



# Between radicalisation and democratisation in an unfolding conflict: Media in Pakistan

REPORT

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# Abbreviations

## Frequently used

APNS	The All Pakistan Newspapers Society
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PFUJ	Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League – Nawas
PPP	Pakistan Peoples Party
PPO	Press and Publication Ordinance
PTV	Pakistan Television Corporation
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas



# Executive summary

After nine years of military rule, Pakistan today finds itself in the second year of a challenging transition to democracy. Unlike previously unsuccessful transitions to democracy, this transition is characterised by the presence of a newly liberalised mass media. This can prove to be a crucial – and positive – factor, but only if the media can assume a role as a watchdog of democracy. Even though Pakistan's media is vibrant this is a difficult task, because the media is faced with a number of challenges.

By highlighting these challenges, this report seeks to focus on how the Pakistani media is affected by, and functions under, the conflict currently unfolding. Furthermore, the report outlines a series of recommendations that can support Pakistan's media in facing future challenges.

## **Media landscape**

Pakistan has a vibrant media landscape, which in spite of political pressure and direct bans that they are sometimes subject to from the state, the media enjoys independence to a large extent. After having been liberalised in 2002, the television sector experienced a media boom. In the fierce competitive environment that followed commercial interests became paramount and quality journalism gave way to sensationalism. Although the radio sector has not seen similar growth, independent radio channels are numerous and considered very important sources of information – especially in the rural areas.

The Pakistani media landscape reflects a multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and class-divided society. There is a clear divide between Urdu and English media. Urdu media, particularly the newspapers, are widely read by the masses – mostly in rural areas. The English media is urban and elite-centric, is more liberal and professional compared to the Urdu media. English print, television and radio channels have far smaller audiences than their Urdu counterparts, but have greater leverage among opinion makers, politicians, the business community, and the upper strata of society.

## **Media and conflict**

Pakistan ranks as the most deadly country in the world for journalists. The security and safety situation in the conflict-affected areas, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and North West Frontier Province (NWFP), are the most grievous. Here journalists face propaganda, threats, coercion, and targeted killings. Some areas are effectively no-go areas for journalists; and the journalists working in the conflicts epicentres have adapted to self-censorship in order to not antagonise the conflicting parties.

As a result, curbs have been put on the free flow of information and some areas in FATA and NWFP and Balochistan suffer from a dearth of information – or an outright information vacuum. There is a great need to provide journalists with improved security through risk-awareness training and conflict sensitive journalism.

Pakistani media have not only been caught up in this violent conflict, but also in a war of words, ideologies and propaganda. FATA and NWFP have more than a hundred radical, illegal hate speech radios and the mainstream media have been subjected to a radical agenda as well.

The media coverage of the regional conflicts within Pakistan and how these relate to the conflict in Afghanistan is either very rudimentary or stereotypical,

and does not contribute to a greater understanding of the interwoven challenges from extremism that the two neighbours face.

**Recommendations**

The main recommendations suggested in the report are:

- Improve the safety of journalists and media workers through improved monitoring, risk awareness and conflict sensitive journalism training, development of risk response mechanisms, and advocacy and lobbying.
- Promote Pakistani-Afghan media relations through dialogue forums and professional cooperation.
- Address the information vacuum and media distortion through awareness-raising on radicalisation of media, and through strengthening radio outlets and by the use of innovative use of new and traditional media in FATA, NWFP and Balochistan.
- Strengthen investigative journalism through training and through funding that can subsidise journalists wishing to undertake larger investigative projects.
- Promote the establishment of a self-regulatory mechanism that can improve standards for Pakistani journalism.

# 1 Introduction

Pakistan is at cross roads in its history. It is the cradle of contemporary terrorism and the centre of attention in the global war against terrorism. The country is faced with a violent, prolonged domestic conflict. But most importantly, after having held elections in February 2008, Pakistan today finds itself in the second year of a challenging transition to democracy after nine years of military rule. The present development marks a historic nexus with an opportunity to establish a sustainable democracy. Pakistan is a fragile state, threatened by economic crisis and the effects of a continued insurgency. The civilian government is facing a difficult task.

The violent conflict with the Pakistani Taliban, Al Qaeda and other militant groups on one side, and the army and state on the other, has intensified dramatically during the past year; and has craved thousands of casualties, produced millions of internally displaced persons and now threatens the cohesion of the state. In several regions the military is involved in fierce fighting with the Taliban, which have been able to assert its will and enforce Sharia Law in the tribal areas and parts of NWFP.

Recently, the army have had its first major success in pushing back the Pakistani Taliban when it cleared the Swat district for militants after heavy fighting. Although ruthless, the military operation received a previously unseen backing of the public and the major opposition party,

The public support encouraged the military and was pivotal for a successful outcome. This indicates that there is now greater resolve to counter the insurgency. But whether the military success in Swat is the beginning of a more determined and comprehensive policy to defeat the Pakistani Taliban remains unclear. But one thing is for certain. If the tide is not turned by a decisive strategy, Pakistan could begin to slide toward a failed state.

This possible scenario is echoed in a recent report from the Atlantic Council think tank, which calls for a more comprehensive US policy towards Pakistan. The Atlantic Council argues that Pakistan is on a rapid trajectory to failure as a democratic and stable state, and needs a boost of \$4 billion in aid and loans each year to begin a reform process. The report warns "that we are running out of time to help Pakistan change its present course toward increasing economic and political instability, and even ultimate failure."<sup>1</sup>

9/11 brought Pakistan into the epicentre of international politics. It was an indispensable actor of the US-led global war against terrorism. Consensus in the international community strongly agrees that a democratic, stable Pakistan is paramount for global peace. But the million-dollar question is if this is still possible.

Creating a well-functioning democracy will require a political leadership able to curb the military's influence in state affairs; find solutions to Pakistan's economic crisis; improve the previous democratic governments' poor track record on effective governance and, lastly, curb the increasing spread of violence and Talibanisation.

The role of the media in this process must be emphasised. If Pakistan is going to make a successful transition to democracy, the media must be able to perform its role as a watchdog -holding politicians, the state apparatus and army accountable and keeping the general public well informed. Even though Pakistan has a vibrant media this is challenging task. As outlined in this report,

<sup>1</sup> *Pakistan Report: Comprehensive U.S. Policy Needed, John Kerry and Chuck Hagel, Atlantic Council, Feb. 2009.*

Pakistan's media is faced with number of challenges. The booming electronic media is powerful, but young, and needs to find a greater balance in its coverage of political and conflict-related issues. Many journalists need training. Areas within the country suffer from lack of access to media. Journalists reporting from conflict areas face security problems that in turn hamper their ability to provide a free flow of information. With twelve deaths in 2008, Pakistan became the second deadliest country for working journalists and other media employees. With six journalists killed so far in 2009, Pakistan now ranks as the most deadly country in the world for journalists to work in.

### **Motivation and objective**

Pakistan is faced with a huge task ahead if it is to establish democratic governance and practices, internal peace and prosperity for its citizens. Aware of the important role the media needs to play in this process, and alarmed by reports of the deteriorating security situation journalists face in large parts of the country, an IMS team went to Pakistan in January 2009 on a combined media assessment mission.

The purpose of the mission was two-fold: 1) to carry out a needs assessment and 2) to identify possible future partners able to initiate activities as swiftly as possible. This report is the outcome of the mission; and its conclusions constitute the foundation for IMS's plans for future projects and cooperation with Pakistan media workers and institutions.

### **Methodology**

The mission, which took place from 31 January to 7 February 2009, was based in Islamabad where most of the major local media organisations, related ministries and governmental institutions, international media support organisations, academic institution and think-tanks have their main offices. Furthermore, a close proximity to FATA and NWFP was preferred as safety issues for journalists were part of the mission scope.

During the mission a series of stakeholders was consulted. To ensure efficiency, and assess how IMS could contribute, other international and local media support organisation were initially consulted in order to learn from their experiences in the country and to establish contacts for possible future cooperation.

Based on these preliminary studies, the IMS mission team consulted with Pakistani media stakeholders. Representatives from print, television and radio broadcaster outlets, the local union of journalist, media regulating authorities, the information ministry, and educational institutions were interviewed. The emphasis of the research was on gaining a general understanding of the Pakistani conflict, and a detailed insight into the media's role and working conditions for the journalists who operate in the conflict areas. The Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) assisted in organising the mission and provided an overall review of the prevailing conflict and the corresponding media issues. This background information was complimented with interviews and insights from local journalists, some of whom work in conflict areas such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Balochistan and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Due to the conflict's regional character – spanning the Afghan-Pakistani border – the mission had a particular focus on media relations between the two countries when conducting field research and interviews with media support organisations, newspaper editors and journalists occupied with the conflict.

The mission's small team consisted of Finn Rasmussen; IMS programme coordinator, and two consultants: Ranga Kalansooriya, specialist in media development, and Jeppe Matzen, MA in History and journalist specialised in Pakistan affairs.

## 2 Background on Pakistan

### 2.1 Pakistan socio-political background

The birth of Pakistan is the story of the birth of an idea. An idea that the Muslim minority of the Indian subcontinent should have a separate state as otherwise the Hindu majority in a united independent India would dominate.<sup>2</sup> The idea became a reality when the British plan to partition the Indian subcontinent led to the creation of the Republic of Pakistan on 15 August 1947.

When independence came, Pakistan had to decide between two different visions of what the State of Pakistan should be. The founding father, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's original vision was for a secular state for Indian Muslims, modelled on the European concept of the nation-state. On the other hand, Pakistan's national poet, Allama Iqbal, championed a different concept. He envisioned Pakistan as an instrument with the purpose of establishing the Law of the God. This vision prescribed Pakistan as an Islamic state. Jinnah's untimely death in 1948 left Pakistan in limbo and the first constitution was not agreed upon until 1956 when Pakistan was declared an Islamic Republic. But other than that the Islamic label no significant Islamic changes were introduced and the bulk of the old British constitution continued in effect. The country was liberal; the influence of conservative religious forces was marginal. However, after 1971 when civil war, with Indian interference, led to the partition of East (Bangladesh) and West Pakistan, national identity shifted. The war showed that Jinnah's vision of Pakistan, as a State for Indian Muslims, was not strong enough to overcome internal cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences. A stronger national sentiment was needed, and the political leaders chose to promote religion as a central building block in the national identity. Pakistan became a homeland for Indian Muslims, but a state that sought to promote and install the right path to the true version of Islam as well. This was evident in the 1973 constitution; the first constitution to stipulate Islam as the state religion. The constitution introduced new religious guidelines. Both the Prime Minister and the President now had to be Muslim; the Muslim minority sect called the Ahmadis was labelled non-Muslims. Furthermore, the government would now have to provide facilities for the promotion of the Arab language. In general the loss of East Pakistan meant the Pakistan shifted its orientation westward itself towards the Arab world.

Under Zia Ul Haq's rule from 1977 to 1988, Pakistan underwent Islamisation, which rolled back Muhammad Ali Jinnah's original vision of Pakistan as a secular nation-state. Today the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a presidential federal democratic republic with Islam as the state religion. But Pakistanis still appear divided about what constitutes the national identity and a cultural clash between liberal and religious forces is ongoing. The previous moderate South Asian Sufi-inspired version of Islam is under pressure from a more strict and conservative version that has gained in strength over the past three decades.

### 2.2 Military rule and democracy

The constitutional development of Pakistan has been entangled in, and influenced by, an unstable political system. Pakistan has had three periods of

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<sup>2</sup> Cohen, Stephen, *The idea of Pakistan*, Brookings Institution, 2004, p. 26

military rule: from 1958–71, 1977–88 and 1999–2008. Periods alternating between military regimes and democracy rule seem to substitute each other with intervals of approximately ten years. Democracy has not had time to fully take root in the population. State institutions such as the judiciary system remain weak and democratic discourse has not emerged. The civil political leadership of the country is tied to the traditional feudal power structure, and the less privileged are not able to rise to political power. Support for democracy is however strong among the Pakistanis. In recent years, civil society has proven to be stronger and more committed than ever. A series of protest rallies led by the Lawyer's Movement in support of a disposed chief justice, and against the military rule of President Musharraf gathered millions of people during in the summer 2007. The Pakistani media, especially the electronic media, played a significant role in mobilising public support for the demonstrations.

Even though Pakistan's military has now stepped back from the political limelight, it remains an influential player in the political process. Defence and foreign policy is – to a large extent – run by, or with the approval of, the military. Pakistan's nuclear weapon programme is totally under its control. The military is an important player on the economic front as well. It has its own military-industrial complex, which provides it with economic autonomy.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.3 Regional dynamics, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the War on Terror

The military's dominant role in society is closely linked with its role as the caretaker of Pakistan's security and defender of the state's Islamic identity. The military have had a close alliance with Islamist political parties and long-standing ties with radical Islamist groups.<sup>4</sup>

These groups have been used by the military to launch a proxy war against India, both in Indian Jammu-Kashmir and more indirectly against perceived Indian interests in Afghanistan. According to Pakistani military thinking, India is a serious, constant threat to Pakistan's existence. To counter this threat, the military doctrine prescribes that Pakistan needs strategic depth in its western hinterland in Afghanistan to avoid being sandwiched between to enemies, and Pakistan should seek to install a Pakistan-friendly or, at the very least, a non pro-Indian government in Kabul.

This policy has been pursued by Pakistan since the 1970's. During the rule of military dictator, President Zia Ul Haq, Pakistan played a prominent role in the Cold War allied with the US in the insurgency against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and US policy in Afghanistan led to a formation of the Mujahedin groups supplied and trained by Pakistan. After the Soviets retreat, the US lost interest in Afghanistan and left it to the mercy of the Mujahedins and warlords. Pakistan, however, continued promoting its own interest by supporting the Taliban during its rise to power in the mid-1990s. The movement was seen a vehicle for gaining influence with a friendly Afghan government thereby fulfilling Pakistani military doctrine.

After 9/11 Pakistan's support for the Taliban became problematic. The Taliban regime was harbouring Al-Qaeda and not willing to cut its ties with the terror network. For a period Pakistan managed to play a double game, supporting the Taliban on one hand and pursuing Al-Qaeda operatives on the other. Increasing US pressure on Pakistan to cut its ties with the Taliban mounted. The Pakistani army no longer supports the Taliban openly. It is however believed that Pakistan remains passive to the activities of the Afghan Taliban leadership based in Quetta, Baluchistan.

<sup>3</sup> Ayesha Siddiqa, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*, Pluto Press 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Haqqani, Husain, *Pakistan between Mosque and Military*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005, p. 312

The Pakistani army – especially the Pakistani Frontier Corps – has for years been in fierce conflict with the Pakistani Taliban which is a compilation of militant groups that previously had the backing of Pakistan's security agency, ISI, along with a series of newcomers, and ex-Mujahedins from the Afghan campaign. The movement is not homogeneous, has different agendas, but is united under the common cause of installing Sharia-Law in Pakistan proper. Al-Qaeda's ideology calling for an international jihad has had a huge influence on these groups. In their battle with the Pakistani army, attack the police, state institutions or politicians, they see themselves fighting the allies of Western neo-colonial interests and a liberal, decadent un-Islamic democratic civilisation.

Large segments of the Pakistani population feel that their country has become a victim of the US led war on terror. Many Pakistanis believe that the presence of international and US forces in Afghanistan has fostered the extremism that Pakistan is battling today. The US, India and European nations on the other hand fear that terrorist attacks in their countries can be planned by Al-Qaeda and related groups in terrorist training camps in Pakistan. If Pakistan is further destabilised, it could become a failed state: a haven for terrorists that can destabilise the region. The security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons technology would then be comprised and could fall in the wrong hands. NATO countries are also concerned about Pakistan due the military presence in Afghanistan. US and ISAF-forces are fighting the Taliban in order to create stability and allow for some sort of nation building. Taliban elements have safe havens in the tribal areas of Pakistan, crossing the boarder to launch attacks in Afghanistan.

Pakistan's security establishment believes that the current Afghan Karzai government is biased toward India. The army fear that it could be sandwiched between two potential enemies. The surge in militant attacks inside Pakistan proper have, however, drawn more Pakistanis including politicians such as President Ali Asif Zardari to the conclusion that the main threat is not from foreign, or Indian insurgences, but from domestic militants and Pakistani Taliban. The military rank and file have not yet accepted this premise. And in public opinion there is still a lack of understanding that Pakistan is now facing what Afghanistan began facing some years ago. The notion that Afghanistan and Pakistan have a common cause in fighting the Taliban is still weak, but gaining in force.

## **2.4 Social and ethnical texture of Pakistan**

Pakistan's social fabric is rooted in its feudal system. Feudalism is still in evidence in a moderated form in rural areas, where the feudal lords have their land and power bases. Many feudal families have gone into politics. Some did so in order to protect their own interests, some because they felt an obligation to govern and serve their country. Feudal families such as the Bhutto's have dominated Pakistani politics for decades. Industrialist families like the Nawas' are newcomers, but their political support derives from feudal families.

Pakistani society is characterised by its multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic, and class-divided texture. With four separate ethno linguistic groups dominating each province: Sindhis in Sindh, Punjabis in Punjab, Baluch in Balochistan and Pashtuns in the North West Frontier Province. Sindh with 46 million inhabitants and Punjab with 81 million are the most populated provinces and have traditionally dominated Pakistani politics and the army. Besides the four dominating ethnic groups, there are numerous smaller groups. In the FATA Areas the majority of the population is Pashtun. Here ethnic groups are divided into tribes, clans and sub-clans.

English is the official language in Pakistan and used in business, government, and legal contacts. English is also spoken among the elites and educated upper middle class. Urdu is the national language and used to communicate between different ethnic groups. Punjabi is the most commonly spoken language. Vernacular languages are spoken in the rural areas. The estimated percentages of the different languages spoken are: Punjabi 44.68%, Pashto 15.42%, Sindhi 14.1%, Seraiki 8.38%, Urdu 7.57%, Baloch 3.57% and the remaining 6.3% speak a variety of other languages.

Pakistan has a population of 176 million. With an annual growth rate above 2% the population is expected to reach 220 million by 2020. An increasingly part of the population will be living in urban areas, and it is estimated that more than 100 million will be living in the cities in ten years.<sup>5</sup>

Average per capita income in Pakistan is 840 USD.<sup>6</sup> On a national basis the literacy rate is 54 percent, 68 percent for men and 40 percent for women.<sup>7</sup> The literacy rate is lower in the rural areas.

Pakistan's school system is made up of private and public schools. Pakistan's Net Enrolment Ratio at the primary level is 62%. In other words, 62% of children of five to nine years of age were attending primary education in 2005/06. (A value of 100% means that universal primary education has been achieved). Some 35% of children 10 to 12 years old were studying at the middle elementary level in 2005 and 2006; 23% of children 13 and 14 were at the secondary level; and fewer than 10% of the 15 and 16 years olds were studying at the higher secondary level.<sup>8</sup>

Parallel to the school system, there are 13,000 and 22,000 madrassas with between 1.5 million to 2.5 million students. Women are less educated than men. In FATA, NWFP and Swat the Taliban have tried to enforce a ban on female education, as reported in a January 21, 2009 issue of the Pakistan daily newspaper, *The News*. 400 private schools enrolling 40,000 girls have been shut down. 169 schools in Swat have been bombed or torched.

## 2.5 Religion

Some 97% of the Pakistanis are Muslims with 80% Sunnis and 20% Shias. The other main religions are Hindu 3,200,000 (1.85%), Christianity 2,800,000 (1.6%), and Sikhism around 20,000 (0.04%). The Ahamadi sect, declared non-Muslim in an amendment to constitution 1973, comprises roughly two million.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, Stephen, p. 232

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, *World development report 2009*.

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org).

<sup>8</sup> *The Education System in Pakistan: Assessment of the National Education Census*; UNESCO Islamabad, 2007.

## 3 Description of the media landscape

### 3.1 Dominant features

Pakistan has a vibrant media landscape; among the most dynamic in South Asia. To a large extent the media enjoys freedom of expression in spite of political pressure and direct bans sometimes administered by political stakeholders.

More than 40 television channels beam soaps, satire, music programmes, films, religious speech, political talk shows, and news of the hour. Although sometimes criticised for being unprofessional and politically biased, the television channels have made a great contribution to the media landscape and to Pakistani society.

Radio channels are numerous and considered a very important source of information – especially in rural areas. Besides the state channel Radio Pakistan, a number of private radios carry independent journalistic content and news. But most radio content is music and entertainment. There are hundreds of Pakistani newspapers from the large national Urdu newspapers to the small local vernacular papers.

Media demographics reflect a multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and stratified class society with a clear divide between Urdu and English media. Urdu media are mostly consumed by the rural population. The English media targets urban and the elite and is more liberal and professional in comparison. English print, television and radio channels have far smaller audiences than their Urdu counterparts, but have great leverage among opinion makers, politicians, the business community, and the upper strata of society.

Besides the Urdu/English and Rural/Urban divide, Pakistan media is also divided linguistically with a series of media in vernacular languages, such as Punjabi, Pashto and Sindhi.

Pakistan's media sector is highly influenced by the ownership structure. There are three dominating media moguls, or large media groups, which to some extent also have political affiliations. Due to their dominance in both print and broadcast industries all three media groups are very influential in politics and society.

The security situation for journalists in general has deteriorated in the past couple of years. Twelve journalists were killed in 2008; and so far by May 2009 six more has been killed. Threats and intimidation against journalists and media workers by state and non-state actors is widespread.

Political pressure on media is mostly done indirectly. One tool widely used by the government is to cut off 'unfriendly' media from governmental advertising. Using draconian laws the government has also banned or officially silencing popular television channels. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has been used to silence the broadcast media by either suspending licenses or by simply threatening to do so. In addition, media is also exposed to propaganda from state agencies, pressured by powerful political elements and non-state actors involved in the current conflict.

As news coverage on the most popular private television channels is mostly focused on conflict and political stories, reports covering social issue, minorities, marginalized groups, human rights and women rights do not get due exposure in the media. In defence of the media, one could argue that developments within political theatre and the prevailing conflict have been so intense that they have demanded all the attention of journalists and media in general.

### **3.2 Media in Pakistan – historical background**

The media in Pakistan dates back to pre-partition years of British India, where a number of newspapers were established to promote a communalistic or partition agenda. The newspaper Dawn, founded by Quaid-e-Azam and first published in 1941, was dedicated to countering "anti-Muslim propaganda" and promoting for an independent Pakistan. The conservative newspaper, Nawa-e-Waqt, established in 1940, was the mouthpiece of the Muslim elites who were among the strongest supporters for an independent Pakistan.

In a sense, Pakistani print media came into existence with a mission to promulgate the idea of Pakistan, which was seen as the best national option for the Muslim minority in British India and as a form of self-defence against suppression from the Hindu majority.

The need for self-defence runs deeply in Pakistani identity due to the pre-independence role as a minority and a victim; the genocide-like violence of the partition days; and defeat in three wars. The Pakistani army is one of the caretakers of this identity and it is seen as the defender of the national identity which has beside alertness/hostility towards India, the national religion, Islam: and the national language, Urdu, as its cornerstones.

The emphasis on Islam as a major pillar of national identity has led to an alliance between the custodians of Islam, the religious leaders with the military, the civil bureaucracy, and the intelligence services. This nexus of these national guardians has had a huge influence on Pakistani media as they tried to use or control media to defend their interests and the national identity.

Religious leaders have promulgated blasphemy laws that have curbed freedom of expression, the intelligence services have manipulated the media, and the civil bureaucracy have been used to control the media through its administration of media laws, licensing and placement of public funds for ads.

The various military regimes in Pakistan have had a special interest in controlling the media, and have been behind many of the media laws used to censor the media.

The first step in introducing media laws in the country was done by the then military ruler Field Martial Ayub Khan who promulgated the Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO) in 1962. The law empowered the authorities to confiscate newspapers, close down news providers, and arrest journalists. Using these laws, Ayub Khan nationalised large parts of the press and took over one of the two largest news agencies. The other agencies was pushed into severe crisis where and had to seek financial support from the government. Pakistan Radio and TV, which made was established in mid-1960's was also brought under the strict control of the government.

More draconian additions were made to the PPO during the reign of General Zia Haq in the 1980's. According to these new amendments, the publisher

would be liable and prosecuted if a story was not to the liking of the administration even if it was factual and of national interest. These amendments were used to promote Haq's Islamist leanings and demonstrated the alliance between the military and religious leaders. Censorship during the Zia years was direct, concrete and dictatorial. Newspapers were scrutinised; critical or undesired sections of an article censored. In the wake of Zia Haq's sudden death and the return of democracy, the way was paved to abate the draconian media laws through a revision of media legislation called the Revised PPO (RPPO).

From 2002, under General Musharraf, media faced a decisive development that would lead to a boom in Pakistani electronic media and paved the way to it gaining political clout. New liberal media laws broke the state's monopoly on electronic media. TV broadcasting and FM radio licenses were issued to private media outlets.

The military's motivation for liberalising media licensing was based on an assumption that Pakistani media could be used to strengthen national security and counter the threat from India. What prompted this shift was the military's experience during two past confrontations with India. One was the Kargil War and the other was the hijacking of the Indian Airliner by Pakistani-based militants. In both these instances, the Pakistani military felt that it had lost the media war to India. The government, intelligentsia, the security agencies and the military were of the view that Pakistan was left with no options to reciprocate because its electronic media were inferior to that of Indian. Better electronic media capacity was needed in the future and thus the market for electronic media was liberalised.

The justification was just as much a desire to counter Indian media power, as it was a wish to set the media "free" with the rights that electronic media had in liberal, open societies. The military thought it could still control the media and harness it if it strayed from what the regime believed was in the national interest – and in the accordance with its own political agenda.

This assessment however proved to be wrong as the media and in particular the many new TV channels became a powerful force in civil society. Media became an important actor in the process that led to the fall of Musharraf and his regime. By providing extensive coverage of the 2007 Lawyers Movement's struggle to get the chief justice reinstated, the media played a significant role in mobilising civil society. This protest movement, with million of Pakistanis taking to the street in name of an independent judiciary and democratic rule, left Musharraf with little backing from civil society and the army. Ultimately, he had to call for elections. Recently, due to a renewed interplay between civil society organisations, the Lawyers' Movement and the electronic media, Pakistan's new President, Asif Zardari had to give in to public and political pressure and reinstate the chief justice. The emergence of powerful civil society actors is unprecedented in Pakistani history. These could not have gained in strength without the media, which will need to continue to play a pivotal role if Pakistan has to develop a stronger democracy, greater stability and take on socio-political reforms.

9 Christine Fair, Senior Political Analyst and Specialist in South Asian political and military affairs at the Rand Corporation, in an interview to *Weekendavisen*, 20. April, Sektion 1, s. 8, *Weekendavisen* 2009.

"The only hope for Pakistanis is that the media will continue to mobilise people. The media have done a great job, even if they are at times very unprofessional, and have to come to term with the limits between journalism and political engagement"<sup>9</sup>, says Christine Fair, Pakistan analyst at Rand Corporation.

Whether Pakistan's media, with its powerful TV channels, is able to take on such a huge responsibility and make changes from within depends on im-

proving general working conditions; on the military and the state bureaucracy; the security situation of journalists; media laws revision; better journalism training; and lastly on the will of the media and the media owners themselves.

### 3.3 Legal framework

Though Pakistani media enjoy relative freedom compared to some of its South Asian neighbours, the industry is subjected to many undemocratic and regressive laws and regulations.

The country was subjected to alternating military and democratic rule – but has managed to thrive on basic democratic norms. Though the Pakistani media had to work under military dictatorships and repressive regimes, which instituted many restrictive laws and regulations for media in order to 'control' it, the media was not largely affected. The laws are, however, detrimental to democracy reform, and represent a potential threat to the future of Pakistani media and democracy.

#### Constitution

The Pakistani Constitution upholds the fundamentals for a vibrant democracy and guarantees freedom of expression and the basic premise for media freedom. While emphasising the state's allegiance to Islam, the Constitution underlines the key civil rights inherent in a democracy and states that citizens:

"Shall be guaranteed fundamental rights, including equality of status, of opportunity and before law, social, economic and political justice, and freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship and association, subject to law and public morality."

However, the constitution and democratic governance in Pakistan was repeatedly set out of play by military coups and the country was under military dictatorship for more than half its existence.

Thus, basic – if not all – democratic norms were severely affected, but the country managed to survive through these dark period and reinstate its sidelined socio-political values. Media played a crucial role in this process.

"Even in the darkest days of the worst kind of military rule, it has been the Pakistan media that had kept the hope for the country and its future alive. No other institution in the country, neither the political parties nor the civil society, not even the judiciary could make such a claim. When every other door had been shuttered, it had been the media and media alone that had crashed open alternatives for the willing to come out and take on the worst dictator," said M Ziauddin, media law activist associated with Internews.

#### Media laws

There are a number of legislative and regulatory mechanisms that directly and indirectly affect media. Besides the Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO) mentioned above, these laws include the Printing Presses and Publications Ordinance 1988, the Freedom of Information Ordinance of 2002, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) of 2002, the Defamation Ordinance of 2002, the Contempt of Court Ordinance of 2003, the Press – Newspapers – News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance 2003, the Press Council Ordinance 2002, the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan Ordinance 2005 and lastly the Access to Information Ordinance of 2006. Also there were

attempts in 2006 for further legislation ostensibly "to streamline registration of newspapers, periodicals, news and advertising agencies and authentication of circulation figures of newspapers and periodicals" (PAPRA).

The liberalisation of the electronic media in 2002 was coupled to a bulk of regulations. The opening of the media market led to the mushrooming of satellite channels in Pakistan. Many operators started satellite and/or cable TV outlets without any supervision by the authorities. The government felt that it was losing million of rupees by not 'regulating' the mushrooming cable TV business.

Another consequence of the 2002 regulations was that most of these were hurriedly enacted by President Musharraf immediately before the new government took office. Most of the new laws that were anti-democratic and were not intended to promote public activism but to increase his control of the public. Many media activists felt that the new regulations were opaque and had been subject to interpretation by the courts which would have provided media practitioners with clearer guidelines.

### **Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority – from partner to controller**

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was promoted by the government as an open media policy reform and was fortified with strong regulatory teeth but it is in reality one of the major hurdles to press freedom in the country.

The establishment of PEMRA was initiated in 2000 through the formation of the Regulatory Authority for Media Broadcast Organizations which was mandated to improve standards of information, education and entertainment; expand the choice available to the people of Pakistan in the media for news, current affairs, religious knowledge, art, culture, science, technology, economic development, social sector concerns, music, sport, drama and other subjects of public and national interest; facilitate the devolution of responsibility and power to grass roots by improving the access to mass media at the local and community level; and lastly, to ensure accountability, transparency and good governance by optimising the free flow of information.

Many pro-democratic campaigners consider this four-point mandate to be a solid foundation supporting democracy processes and comprehensive media liberalisation. However, the general opinion among media practitioners is that PEMRA only acted as a license issuing office that has implemented regulatory barriers for broadcaster. "It is a Bhatta (means money extortion in Urdu) body that collects money from broadcasting operators in a legal way. Nothing more can be expected," notes media law activist and journalist Matiullah Jan.

The PEMRA laws were utilized by the Musharraf regime in his attempts to tame the media. Some stations were shut down and some were under severe harassments using these laws. The 12-member authority was dominated by bureaucrats and ex-police officers – a phenomenon that had been partly changed after the assumption of office by the present government. However, media activists are still not comfortable with the composition of the 12-member committee where they highlight the need of a greater representation from the media itself. "Regulation of the TV and Radio should be through the participation and representation of the stake holders. What must happen is the restructuring of the Board of PEMRA with independent eminent people. It is still full of bureaucrats and ex-policemen, so there you find lack of ownership," say Matiullah Jan.

PEMRA's leadership agree to that the institution needs to be more engaged with its stakeholders. "It's a combination of regulator and the stakeholders. Therefore, the chain is - Law /Regulator / Stakeholder," says Dr. Abdul Jabbar, the Executive Member of PEMRA.

However, the present government is under pressure to amend or repeal these laws. Many media practitioners confirmed that the harsh use of the PEMRA laws during the Musharaff regime had not occurred during the past year. The PEMRA board has been reconstituted to some extent and includes some media professionals. Furthermore, the government is making some attempts to reintroduce some democratic norms in its media regulation reform.

The Code of Conduct made by PEMRA has been subjected to criticism by the industry players, and is now being reviewed by the government. The former Minister of Information has requested Pakistani Broadcasters Association to draft a new Code of Conduct to replace the existing Code of Conduct of PEMRA.

Still, a somewhat top-down approach is taken from PEMRA authorities on this matter. Referring to the issue on Code of Conduct, Dr. Abdul Jabbar said that presently there are many Codes of Conduct, one by PFUJ, one by South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA) and the broadcasters are in the process of formulating another. "The Government will not agree to any of these, most probably. But taking all these documents into account, the government will come up with a comprehensive document that can be acceptable to all stakeholders. Then everybody has the ownership".

He continued: "PEMRA will function - it will not be silenced or nullified. We will be the regulatory body. But the stakeholders will have a say in the Code of Conduct. That's what we call self-regulation".

### **Press Council and Newspaper Regulation**

Established under Press Council of Pakistan Ordinance in October 2002, the body operates on a semi-autonomous nature along with an Ethical Code of Practice signed by President Musharraf. It is mandated with multi-faceted tasks that range from protection of press freedom to regulatory mechanisms and review of complaints from public.

However, the Press Council never came into operation due to the reservations of the media organizations. In protest over its establishment, the professional journalists organisations refrained from nominating their four members to the Council. Nevertheless, the chairman was appointed, offices now exist and general administration work continues. This has led the government to review the entire Press Council mechanism.

The Press Council Ordinance has a direct link to the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance (PNNABRO) of 2002. This legislation deals with procedures for registration of publications and criteria of media ownerships.

Among the documents required for the permit or 'Declaration' for publishing a newspaper is a guarantee from the editor to abide by the Ethical Code of Practice contained in the Schedule to the Press Council of Pakistan Ordinance. Though the Press Council procedure has made silenced or paralysed, these forms of interlinking laws could provide the government with additional means for imposing restrictions and take draconian actions against newspapers. The PNNABRO, among its many other requirements demands that a publisher provides his bank details. It also has strict controls and regulations

for the registering procedure. It not only demands logistical details, but also requires detailed information on editors and content providers.

Ownership of publications (mainly the newspapers and news agencies) is restricted to Pakistani nationals if special government permission is not given. In partnerships, foreign involvement cannot exceed 25 percent. The law does not permit foreigners to obtain a 'Declaration' to run a news agency or any media station.

### **3.4 Media in Pakistan**

#### **Print media**

Pakistan's market for print media has undergone significant changes in the past decade. In 1997 the total number of daily, monthly, and minor publications was 4,455 but by 2003, six years later, only 945 remained.

Circulation however has increased in the same period. In 2003 daily distribution was 6.2 million. This figure includes a wide spectre of publications. According to the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies there are 142 proper newspapers. Circulation statistics are uncertain. According to Zaffar Abbas, editor of the English newspaper, Dawn, the overall circulation of newspapers today is around four million.

The print media is the oldest media in Pakistan, dating back to before independence. For many years newspapers were the only privately owned media that took an independent and critical stand towards the state authorities.

Print media publish in 11 languages with Urdu and Sindhi as largest language groups. English-language publications are not as numerous. The divide between Urdu and English media also goes for the print media. Urdu newspapers are the dominant media in the rural areas. They are conservative, folkloristic, religious and sensational and are by far the most read and influential among the general public. The English media is urban and elitist, is more liberal and more professional. English print media has an impact among opinion makers, politicians, the business community and the upper strata of society in general.

There are three major players on the print media market and in the media market in general.

The Jang Group of Newspapers is Pakistan's largest media group and publishes the Urdu language Daily Jang, The News International, Mag Weekly, and Awam. The group tends has at a moderate conservative perspective.

The Dawn Group of newspapers is Pakistan's second largest media group and produces an array of publications with that include the Star, Herald and the newspaper Dawn, which is its flagship. Dawn is considered a liberal, secular paper with moderate views. The Star is Pakistan's most popular evening newspaper, and the Herald, is a current affairs monthly.

Nawa-i-Waqt is an Urdu language daily newspaper and has one of the largest readerships in the country. It belongs to the Nawa-Waqt group, which also publishes the English newspaper, The Nation. Like The Nation, the Nawa-i-Waqt is a right wing, conservative paper. According to Javid Siddiq, resident editor, the paper stands for democracy and for an Islamic welfare state.

The organisation All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) represents major newspaper publishers and owners and is dominated by the media moguls. It was founded in 1953 by the major pioneering editors and publishers of the day to facilitate the exchange of views between editors and to protect the rights of newspapers. Today, APNS's primary objective is to safeguard the commercial interests of its membership. If an advertiser defaults on payment, the newspaper company complains to the APNS. With 243 members, APNS will then pressure the company or the ad agency to either pay or be blacklisted.

## **TV**

Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) broadcasts began in 1964. Today, PTV has six channels, one of which, PTV Global, broadcasts in Europe, Asia and the US. PTV News is a dedicated news channel and PTV National sends programmes in the many different languages of Pakistan. PTV's state monopoly was ended in 2003 when the market for electronic media was liberalised. This led to the boom in new private TV channels that today transmit soaps, news, dramas, and talk shows millions of viewers.

The private channels have been issued licenses for cable or satellite only, which means that PTV is the only channel that provides terrestrial services to the population. This favours PTV, as most of the rural populations do not have access to the alternative channels that send via cable or satellite. It also indicates that the government still wishes to have control over the private TV channels, as cable connection and satellite transmission can be easily be shut down. That the government not only sought to liberalise the electronic media on its own terms, but also wanted to control and use the media as a tool to strengthen national interests, is also evident from the way that the public advisement budget is allocated. PTV receives 70 percent of the budget. The remainder is dealt out to independent TV stations that sympathise with government policies. Allocations have in the past been withdrawn in order to coalesce stations to change critical editorial policies.

But the TV sector remains vibrant. In total Pakistan has 49 TV channels of which 15 are news channels, 32 primarily entertainment and two religious. The three media conglomerates also have their own TV channels, but newcomers such as ARY TV and Ajj TV have challenged their dominating status. The Haroon group however still owns the 24-hour English news channel Dawn News that is popular among the urban elite.

Geo TV, owned by the Independent Media Corporation, is affiliated with the Jang Group of Newspapers. Geo News is Geo TV's flagship. The Urdu channel is one of the most popular in Pakistan and has a large audience. Geo is however cable based with no terrestrial access. Like other news channels, Geo News has been criticised by the government for exaggerations and misrepresentations of facts. Numerous times, the station has been subjected to bans and shut downs. When President Musharraf imposed emergency in the fall of 2007, Geo TV Network received an order from local authorities of Dubai on November 16 to cut off all their Live broadcast of programmes. Geo TV was also banned for showing any programme with Geo News' popular anchors Dr. Shahid Masood and Hamid Mir.

Recently, in March 2009 Geo News was taken off-air in the evening in many major cities of Pakistan. The step was taken by President Ali Asif Zardari and PPP-led Pakistani government days before Pakistani lawyers had called for a "Long March" to force the reinstatement of Chief Justice, Iftikhar Chaudhry. The ban led to the resignation of Information Minister, journalist Shehri Rehman.

Geo News has been targeted due of its coverage of the Lawyers' Movement and to its continued criticism of the sitting government. Although the criticism had been legitimate and in line with an overall support for democratic principals, it has at the same time also been criticised for being politically biased. In general, the Jhang group and the Nazami group back PML-N, while the Haroon group supports PPP, according to Dr Syed Abdul Siraj, Department of Mass Communication at Allama Iqbal University in Islamabad.

Geo News was not the only station that has been harassed. Most of the other hugely popular news channels have been criticized as well for misusing press freedoms to prompt particular political agendas or simply raise their ratings. The TV channels are in a fierce competition for viewers. This leads to a high degree of sensationalism. News programmes cover political developments on an hour-to-hour basis and have been criticised for focusing too heavily to violent conflicts and political affairs that can be dramatised to increase their entertainment value.

### **Radio**

Radio is a vibrant media in Pakistan and the dominant media in many rural areas where television does not penetrate because of the prohibitive transmission costs or simply a lack of electricity in rural households. In urban areas, radio is gaining in popularity, as people are too busy to watch television and often listen to the radio while driving to and from work.

Radio in Pakistan was a monopoly controlled by the state until 2002 when the Musharraf liberated the media and PEMRA opened for private FM radio stations by selling of licenses to the highest bidder.

This led to the emergence of more than 40 FM stations that have reached millions of Pakistanis both in rural and urban areas. In the first couple of years after liberalisation radio licenses were cheap. Najib Ahmed, head and founder of Radio Power 99, paid some 3 million Rupees the first FM license.

Today, increased competition and greater demand for new FM licenses has pushed prices up to some 30 million. This increase has meant that the new stations are owned by industrialists, large media groups, feudal lords or politicians, who often are one and the same. Most large media groups were initially focused on acquiring television licenses, but now they have become interested in radio as well.

Part of barrier for opening a new FM station is a lack of trained radio professionals. Few journalists have radio training, according to Najib Ahmed. Universities do not teach practical radio skills, so he trains his own reporters. The lack of radio reporters means that most stations air mostly music and small talk. Radio Power 99, along with a handful of other private stations, are the only private stations that produce news programmes and background features on political and social topics.

The state-owned Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) still dominates radio in Pakistan and has the biggest audiences in the rural areas. PBC's Radio Pakistan and FM 101 have by far the largest outreach with 31 stations that covers 80% of Pakistan territory, reaching 96.5% of the population and has 95.5 million listeners.<sup>10</sup>

Previously Radio Pakistan was a state tool, primarily airing propaganda, but today it is in a reform process but as it has 6000 employees reform is a challenging task, says Najib Ahmed, who was trained and worked in Radio Pakistan for 14 years.

<sup>10</sup> Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, website: <http://www.radio.gov.pk/aboutus.htm>

### 3.5 Educational and training institutions

In 1941, University of Punjab, Lahore established the first department of Journalism. The founder, Professor P.P. Singh, graduated from the University of Missouri with a Master's degree in Journalism. Professor Singh's visions and ideals led to an American influence in both Pakistani and Indian journalism training programmes and this influence is still evident.

Karachi University established a department of journalism was in 1955. An initial diploma-course for professional journalists was upgraded to a full master's programme in 1962. No new university journalism was established during the following two decades.

The 1970s witnessed the establishment of a journalist training programmes around the country: Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan (DIK, NWFP) in 1974; the Department of Mass Communication at Sindh University, Hyderabad in 1977. In the 1980's, four more departments were established in three different regions of Pakistan. The department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Peshawar and the department of Mass Communication at Bahaudin Zakari University (BZU), Multan began offering evening Diploma-courses in 1985 and 1987, respectively. In Peshawar a full master's programme began in 1988 and followed by on Multan in 1991. The other two departments established in the 1980's are the Department of Mass Communication at the Allama Iqbal Open University (AOU), Islamabad, in 1986; and the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Balochistan, Quetta in 1987. The department at the AOU offers distance learning courses, while all the other departments only offer courses conventional on location courses. Since then a Department of journalism has been established at Hazara University (NWFP) and at the National University of Modern Languages in Islamabad. The top five universities with journalism curriculum are Peshawar, Lahore, D.I. Khan, Karachi, and BZU.<sup>11</sup>

A number of private institutions also offer journalism courses. Course quality is much lower here compared to that at the universities.

### 3.6 Journalists and media workers in Pakistan

The working conditions of a Pakistani journalist varies greatly depending on the form of the media (electronic/print), its readers (rural/urban), language (English/Urdu) and the size of the media (local/national).

Financially, the greatest divide is between print journalists on the one hand and TV-journalists and other electronic media workers on the other. A full-time TV employee earns up to 100,000 rupees a month (1.200 Euros). The most prominent reporters and anchors have higher salaries than cameramen and other TV employees under regular contracts.

Newspaper journalists earn less, often with no clear contracts and irregular payment of wages. The minimum wage at a newspaper is officially 10,000 rupees a month (120 Euros). At a larger paper a regular employee will typically make 15-20,000 rupees a month. Salaries at the large national papers and especially those in English are higher.

According to the general secretary of PFUJ, Mazhar Abbas, up to 80% of the print journalists have no contracts or employment letters and media houses invent scams to avoid paying higher salaries. Dawn, according to Abbas, con-

<sup>11</sup> According to Professor Altaf Ullah Khan at Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Peshawar University.

tracts some journalist through a subcontractor in order to avoid having complaints about wages directed at the newspaper itself.

Working for a rural newspaper can be particularly difficult. "Sometimes the owners of rural newspapers tell the journalists, that there is no salary, but that they can make money by selling advertising" says Abbas.

Many rural journalists work part-time for a local paper or they freelance and provide local news for a larger urban or national media. Besides poor financial conditions these journalists also lack backing for their safety concerns and support in legal matters and insurance.

Journalists training vary greatly. Some local journalists have no education or training at all. Many came from low-paid jobs as for example schoolteachers. Journalists who are able to write and speak English are more likely to make a decent salary. A job with the urban elitist media is considering favourable if you are print journalist.

These urban media also have a number of columnists, who often come have different backgrounds. Many of these columnists are retired army officers, academics and intellectuals, who often are financially well off and belong to the higher middle or upper classes. They are often very influential and provide background information related to specific news reporting.

Female Pakistani journalists have very different work area. In general female journalists are not assigned to cover conflicts or politics, but find themselves confined to reporting on social and cultural topics. Most female reporters work for the large urban and national media, and especially in the electronic media.

## 4 Major challenges for media related to the ongoing conflict

### Safety for Pakistani journalist and media workers

Killings, physical attacks and coercion are constant concerns for many Pakistani journalists, editors, cameramen, other media workers and owners. Violence and threats are serious problems that lead to self-censorship and limit the topics and geographical areas being covered by the media.

Pakistan is currently ranked number one in the world in the statistics of journalists killed in 2009. So far six journalists have been killed, and recently (May, 2009) a seventh journalist disappeared after he had received threats. This follows a period of increased violence during the last days of the military regime. In the year from May 2007 to May 2008 fifteen journalists were killed, 357 were arrested, 123 sustained injuries in physical assaults, 154 were harassed while there were 18 cases of attacks and ransacking of media properties and 88 cases of various gag orders issued by the government.<sup>12</sup> In 2008 twelve journalists were killed, and at least 74 journalists sustained serious or minor injuries in 41 cases of assault or injury.<sup>13</sup>

### 4.1 Safety challenges for Pakistani media

#### Regional differences

These figures indicate that the safety of Pakistani journalists has deteriorated in the past years. FATA and the south western parts of NWFP have become the most dangerous areas for journalists due to the prevailing conflict. The low intensity conflict in Balochistan has also been problematic for some time. But for the past years violence has increasingly spread outside these areas, and made the security situation increasingly dangerous for journalists and cameramen in general. In the various geographical areas there are different safety and security scenarios with different perpetrators and different consequences.

#### Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)

The federal government in Islamabad officially controls the tribal areas. But FATA has never been fully under the control of any central government. Since colonialism under the British, Pashtuns living in FATA had autonomy, which they have been enjoyed against the sacrifice of influence in national policies, and a draconian regulatory system, called the Frontier Crime Regulation. The area is 27,000 square km and has a population of 3.5 million. Literacy is only 17 percent, compared to the national average of 50 percent; among women it is 3 percent, compared to the national average of 36 percent. Nearly 66 percent of households live beneath the poverty line.<sup>14</sup>

After 9/11 FATA, has increasingly become the focus point in the so-called War on Terror. An anti-insurgency campaign at time resembling war between the Pakistani Army and the militants has been waged of and on since 2002, but the army has never been able to assert itself. For more than two years America has conducted drone attacks in the region. FATA has come under the control of Al Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban and is used as a safe heaven to launch attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and for overseas terrorist activities.

<sup>12</sup> *Intermedia, Annual State of Pakistan Media Report 2007-08.*

<sup>13</sup> *Intermedia, Report 2008: <http://intermedia.org.pk/Media%20in%20Pakistan%202008-pr.pdf>*

<sup>14</sup> *Daniel Markey, Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt, Council for Foreign Relations, No. 36, August 2008, p. 5.*

There is no exact count of the number of journalists working in FATA. Estimations put the number at approximately 200, but in recent past years many journalists have stopped reporting due to the increased danger. Many of the journalists who continue to report from the region are freelancers or stringers with no backing from a media organisation.

"Due to this pressure in the last 2 to 3 years many journalist have stopped working for foreign media. The extremist groups have very good international network, and find out if you have worked for international news agencies. The reporting has becomes more difficult, especially because of the many bombings that take place. The journalist's families are coming under danger, and they can be forced to move to new locations", says Mr. Mazhar Abbas, Secretary General of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ).

For many years journalists working in FATA have had to deal with safety and security issues on a daily basis and media workers that still operate in the region seem to have adapted to the situation. According to an employee of a local radio station in FATA, the militant control of the area has affected editorial policy. "There are some limitations to what kind of programmes we can carry. We avoid sectarian issues, investigative reporting, and in-depth stories about military operations", says the source who prefers to be anonymous.

In order to reduce the level of threats and violent incidents, media focus on balancing the news, taking the military, Taliban, and the militants into account. All parties involved in the conflict have threatened journalists; both militants groups and the intelligence agencies are under suspicion for being linked to physical attacks or targeted killings of journalists. Recently the relationship with the militants has deteriorated and had become the main problem. According to Javid Siddiq, the resident editor of Nawa-e-Waqt, in Islamabad, the Taliban now believe reporters work for the Pakistani army. Previously, the media had a working relationship with the militants and it was possible interview militant leaders. But today journalists are increasingly met with hostility and seen as possible agents. Bombings also present a serious threat.

"Reporting has becomes more difficult, especially because of the many bombings that takes place. The journalist's families are under constant danger, and they can be forced to move to new locations", says Mazhar Abbas.

This development has led to an increased information vacuum in FATA. The population receives little news about the outside world. Reporting from FATA is limited to headlines and descriptive reporting without any investigative journalism.

### **North West Frontier Province (NWFP)**

For several years large parts of the NWFP have been the scene of a conflict between the army and militants. Especially the southern and western districts of the province have experienced a war like environment for some years. As in FATA, journalists have learned to adapt to self-censorship in their reporting in order to not antagonise the conflicting parties. No in-depth or investigative reporting is done in these parts of the province. In 2009 two journalists were killed in NWFP while covering a suicide bombing.

But throughout the past year-and-a-half the conflict has spread and intensified. Most of NWFP is now affected. This has brought the dynamics of the conflict to new areas where local journalists who are not accustomed to war are now dealing with the safety and security issues. In the district of Swat,

which have been under the control of the Pakistani Taliban and Sharia Law, journalists have had to come to terms with the new realities.

"In the beginning the media were not so worried about safety, and did not have a bullet proof jacket. Today some have bullet-proof jackets. There is a greater awareness now. Still, some new TV-channels commit the same mistake and they are not providing their journalists with safety", says a reporter that covered NWFP and Swat for a newspaper for three years.

According to the reporter, who prefers to be anonymous, the militants have been especially brutal in the southern Swat valley. "Journalists have started to carry guns. The situation has gone out of control. Anyone can attack you. When you are in a conflict zones, you can incidentally get caught into the cross fire."

Senior journalist and editor of the News in Peshawar, Rahimullah Yousaf Zai, confirm the seriousness of the situation. He has worked in the area for the last three decades, interviewed Osama Bin Laden twice in the 1990s, and has learned to cope with the security dangers.

"But now it is becoming more dangerous because of the conflict. You have to think about the interests of the army, the intelligence, the militants and tribal groups when you report. Whatever you say on the radio is closely watched by all groups," he explains.

All parties in the conflict are aware of what bad PR can do. The militants seems to believe that the media has turned against them and is given them a bad image. They are, thus, very keen on controlling the news flow.

"People are not keen to talk to media, because of fear of the militants. Cell phones are the main tool to reach sources for journalists. But you have to catch the heat with the camera, and cameramen have to get away from the safety of the hotel. Mostly the area they go to are distant and dangerous", says one journalist who has covered Swat. Ignoring these guidelines can be fatal.

This is evident in the case of Mosa Khankel, a Geo TV reporter who was killed in Swat by unknown gunmen. Also, Musa Khan, a TV journalist, was slain while covering the Taliban in Pakistan. The prominent Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir said, "Musa was not only shot but also decapitated. He was continuously facing problems while reporting from Swat. The mood of celebration has been converted into mourning." Dawn reported that Musa Khan had received death threats from the local Taliban in the past.

### **Balochistan**

The conflict in Balochistan has a different background. Balochistan has a history of independent movements and struggle against what is seen as the federal government's suppression of the Baloch people and their ownership of the province's resources. Islamabad's unwillingness to cede political and economical autonomy to this resource rich, but most underdeveloped of Pakistan's provinces, has led to a series of uprisings by Baloch leaders and nationalists. The Pakistani military has tried to subdue the Baloch by force and a divide-and-rule policy but the suppression has generated support for the Pashtun Islamist parties and Deoband fundamentalists in their bid to counter secular Baloch and moderate Pashtuns forces.<sup>15</sup>

The Baloch local media faces threats, assaults, prospects of kidnappings and murder by Islamist militants as well as by the military and radical Baloch separatists. In 2008, two journalists were killed and five abducted. Twelve

<sup>15</sup> *Pakistan: The Forgotten Conflict in Balochistan*, International Crisis Group, 2007.

journalists were assaulted. Neither does the military shy from using brute force when dealing with the media. In December 2008 Behram Baluch, the bureau chief of the Urdu language Daily Intekhab, was attacked by Pakistani forces while reporting from the port city of Gwadar. In February 2008, Abdus Samad Chishti Mujahid who worked for "Akhbar-e-Jehan", an Urdu language weekly, was shot by an unknown assailant in Quetta city which is close to the Afghan border. A separatist organization, the Balochistan Liberation Army, is claimed to be responsible for his murder.

In general the media in Balochistan is victimized in a complex centre versus periphery/state versus ethnic group conflict. According to Mr. Mazhar Abbas, Secretary General of Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), the separatist leaders often blame newspapers for biased in favour of the government. They see, he says, the journalists as agents of the establishment.

The media safety is further aggravated by the presence of Afghan Taliban and militant groups based around Quetta in the northern Pashtun dominated parts of the province.

### **Major cities and other areas**

Even though Balochistan, FATA and NWFP have been the most dangerous, in the past years Punjab, Sindh, and the capital, Islamabad, that have seen the most incidents of killings, assault and abduction. 3 of the 12 murders and 27 of the 74 assaults in 2008 occurred in Punjab. This indicates that the conflict between militants versus the state's security forces is no longer confined to FATA and NWFP. But Punjab is also the most populated province in Pakistan with 80 million and with much media presence. In addition Lahore in Punjab along with Karachi in Sindh and Islamabad has been hotspots for political activism and unrest related to the elections and the lawyers' movement. Punjab is the base of large militant organisations such like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) that have carried out bombings and attacks. In general the deteriorating security situation affects the media in the cities such as Lahore and Islamabad. In 2009 two journalists were killed in Islamabad/Rawalpindi; in Lahore one journalist was killed and another is reported missing. In Karachi journalists have been harassed by political cadres during conflicts between of the ruling parties, PPP and in particular MQM.

### **Perpetrators and impunity**

The perpetrators behind the killings, assault, and coercion of journalists can come from the military, intelligence services, religious and secular militants, political cadres and criminal organisations. After the fall of the military regime and the rise of democratic rule, the tendency has shifted and abuses and threats on media workers now come from militants and extremists elements. At the same time, the media has also taken a much more critical approach to the militants since the Red Mosque incident in 2007, when the extremists were projected as dare devils and given credit in the press for confronting the military.

The bottom line is that it is unclear who the perpetrators behind the attacks on journalists really are. Assaults and killings are not investigated properly; the cases are very rarely solved. In reality attacks on the media are carried out with impunity.

### **Lack of safety for journalists**

Journalists rarely take proper safety precautions. In FATA and NWFP some senior journalists and local media workers have learned the art of 'navigating' in an environment of danger, and are experienced in balancing stories in order not to antagonise the different parties in a conflict. Experienced editors like,

Rahimullah Yousaf Zai at the News in Peshawar, are aware that a particular story can be dangerous to publish, and the situations which his journalists should try to avoid.

Some of journalists in these areas have received safety training from media support organisations, like Internews or PFUJ. But according to Rahimullah Yousaf Zai, few have had any safety training.

"It is a financial question. Journalists from foreign media are trained and equipped. There is no adequate security for local journalists, and most have not been given any equipment, such as bullet-proof jackets. Sometimes we say that the media owners have insured the camera, but have not insured the cameramen", Zai says.

According to Mr. Mazhar Abbas of PFUJ, little media safety training takes place in Pakistan at all. The universities do not conduct training that cover conflict related issues, and safety issues are not part of the curriculum.

Bombs are a big problem, he says. Two journalists died when they went too close to the scene of a bomb blast and a second bomb was detonated.<sup>16</sup> Also other deaths could have been hindered if journalists were trained in how to avoid getting caught in cross fire.

At Radio Power 99, which airs programmes that are critical of the extremists and militants, security measures are not part of the training agenda. Although the station receives threats, the owner and editor of this small radio station does not believe that he can take any particular steps to improve his own security, that of his employees or of his facilities.

Part of the problem is a lack of awareness among journalists with regard to the possible precaution that can be adopted to improve the safety. As Irfan Ashraf, a journalist at Dawn with extensive experience in working in conflict areas, notes, "Journalists are not very aware of the safety issues. But they must be. Many journalists in areas such as NWFP or FATA are not educated as journalists. They were shopkeepers or teachers, who have gone into journalism to make a living. They are not trained to confront the new situation with its new demands for safety".

He believes that media centres in Islamabad and Lahore, are too far away from the ground realities in these conflict areas, but the journalists feel pressured to report from these dangerous zones. Editor of the Dawn, Mr. Zaffar Abbas, stresses that the competition between the media houses is putting journalist more and more in harm's way.

The media houses hunt for breaking news prompts a competitive atmosphere that pushes journalist to take safety risks. The same media houses do little to train or equip the journalists to tackle security and safety issues. Mr. Mazhar Abbas of PFUJ stresses that media groups should carry out such training, and insure their employees as well. "So far no media houses have been able to organise safety training workshops for their employees. We have discussed this with owners associations. They are financially viable enough to organise these courses", he explains. Only two media houses have insured their employees.

At Nawa-e-Waqt a major national Urdu paper, Editor Javid Siddiq admits that the paper has not instituted life insurance policies for their employees so far. But after incidents where people have died, greater focus has been given to the issue. "Training of journalists in hostile environments has been largely ignored. But we would like to take steps to improve, but we do not

<sup>16</sup> Tahir Awan and Mohammad Imran were killed on 4 January 2009 in a second suicide bombing near the Government Polytechnic College Dera Ismail Khan in NWFP while they were reporting at the scene of the first blast.

have any experts in our organisation", says the editor. Nawa-e-Waqt has approximately 20 journalists working in the tribal areas.

When it comes to providing safety for its employees, Dawn is an exception. The newspaper has an internally developed risk assessment system. This assessment is done on specific cases although not on a day-to-day basis. No staff can travel to hostile areas without first taking proper safety precautions. Bullet-proof jackets, medical kits, basic first aid knowledge are compulsory, says Editor-in-Chief Abbas. Dawn also has a comprehensive insurance scheme in place for journalists working in risk areas.

On 1 April 2009, PFUJ, with support from the IFJ called on Pakistan's government and media owners to address the extreme dangers confronting media workers in the country's most troubled regions and towns. PFUJ fears that many journalists either will quit the profession or be forced to endure continuing threats if the Government and media owners do not take serious steps to ensure protection for media workers.

According to Abbas, the conflict in FATA demonstrates what happens when the situations deteriorates. "In the past the militants had an unwritten code not disturb the families. But now even families are not spared. Intolerance is increasing. Now they blow up their house and kill everyone. It's a war zone. Access is very limited. When access becomes so difficult, there is no way out, but just to abandon the area and stop from covering it."

According to Shabbir Anwer, Principal Information Officer at the Ministry of Information, a Victims Support Fund for journalists has been established. It has existed for 4 to 5 years, but the support has only recently has been institutionalised. Anwer stipulated that the support is dependent on the funds available. He was not able to give any indication of the amounts available for supporting journalists who have been attacked or the number of persons that have already received government support.

## 4.2 Media distortion

Media content in Pakistan is distorted most of all because of coercion, pressure, bribery and propaganda from outside actors. Radical Islamist influence on the media first manifested itself in the 1950s, when the government in Punjab used the media to promote radical views against the Ahmadis Muslims. The newspaper Nawa-e-Waqt was among the papers receiving money from the Punjab government to incite public anger against the Ahmadis.

Since then radical groups and political parties such as Jamaat-i-Islami, Sipahi-Sahaba and more recently the Pakistani Taliban, have infiltrated the mainstream media or strengthened and expanded their own media platform.

The radical organisations have grown strong enough to threaten violence with such leverage that the mainstream media often give in to their agenda. A survey by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies found that 69% of 16 journalists and editors thought that radicalisation was crippling freedom of expression. 50% found that the radical media had an impact on mainstream media, and 57% thought that the media was concealing facts about radicalisation.<sup>17</sup>

17 Muhammad Azam, *Radicalization and Media, Conflict and Peace Studies*, vol. 1 2008, PIPS, p. 37.

Coercion comes in different forms and affects the media in many ways. When journalists are in the field in NWFP, says an interviewee that prefers anonymity, "the militants use to follow journalists around to ensure that they are not talking to ordinary people. They are not honouring our independence."

This is a mild form of coercion. Radicals also threaten to kill journalists and their families, media owners and editors. According to Waseem Ahmed Shah, resident editor of the Dawn in Peshawar, journalists and media representatives live in fear, and therefore they censor their reporting so the public are not getting appropriate and balanced information.<sup>18</sup> The situation is very different from region to region. In the south and middle regions of the country radical influence is not as dominant as in the NWFP and FATA.

Part of the radical influence has also been generated by the media's own dynamics as media sees the conflict as hot news and follows it intensely. During the Red Mosque incident in 2007, the media was criticised for covering the event as an entertaining spectacle, and thereby for giving too much airtime to the radicals inside the mosque. Journalists are not sufficiently trained to have a critical eye, to sort out undocumented information and radical viewpoints when these are not relevant or necessary to the present story. Radical organisations seek media coverage because they want to spread their messages. The media is aware of this and, consequently, give the radicals extensive coverage to avoid their wrath.<sup>19</sup>

Part of the problem is that journalists, TV-anchors and reporters want to be popular and increase their programme's ratings by covering what they believe to be popular events and issues. This is true at both the large TV-stations as well as at small newspapers. The Urdu media however prefers to propagate radical views as they believe that their readers and viewers are conservative and more likely to appreciate Islamist agendas.

In addition to the radicalisation of mainstream media, the Islamists also have their own media. Pakistan has always had religious media, but in the 1980s a new type of radical Islamist media came into existence that was established in order to support the call for Jihad in Afghanistan and building support for Islamist movements. This has now become a parallel media industry.

The number of radical publications runs into hundreds. Six major jihadi outfits print more than 50 newspapers and magazines alone. The Urdu monthly, Mujalla Al-Dawa, has a circulation of approximately 100,000. It is published by the Jamaat ud-Dawaa, an organisation run by Lashkar-e-Taiba which has been label as a terrorist organisation. Lashkar-e-Taiba also publishes the weekly paper, Ghazwa, claiming a circulation of approximately 200,000.<sup>20</sup> The Islamist party Jamaat-i-Islami publishes 22 publications with a total circulation equalling that of a large mainstream Pakistani newspaper.

Many of these publications can be found in newsstands across the country; the banned publications are distributed around mosques, or delivered to subscribers' home address. Glorification of the Mujahedins and disparage of the US and its allies are the dominant features of these publications. They criticise the government of Pakistan; and encourage true believers to die for Islam. Militant activities are highlighted and glorified as are calls for the Umma to unite against the enemies of Islam. The jihadi and other radical organisations are also using electronic media. According to Altaf Ullah Khan, Professor in Mass Communication at Peshawar University, there are hundreds of underground Jihadi radios in FATA and NWFP.

Mullahs use the radio to glorification and to propagate their cause. But another very important use of the radios is to generate fear. Mullahs began using the radio to spread hate and fear a few years ago and realise that it is an effective weapons useful to instil terror in inhabitants of FATA and parts of NWFP who are cut off from the rest of the country and hostage to the Taliban and other militant groups. In Swat the notorious Mullah FM run by Maulvi Fazl Ullah broadcasts threats of attacks. These are always followed up with action

18 *Ibid*, p. 26.

19 *Ibid*, p. 25.

20 *Jihadi Print Media in Pakistan: An Overview*, Muhammad Amit Rana, *Conflict and Peaces Studies*, vol. 1. PIPS 2008.

the next day if the people named do not comply and capitulate to the verdicts announced on the radio. People regularly listen to the radio to hear whether they are named, or their business or profession banned. Children want to have a radio to hear whether their schools will be allowed to function or whether the age limit for girls to go out in public is further reduced.

Many community radio stations in Pakistan have fallen into the hands of radicals. One of the reasons for this is that PEMRA has not been willing to issue licenses for community or non-commercial FM radio operation. PEMRA has the authority to issue special licenses for community radios, but the special community radio licenses have not been put into effect on a large scale.

FATA is not under the jurisdiction of PEMRA. The central government has the authority to issue radio licenses in the tribal areas. Shabbir Anwer, Principal Information Officer at the Ministry of Information suggests that a system for issuing free frequencies for community radios could be established.

According to Altaf Ullah Khan, community radio could have a major impact in fostering social change, public healthcare, education and the spread of democracy. It is impossible to close down or jam the radical stations but providing access to an alternative and a voice for normality would be valuable.

The government, military and intelligence agencies also influence the media's agenda through coercion, bans and revoking of advertisement budgets. According to Samina Ahmed of the International Crisis Group, bribery is also used. "Prominent journalists are on the take and corrupt. But the journalist associations and union don't want to come to terms with it", she says.

### **4.3 Information vacuum**

Some areas in Pakistan suffer from a lack of access to information or only receive information that is one-sided and manipulated.

Many people living in areas of FATA and NWFP that have been living under the control of the Taliban for years. Mainstream newspapers are not available as many villages are difficult to access and selling publications can be dangerous. Since only very few people can afford television sets radio transmissions are the main sources of information and radical hate-speech and propaganda dominate the airwaves although some unbiased FM radios transmit in the region as well.

Radio Khyber, based in the Khyber Agency in FATA, is the only radio out of four services in the area that carry news programmes. News reports, according to a Radio Khyber employee, focus on local events and that only in a short descriptive bulletin format. Furthermore, Radio Khyber is the only source of information in the area that transmits in Pashtun.

Officially FATA is highly dependent on government-controlled media. Five radio stations owned by the state transmit to the region and the government does not issue radio licenses to private FM stations. But over 100 illegal stations run by Mullahs or religious extremist groups transmit in the area. Much of the population is ill informed about developments outside FATA, and ignorant about developments outside of Pakistan. Some radio stations outside of FATA do reach the area.

One of them, Radio Power 99, with a secondary FM transmitter in Ahmadabad in NWFP and a main transmitter in Islamabad, reaches large parts of NWFP, SWAT and parts of FATA. People often call in during its programmes

to tell their accounts of the conflict. Radio is a good model of how the air-waves can be used to contact people in the less developed, inaccessible and conflict affected parts of the country so they can express their opinions to a broader and urban audience.

Mobile phones are an important tool for connecting the population to the outside world. But mobiles are not yet common among the rural population.

In NWFP areas such as SWAT are suffering from an uncontested exposure to propaganda and erroneous information from the illegal radical radios. In other areas, the radical Islamist radios have been instrumental in campaigning against polio vaccines programmes because these are seen as being un-Islamic and the vaccines to be a cause of infertility. Educational and health-care information is either scarce or highly distorted in these regions.

Balochistan also lacks access to factual, balanced news but for a somewhat different reason. Balochistan accounts for 55 % of Pakistan's total landmass but with only 5% of the country's population. A large part of the population is concentrated in cities such as Quetta, but is also spread out in remote areas with little access to electricity or information technology.

Part of the problem is that the central government in Islamabad has tried to control information flow and to some extent has sought to keep the population in the dark. This policy was used in efforts to quell the Baloch separatist movement.

"PEMRA operates very closely with the state. Historically, the policy has been to keep the people in certain areas deprived of information. Balochistan has always been an area where this policy has been implemented", says Aurangzeb Khan, researcher and journalist, Journalist Department, Peshawar University. He is currently working on a report on the media situation in Balochistan.

There are only two to three private radios on air, and only one of them is based outside Quetta. Distances are huge; the region is underdeveloped; and people generally have only access to information in a local context, from BBC or Voice of America. In urban areas, cable TV is accessible, but in the Pashtun areas nearer the Afghan border, there is no cable or radio. The further from Quetta, says Khan, the weaker the media footprint.

According to Khan, efforts to improve the situations should focus on the print media. Acquiring radio licenses is hard, because more private radio is not in the national interest. Especially the northern Pashtun areas are anti-establishment, and that makes it more difficult to get license.

Women in Pakistan, particularly those who live in rural areas and in particular in the more conservative ones, are deprived of information. Women are, according to Tasneem Ahmar from Uks – Research, Resource and Publication Centre on Women and Media, often not allowed to watch TV or listen to radios. Because many women are illiterate, print media is not a source of information or news. It is, says Ahmar, the husbands that keep their wives in the dark, and changing this behaviour will require socio-economic change and creating of greater awareness among women of their rights.

## 4.4 Quality of journalism

### Quality of media and journalists

Pakistan has many excellent and professional journalists, who are able to produce high quality journalism under very difficult conditions. But the standard

of journalism varies widely from the best trained, educated and most professional journalist to the uneducated, untrained and unprofessional. Even the most professional journalists often work under conditions that make it hard to maintain a high journalistic standard.

The boom in electronic media has led to a surge in the number of journalists working in Pakistan in recent years. Some experienced TV-journalists have left the state broadcaster PTV to work at the new TV-channels, but the bulk of the new TV-reporters have come from the print media. TV-channels offer better salaries and the prospect of gaining celebrity status – attractive work places for a young journalist.

Sufficient training and education of TV-professionals have not accompanied the sudden boom of TV-channels. Major TV-channels and reporters are criticised for sensationalism and too heavy a focus on breaking news. News events are followed on minute-by-minute basis with reporters on the spot, but these contain little background information, analysis or follow up that could put events in a context. "Few journalists care about the quality of the news and have little knowledge of issues", says Farrukh Tanveer Malik, Senior Assignment Editor at Geo TV in Islamabad. "They just report on what is happening."

Commenting on the issue of the breaking news trend, Farrukh Tanveer Malik explains that owners insist on a focus on breaking news. "Stories are broken up into mini-stories, where insignificant details are blown out of proportion. 'Now the Chief Justice comes out of his house, now he sits in his car, now...!' This is not breaking news. We are forced to practice it."

Sensationalism is also prevalent in the political talk shows. Seeking to raise ratings by airing opinions presumed to be popular among their viewers, talk show moderators sometimes step outside their roles and become biased stakeholders in a debate.

According to Khalid Jameel, Bureau Chief of Ajj TV in Islamabad, five or six moderators on the TV channels dominate national debate. Acting as hosts to a group of retired army personnel and professional opinion makers, these programme anchors sometimes espouse ungrounded speculations and unfounded conspiracy theories.

To some extent this sensationalism can be seen as part of the growing pains of a recently liberalised and booming electronic media with ambitious journalists trying to learn to deal with the responsibilities of a powerful medium. Farrukh Tanveer Malik, at Geo News, thinks that too few journalists care about the quality of the news and have knowledge of the issues. He stresses the need for more training. In general TV journalists come from three backgrounds. Former print journalists that have gone into TV reporting, because of the much higher salaries, better working conditions and higher status; young journalists or newcomers that have begun their career in television. The third group are of the few seasoned television reporters, or senior newspaper journalists, who often fill the editorial and management positions or function as anchors.

Both in the electronic and print media, reporters, anchors and editors also unfounded speculations. Political talk shows on TV are crammed with guest analysts and retired army officers who often are biased and are not being challenged about their personal agendas. The same goes for the opinion pages in the newspapers, which some times print erroneous and untruthful manipulative content. This is often the case for foreign affairs news reporting. The Pakistani media's coverage of foreign affairs is limited, superficial and, at times, misleading.

Commercial interests, hidden political agendas, and attempts to coerce media are often the motivations behind airing biased information in newspaper and TV reports, interviews and talk shows. But journalists have so far not been able to unite and raise their concerns about the lack of objective, balanced journalism with the powerful media owners. Training and education is not part of the media budgets. "Few journalists do mid-career training or refreshment courses. They are trying to do their best, but are not up to mark", says Farrukh Tanveer Malik from Geo TV.

### **Creating a culture of training**

According to Zaffar Abbas, the editor at Dawn, training Pakistani journalists is a major challenge. An ad hoc, 'happy-go-lucky' approach seems to be commonplace, and few journalists or media houses are motivated to invest in training. Part of the problem is that investment in education or professional training is not rewarded in the workplace. "The need to have training has not been realized by the industry players. There is a need, but not felt. You have to make them feel the need. They feel it only when something happens. No journalist at Dawn had training on hostile environment journalism. Had they been trained some major past accidents would have been averted. Generally journalists are poorly paid, and just want to keep their jobs. But we can avoid 50 percent of injuries of journalists if they were trained. Training is becoming most essential element in conflict area coverage."

The lack of a training culture is partly due to the journalists' economic situation and the perceptions of the media owner. The prevailing attitude is that investment in training is not necessary when it is possible to gain on-the-job experience instead.

According to Najib Ahmed at Radio Power 99, training is left to the media outlets themselves. "The standards of journalist's professional skills are low. The universities do not teach practical skills, so I have to train my own radio reporters." He has arranged internships for some of his journalists with Deutsche Welle in Berlin. But he believes that more should be done on this front – both for a better understanding of foreign affairs, but also in order to raise professional standards.

Part of the problem is that typically journalists in Pakistan are educated at universities, which have less focus on practical, technical skills or field work. The Department of Journalism at University of Peshawar has a master degree curriculum comprised partly of training journalism, theoretic issues, reporting, mass communications and current affairs studies. It does include practical field work in its internship programs. But since the basic standards of journalism of the region are very low, the practical skills gained by students during field work are minimal.

"Looking at the environment we are working in, we need more practical experiences. The academic communication theories are important, but we need international assistance to bring a comprehensive balance between theory and practice. Especially to develop training modules like media laws, media management, media in conflict and conflict sensitive reporting. That assistance could be in the form of teaching material, HR, training of trainers, skills research material etc.", says Altaf Ullah Khan, who is working at one of the countries leading departments for journalism and mass communication.

At the other end of the spectrum, Dr Syed Abdul Siraj from the Department of Mass Communication, at Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad says that his university is a "poor man's university. The university has a BA distance ed-

education programme with 24,000 students enrolled every year. The curriculum is mostly reading textbooks and Urdu language training. Ten day workshops with journalists and media professionals are held at 35 study centres around the country", he explains.

The MA programme has 500 students and is conducted in English. The department also has a Ph.D, M.Phil and Post graduate programmes in electronic media, and offers internship programme for two months. It is also planning a television curriculum.

The standard of the university programmes are often below standard. Since the electronic media has opened up university graduates programs, the number of young people going for career journalism has exploded. The universities have responded, and at universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi alone there are 10 mass communication departments.

Dr. Siraj at Allama Iqbal Open University says his students often come from the lower middle or poor rural population. The fee for the graduate level programme is 1000 Rupees per semester. MA fees are 3000 Rupees per student per semester. The education of journalists has become big business, and the department has a turnover of 50 million PKR per year.

### **Code of Ethics and Self-regulation**

Pakistan's media organizations and journalist community at large oppose to the concept of Press Council, fearing this would make state intervention in regulating the media unavoidable. The journalist unions have purposely made the existing Press Council nullified by not appointing their representatives to the monitoring council.

Instead an independent self-regulatory mechanism is preferred. Some initiatives have been taken in this regard. The main issue with regard to forming and initiating such a process seems to be the lack of coordination and collaboration between the major organizations representing different stakeholders of the industry. There are at least three major codes of practice (or code of ethics) mainly by the PFUJ, Safma Pakistan and also by the Editors' Council. It is imperative that these organizations get together and work for a common Code that would be the basis for any self-regulatory mechanism.

In electronic media sector PEMRA stands for the regulatory mechanism through tough laws and procedures, which are now being subjected to review, according to PEMRA officials. In any situation, the regulation of television and radio is being done according to the telecommunication procedures, but the regulatory structures could be adopted through the consultation of the industry players. The main feature in this context is the Code of Conduct. The present Code of Conduct of PEMRA laws have no fundamental democratic features. It has had neither any industry input nor any other mode of consultation from media experts.

However, there seems to be some flexibility in the reviewing process of the PEMRA laws initiated the by the present government. The former Information Minister (who resigned in April 2009) at a meeting with the broadcast media heads has requested them to prepare a draft code of conduct for the perusal of PEMRA. However, during the meeting with PEMRA officials it was made to clear that the authorities would only 'consider' the draft with no obligations to recognize it.

## 4.5 Pakistan and Afghanistan: cross-border relations and news

Pakistan and Afghanistan have an interwoven history spanning the war against the Soviet Union in the 1980's and through the emergence of the Taliban in the 1990's. Pakistan's military doctrine which calls for a need to ensure strategic depth in Afghanistan have led to Pakistani interference in Afghan politics, to its support for the Taliban and at times to actions that antagonised the Karzai government.

Afghanistan has at times also interfered in Pakistani politics and has been accused of having supported Baloch separatism. Pakistan also feels that Afghanistan's refusal to recognise the Durand Line as the official international border between the two countries has indirectly stimulated Pashtun nationalism in Pakistan's border region. Pashtun leaders on both sides of the border do not recognise the Durand Line, because it separates Afghanistan's large ethnic Pashtun population (40 %) from the 25 million Pashtuns in Pakistan. The border issue is a concern for Pakistan with its history of Pashtun nationalism and separatist movements.

The relations between the Pashto people in Afghanistan and in NWFP and FATA are strong, and the Pashtuns have always crisscrossed the border to seek sanctuary whenever they faced threats in their home country.

In Pakistan however, there is a tendency to look upon Afghanistan with suspicion, and as a tool to counter India, and not as a neighbouring country with a population whose suffering can in part be blamed on Pakistan. In general, Pakistani media mainly concentrate on the presence of US and ISAF troops in Afghanistan, major political developments, and do not focus on the plight of the Afghan people. Afghanistan's problems with extremism are generally ignored, and journalists rarely cross the border to this neighbouring country to investigate and report. "There is no presence of Pakistani correspondents in Kabul. Media houses don't spend money on letting journalist go there. In stead they get news from international news agencies. The same is true for the Afghan media. They don't have any reporters in Pakistan, but rely on a few Pakistani reporters in Peshawar that work as stringers", says Rahimullah Yousaf Zai, editor in chief, The News in Peshawar.

The Pakistani journalists from the Pashtun belt – NWFP, FATA – have links with Afghan journalists, which often date back to the time of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. According to Mr. Yousaf Zai there are exchanges, but it is not very frequent, between Afghan and Pakistani journalists. "There have been joint workshops, joint trainings, between Pashtun journalist from both countries," he says. Cross border seminars have been organised by Intermedia with supported from the British Council. Friedrich Eberhart Stiftung has also organised such an exchange. "Most importantly, this brought them together for the first time, helped develop understanding, and build contacts. You start understanding each other. It has been very useful for young journalists to learn new language skills, and gain a better understanding."

In some cases, Pakistani journalists have started working for Afghan media, and vice versa. But according to Mr. Yousaf Zai there is still need for more trainings and more interchange.

The Pakistani journalists from the populated mainland, Punjab, Sindh, and the Islamabad area have very poor relationship with their Afghan counterparts. This is also the case for the journalists those are working at the large televisions stations.

According to Henning Effner from the Freidrich Eberhart Stiftung (FES) mainstream non-Pashtun Pakistani media representatives need to established relations with their Afghan counterparts. This recommendation was supported by a group of 12 senior Pakistani journalists, who went to Kabul with an exchange programme organised by the FES. After having meet with Afghan journalists and parliamentarians they called for more exchanges as these are them essential for creating mutual understanding between the two populations, and for improving inter-state relations.

A reciprocal visit by the Afghan journalists was also planned, but did not materialise. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung's next step in the exchange programme would have aimed at establishing institutional relations between media stakeholders in the two countries.

## 5 Recommendations

Pakistan is at a turning point in its history. After years of military rule, democracy once again has a chance to take stronger root. Unlike previously unsuccessful transitions to democracy, this transition is characterised by the presence of a newly liberalised and free mass media. This can prove to make a crucial, positive difference. Having had a significant role in the fall of the military rule and the resolution of the judicial crisis, Pakistani journalists have demonstrated an unprecedented ability to act as catalysts in civil society efforts to strengthen democracy. The media have indeed become one of the positive signs indicating a possible better future for the Pakistani state and citizens.

The country's troubled economy has however affected the Pakistani media sector during this present critical period in which state institutions are unstable and threatened by prevailing political conflicts and extremist insurgency. The safety and security of Pakistani journalists are at risk. Due to economic difficulties facing media outlets limited resources are available both to address the insurgencies and to come to terms with media's new roles and responsibilities in a democratic reality that follows years of military rule.

This IMS strategy focuses on initiatives that can support the media in assuming a role that prompts democratic reform, and in playing a positive role in bringing stability and security to this conflict-ridden country.

Building upon this IMS assessment of the Pakistani media and the challenges that they are confronted with in a conflict-related environment, support is recommended for four focus areas:

1. Safety and security for journalists and media workers
2. Pakistani-Afghan media relations
3. Information vacuum and media distortion in conflict regions
4. Quality of journalism

In the following recommendations, these four areas primarily address the media's present needs for tackling the ongoing conflict in Pakistan with a focus on the situation in the NWFP, FATA and Balochistan.

The recommendations are guidelines for the course of action that IMS will pursue in Pakistan. This said, only some of the recommendations will be addressed directly by IMS and implemented in collaboration with local and international partners. IMS therefore hopes that the recommendations can also serve as inspiration and guidance for others engaged in supporting the media and journalists in Pakistan.

### 5.1 Safety and security for journalists and media workers

#### Background and justification

Over the past couple of years Pakistan has become one the world's most dangerous countries for journalists to work in. The security and safety situation in FATA and NWFP are the most grievous. A number of safety training

courses have been organised for journalists working in these two regions by media support organisations during the past couple of years. Unfortunately, in other parts of the country where media are targeted few journalists have had safety training.

To a large extent safety-training courses in the past have taken place on an ad-hoc basis without much involvement of the media houses themselves. Media outlets and their owners have in general not seen employee safety to be their responsibility.

Providing journalists with better security and improving their capacity to counter threats and coercion by authorities, powerful political groups and individuals, the army and other security services as well as the agencies and extremists, is essential in order to secure a free flow of information. This exchange of information is crucial for stimulating knowledge-based national dialogue and debate, which again is vital for strengthening democratic practices.

Safety and security for journalists and media workers are essential preconditions required if Pakistani media is to deliver balanced and nuanced coverage of the current insurgency. News and analyses about the effects of violent militant actions against state institutions and security forces, the nature of the insurgents' policies and reasoning for repression of civil rights, are essential for the formation of fact-based and qualified public opinion. Information from the conflict-affected areas is crucial for forming a national consensus in support of the workable policies needed to counter threats towards the population and the state. The media's own ability to withstand threats and coercion is also essential in efforts to counter attempts to radicalise or sideline mainstream media.

### **Strategic considerations**

Clearly journalists and media workers will continue to be in harms way for some time and is all the more reason why comprehensive, sustainable and cost-effective measures need to be taken to provide adequate safety and protection measures with a medium-term perspective. Comprehensive safety mechanisms, which at the same time are both proactive and reactive, need to be established.

Specifically, a set of four safety mechanisms should be implemented: Monitoring and documentation of violations; capacity building in risk awareness and safety preparedness; risk response mechanisms; and advocacy and lobbying activities.

### **Monitoring**

Credible and detailed context-based monitoring of media related violence and other forms of harassment is a primary task. This data is central for preparing tailor-made prevention and protection procedures; and for compilation of comprehensive case data needed in advocacy efforts aimed at increasing public and governmental support for journalists and other media workers.

Currently, there are very few organisations that monitor media safety in Pakistan. Some organisations do credible, accurate monitoring but only on a yearly basis. Such an interval is of course too long to provide the continuous overview needed for swift reactions or proactive measures in due time if a situation deteriorates.

Recommended actions are:

1. Enhance the existing monitoring mechanisms, based upon a detailed assessment of current efforts. Improvements should focus on ensuring that field monitoring from the high-risk regions is reliable, detailed and timely. Accuracy and factual case-by-case monitoring should be linked to a system that can collate and process data and generate overviews and trends. Use of lessons learned, and cooperation with organisations from countries such as Afghanistan (where the conflict has some similarities with Pakistan) and Colombia (where advanced monitoring systems have been developed and are operating with success) can provide useful insights on how to proceed. Two organisations conducting media risk monitoring are Intermedia, which publishes a yearly report, and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, which lists incidents reported by journalists on an ad-hoc basis. Cooperation with one or both of these organisations could be a feasible approach for boosting monitoring capacity.
2. Ensure that monitoring systems are able to disseminate information and analysis for multiple purposes including: immediate response in support of journalists and media workers at risk; development of contextualised risk analysis needed for accurate design and improvement of response mechanisms; and provision of data for initiatives that argue for increased engagement in protection and safety of journalists by media outlet owners and government institutions.

### **Capacity building in Risk Awareness and Conflict Sensitive Journalism**

Awareness and knowledge among journalists and media workers of how to take preventive measures in situations of risk are central; training and other forms of capacity building need to be implemented. Some activities in this area have already taken place, although with an ad-hoc approach dealing with immediate needs. Risk awareness training should be implemented in tandem with training in conflict sensitive journalism that teaches journalistic tools for more balanced and conflict-neutral reporting. This curriculum will strengthen the journalist's ability to function as a well-balanced reporter able to see beyond his/her own vested interests – thereby minimising risks of harassment and attacks from conflicting parties.

Recommended actions are:

1. Promote a process in Pakistan in which national and international organisations involved in risk awareness training and capacity building can share information and know-how, coordinate and develop joint strategies.
2. Develop medium-term comprehensive and contextualised training and capacity building programmes that address the areas most in need. The training-of-trainers approach or other similar measures which strengthen and sustain local capacity should be given preference.
3. Elaborate contextualised manuals for risk awareness and conflict-sensitive journalism.
4. Increase risk awareness among editors and media owners; encourage and assist them in incorporating procedures that lead to better practices on safety and security issues; and institutionalise safety measures so these become daily routines. Furthermore, media outlets should be encouraged to procure flak jackets and other protective equipment that can augment the safety of media workers in the field.

**Risk response mechanisms**

In order to be able to react rapidly to threats and sudden risks a mechanism should be established, which can assist journalists and media workers in danger. Due to the size of the country and the specific characteristics of the different regions, safety mechanisms need to be regionally based, while an overall coordination at national level is pursued. National initiatives should be anchored within existing organisations or between networks or consortiums of organisations.

The mechanism should involve the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists as well as the local journalist unions – such as the Tribal Union of Journalists in FATA – or carefully selected influential members of the local media communities.

Recommended actions are:

1. Establish regionally based safety funds, which can provide financial and other forms of support for journalists and media workers that need to relocate to a safer region for some time, or otherwise need assistance. Establishment of safe houses also falls within the mandate of the safety funds. As part of this setup, a hotline system should be established, where sudden threats or attacks can be reported and appropriate action taken to provide assistance.

**Advocacy and lobby**

In Resolution 1738 (2006), the Security Council urges the States to “prevent violations of international humanitarian law against civilians, including journalists, media professionals and associated personnel”. Further, the resolution “emphasizes the responsibility of States to comply with the relevant obligations under international law to end impunity and to prosecute those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law” and “urges all parties involved in situations of armed conflict to respect the professional independence and rights of journalists, media professionals and associated personnel as civilians”.

This resolution, as well as Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, clearly underlines the responsibilities of the States, as well as other actors, to ensure that journalists and other media workers are protected and can carry out their work unhindered. These instruments serve as the platform from which advocacy and lobby efforts promoting safety and protection of Pakistani journalists and media workers can take place.

Recommended actions are:

1. Establish a dialogue with government institutions, including the Ministry of Information; Ministry of Security; the military authorities; and the security authorities and police in order to increase awareness and understanding of the role of journalists and media in society.
2. Organise international missions of media rights organisations to Pakistan. Coordinated with local stakeholders, these organisations can help advocate for safety of journalists with government authorities and other relevant actors. One matter that this advocacy work could focus on is the enhancement of the Ministry of Information's media safety fund .

## 5.2 Pakistani-Afghan media relations

### Background and justification

The conflict in western Pakistan cannot be separated from the conflict in Afghanistan. Pakistani security considerations and unresolved border issues hinder the two countries from forming closer cooperation and a united front against the extremist threat. Neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan or the international community can tackle this threat separately. The underlying political issues and security matters must be addressed within a forum of shared understanding if long-term peace and stability are to come to the region.

Media coverage in Pakistan and Afghanistan lacks a regional platform for discourse; reporting from the neighbour country is often erroneous and lacking balance. Pakistani media does not cover how the conflict with the Taliban affects the Afghan population; and in general in Pakistan there is a sense of denial of how its policies have led to atrocities in Afghanistan.

Attempts to establish closer cooperation among Afghan-Pakistani political stakeholders so they could jointly address the dual conflicts are not reflected or encouraged by the Pakistani mainstream media. The non-Pashto Pakistani media's relations with Afghan media and coverage of the effects of the conflict in Afghanistan are few; face-to-face exchange of views and ideas between journalists are rare. Part of the reason is simply a lack of financial resources; major Pakistani media house do not prioritise stationing correspondents in Afghanistan. The Pashtun Pakistani media however does have cross-border links, and individual journalists also have ethnically-based contacts with counterparts in Afghanistan.

Strengthened relations between Pakistani and Afghan journalists and media houses could pave the way for improved coverage of the conflict dynamics in the region and help address the two countries' mutual issues and disputes in a more balanced manner.

### Strategic considerations

Initiatives for strengthened relations and cooperation between media should build upon existing know-how, such as the media-dialogue process between Pakistan and Afghanistan organised by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

The existing links between Pashtun Pakistan-Afghan media can potentially serve as a vehicle for building broader contacts between media stakeholders in the two countries that include the non-Pashtun media.

Media houses invited to take part in the dialogue process should include both local/regional media working from the border areas, as well as the national media icons that can influence opinion-making in both countries.

The dialogue process should be guided by an external international actor, with no vested interests in the ongoing conflict and who is perceived as a credible broker by the media sectors in both countries.

Specifically, efforts to strengthening Pakistani-Afghan media contacts should include three project activities: dialogue forums, twinning and team reporting.

### Dialogue Forums

An important first step will be to promote a strengthened dialogue between the media community in the two countries.

Recommended actions are:

1. Organise media content monitoring and perform interviews with editors and senior journalists, which can provide systematic and precise information on the coverage of Pakistan in Afghan media and vice versa, and data on editorial and journalistic choices and priorities.
2. Use the monitoring results and interviews as input in a forum where decision-makers and role-models from leading media in both countries are brought together to discuss how to enhance regional discourse and more balanced cross-border coverage. The forums – which could be conceptualised as a journalist jirga for esteemed journalists and editors – should be facilitated by an external actor thus signifying the local ownership of the process. The aim of the forum would be to build momentum promoting regional discourse, create and consolidate inter-media relations, and increase awareness of the importance of improved Afghan-Pakistani media relations.
3. The outcome of the forums cannot be foreseen, but will provide a consensus of what further steps are feasible and whether the establishment of institutions of more permanent character should be considered; for example, a Pakistan-Afghan media ombudsman with focus on regional coverage. The dialogue forums can also address feasibility of initiating twinning and team reporting activities.

### **Twinning**

Building more institutional relations between media houses through the exchange and cooperation of media professionals on reporting, editorial and management levels has proven to be a successful method for increasing mutual understanding. The basic premise behind twinning is that it is a mutual learning process in which both sides can make professional gains.

Through the twinning methodology, a levelled playing field is created in which journalists enjoy both the role as a "host" or local expert as well as that of the "visitor". Furthermore, by benefiting from the knowledge, insight and network of their counterpart, paired journalists can increase their understanding of the work methods of each other's country, its politics and cultural implications thereby enriching later media output.

The twinning activities should be tied closely to needs for increased cross-border understanding.

Recommended actions are:

1. Establish a pilot phase in which a few carefully selected media institutions in Afghanistan and Pakistan are invited to take part in a twinning process. Through a joint evaluation individual participants are paired with counterparts in appropriate media outlets in the neighbouring country.
2. Evaluation of the results of the pilot phase, to see if there are grounds for continuation or enlargement of the twinning programme to include a larger group of media outlets should be invited to participate in the programme.

### **Team-reporting**

This project form is a frequently used exercise that can inspire journalists and other media workers to carry out collaborative reporting and build understanding between media professionals from different ethnic groups or

with different political observations. Through team-reporting exercises, discussions and development of joint work, stereotypes and negatively charged images are eroded and replaced with an increasing nuance awareness and understanding of the counterpart.

Recommended actions are:

1. Develop one or two team-reporting exercises, where journalists and other media workers such as photographers or cartoonists from both countries are mixed across nationalities and assigned to produce news and feature stories related to cross-border issues with a particular focus on an issue connected to the ongoing conflict.
2. Based upon experiences from the exercises, a more long-term process of cross-border team reporting can be established. Project support can be organised in a number of ways. One avenue could be to use the so-called SCOOP model.<sup>21</sup> In this model – which has been successfully applied in Eastern Europe and the Causasus and later in an adapted version in the Arab World –journalists are provided with small grants that enable them to carry out more in-depth reporting on specific topics.

The financial support is coupled with editorial mentoring and legal support. An applied SCOOP model would establish a fund managed jointly by Afghan-Pakistan actors. The fund would provide grants and technical support to selected joint Afghan-Pakistan applications that intend to cover cross-border and conflict related issues. Such bi-national team reporting applications can be supplemented with support to individual journalists or media workers, who wish to do in-depth coverage of these issues.

## 5.3 Information vacuum and media distortion in conflict regions

### Background and justification

Areas such as FATA, NWFP and Balochistan are in an information vacuum. In FATA and NWFP the lack of information has increased during the past couple of years when the conflict between the government, the army and the Pakistani Taliban and militants intensified. The situation is most critical in the areas the Taliban have attempted to control. In many of these, the militants have established their own radical media outlets.

There are no local media outlets in FATA, and outside penetration is difficult for Pakistani media, although some FM radios and state TV do reach the area. Media support organisations also have a hard time stationing staff in the region.

In Balochistan the information vacuum is not new but is rather the result of long term underdevelopment and a long-term policy on behalf central government. Access to especially the northern areas of Balochistan is not easy, but possible. In the other parts of Balochistan, where the information vacuum is significant, access also is possible, but distances are long and facilities are sparse.

The militants' strategic aims are to destroy social-economic infrastructure by eliminating any critical opposition and creating a climate of fear and uncertainty. An element of this strategy is to deprive rural populations of information from the outside world; substituting factual, balanced information with hate speech and propaganda. Providing information to the population in the

<sup>21</sup> For further information on SCOOP, see [www.im-s.dk/node/97](http://www.im-s.dk/node/97)

areas that receives none, or only receives propaganda and radicalised information, is therefore important if further radicalisation of the population is to be hindered. Better access to information will also support socio-economic progress in underdeveloped areas.

### **Strategic considerations**

In those areas of FATA and NWFP that are controlled by, or under threat from militant groups, it is difficult to establish media outlets that carry news and detailed information of military or political developments that can be deemed as critical towards the army or the militants. Meanwhile, community-based media outlets that deal with more neutral topics such as health-care, education and social issues could be established or supported without provoking the militants or the security forces. Such efforts can be combined with boosting the transmission capacity of existing radios based outside these regions. Different strands of alternative communication; for example, exploring potentials within new information technology, as well as building upon different forms of traditional communication in these areas can be ways forward. Parallel to such efforts, it is important to build knowledge and awareness of the problem of radicalisation and hinder that the radical discourse spreads into non-militant media.

The information vacuum in Balochistan can be addressed with more standard media programmes, such as establishing community radios, while taking into consideration that this region also is influenced by militant groups.

Specifically, activities targeting the information vacuum and media distortion should work within three areas: raising awareness of radicalisation of media; establishing and strengthening radio outlets; and exploring strengthening information and communication through new and traditional media.

### **Raising awareness on radicalisation of media**

Although increased information on, and analysis of, the radicalisation of media is taking place, for example by the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), it is important to glean further understanding of this phenomenon as well as ensure that this data and research is passed on to the media community.

Recommended actions are:

1. Monitoring of media content and other forms of analysis of the radicalised media should be developed and serve as a basis for awareness raising initiatives among non-radical media. This study should include identification of which media are used for transmitting radical content and analysing radio, television and print media, as well as the use of mobile technology and internet-based media. Discussions on this matter could both seek to target academics as well as media professionals, especially those at the editorial level.

### **Establishing and strengthening radio outlets**

Radio is an obvious choice for addressing needs for improved information and news as it has a potential for increased outreach to the urban and rural populations in NWFP, FATA and Balochistan. Commercial and community radio outlets should both be considered as each of these have particular strengths.

Recommended actions are:

1. Support for existing community radios and the establishment of additional stations in NWFP, FATA and Balochistan is recommended. In FATA, which has no local media outlets, this would provide a voice for the local

population. The first step in establishing community radios in FATA, where PEMRA does not have authority, would require approval from the information ministry or the governor of FATA. In NWFP and Balochistan it will be necessary to lobby PEMRA for licences. A number of initiatives to establish community outlets are already taking place. Initially, an overview of ongoing initiatives will be necessary in order to identify areas and needs not as yet addressed. Furthermore, collation of lessons learned and a discussion of these among the involved stakeholders is recommended.

2. Strengthening of the existing media, both in terms of geographical reach in particular areas, and in terms of editorial content, should be considered. Today, some FM radios that reach the areas are radicalised media. Other areas fully lacking access to radio. A greater reach of these media should be supported. Support is also recommended for improvement of these outlets' news and editorial capacity where needed.

### **New media and traditional media**

On an overall level, the use of new media platforms, such as mobile phone technology and internet platforms, are increasing in Pakistan, especially among the young. The IMS mission did not establish a very concise picture of the distribution and use of these technologies in NWFP, FATA or Balochistan, but it is assumed that mobile phone use is less widespread than in other regions, and that segments of the population in these areas, such as women, have less access to this technology. Nevertheless, there is an obviously potential here, and it is important to explore options. Likewise, more traditional forums for communication in communities, such as Friday-prayer meetings and informal group gathering are similarly important to look into as information and communication channels.

Recommended actions are:

1. The variety of options that exist for using mobile technology as an information and communication tools should be explored. A particular focus should be to strengthening the use of this channel among women, who are often deprived of access to information. A first step would be to investigate communications forms in these communities, and to map the existing use of this and other technologies as well as traditional forms of communication in use.
2. Based on these research findings, options for communication programmes can be developed. Combinations of new and traditional forms of communication can be explored. When developing strategies for use of this technology, synergies should be explored between commercial enterprises, media development organisations, and local community based organisations.

## **5.4 Quality of journalism**

### **Background and justification**

The quality of Pakistani journalism is characterised as being very uneven with a large span from top to bottom. The quality of journalism remains comparatively poor, especially in the vernacular press. Professionalism, quality reporting and analysis are primarily found in major TV-stations news programming, the English language press, and in major Urdu newspapers.

Sensationalism sometimes substitutes for accurate, balanced reporting. Reporting practices that focus on breaking news – reporting on spectacular and dramatic political development minute by minute with no background or

contextual references – is prioritised. When sensationalism takes over, the media can inadvertently and implicitly end up transmitting radical propaganda and heavily biased perspectives that promote political agendas that leave little room for objectivity. Prominent anchors on political talkshows on TV-channels often end up being political stakeholders divulging accusations that are not rooted in facts rather than providing in-depth coverage of political or socio-economic affairs.

Especially foreign affairs coverage and the relationship to the neighbouring countries are marked by stereotyped reporting with little scrutiny of Pakistan's own problematic role. Pakistani media is often either in a state of denial or under pressure, and political or military circles seldom highlight topics that criticise government or army policies.

Investigative journalism is rare, just as is reporting on social issues, gender issues and the life of the average Pakistani. Journalism investigations that uncover corruption, breaches of human or minority rights, or the effects that misuse of political power has on the individual, are very rarely done.

### **Strategic considerations**

If the media is to take on its role as the watchdog of the young Pakistani democracy scrutinising politicians and state apparatus, more in-depth and investigative journalism is needed. Further, more in-depth, investigative and balanced reporting on regional topics could also help Pakistanis acquire a more nuanced perception of regional politics.

Improved quality in journalism with less focus on sensationalism would leave less room for radical opinions and propaganda from extremists or politicians to flourish without balanced counter arguments and factual news. The media can play a decisive role in the creation of a viable democracy, but if its tendencies to resort to superficiality and sensationalism are not curbed it could lose its legitimacy. Obviously, it is important to factor in the commercial aspects of the use of sensationalism, which is seen as a very important feature in the competition between media outlets. Resistance from media outlets to decrease the use of sensationalism can be expected.

Specifically, the enhancement of the quality of journalism could be addressed within two areas: promotion of investigative reporting and strengthening of self-regulation.

### **Promoting investigative journalism**

The promotion of investigative journalism has multiple purposes. It will improve journalists' capacity to produce in-depth stories on, for example, abuse of power, corruption and other matters and keeping those in power accountable and contribute to the strengthening of democracy. Further, by supporting training in investigative skills and promoting investigative reporting, accomplished investigative journalists can potentially serve as role models for their peers in the media community.

Recommended actions are:

1. Investigative journalism should be strengthened through training and through funding that can subsidise journalists in undertaking larger investigative projects. Training in investigative journalism should be offered in cooperation with local partners, for example Peshawar University. Pakistan and international specialists in investigative journalism should hold trainings sessions in close cooperation with local specialists in order to establish relations and build local capacity.

2. Capacity-building should be coordinated with the establishment of a fund for investigative journalism, which provides scholarships for concrete investigative projects that focus on issues otherwise not covered in mainstream. Possible issues could be Pakistan-Afghan relations, minorities, humanitarian developments, women rights, corruption or social issues. It is important that journalists find the project appealing, not only because of the funding available, but also because the training would improve the journalist's career possibilities.

### **Strengthening self-regulation**

Self-regulatory mechanisms can work as vehicles for curbing sensationalism and improving standards for Pakistani journalism. The ownership to the process to strengthen self-regulation from media outlets must be given to representatives of editorial and journalist staffs, media associations and journalist and media workers unions/associations and civil society if the process is to have legitimacy and success. Experience from a number of countries shows that self-regulation benefits from the involvement of civil society actors, representing the interests from sectors in society that are consumers and users of media.

Focus should be on the establishment of a system of self-regulation within the print media as an initial step. Such an initiative on the print media would be a good eye-opener for the broadcast media since it needs efforts to unite the players in different layers within the broadcast industry and also to build bridges between the media stations themselves.

Recommended actions are:

1. Launch an awareness campaign through open debates and lobbying on the benefits and advantages of the self-regulation mechanism among the different layers of the industry. This should specifically focus on lobbying the media owners and the editors since consensus does already exist among the journalist community at large. Financial advantages for the owners over legal expenses in a non-costly self-regulatory mechanism would be a major attraction to the media ownership.
2. Promote unity between the media actors for a common cause. Inter-organizational activities and other similar activities could be contributing factors to the move. A major conference on self-regulation in Pakistan that would bring the different players under one umbrella and one theme would be another option.
3. Expose the key players to regional/international best practices on self-regulation. Such endeavours should be inclusive and collective. These initiatives will not only expose the Pakistani key media players of different layers to the experiences of other systems, but also create understanding among themselves.

## 6 Annexes

### 6.1 List of interviewees

AAJ TV

Khalid Jameel, Bureau Chief

Nusrat Javeed, Director Current Affairs

Muhammad Mushtaque Siddiqi, Director News Coordination Planning

Allama Iqbal Open University, Departement of Mass Communication

Syed Abdul Siraj, Chairman/Associate Professor

Daily Nawa-e-Waqt

Javed Siddiq, Editor

Dawn, Group of Newspapers

Zaffar Abbas, Resident Editor

Freidrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)

Henning Effner, Country Director

Abdul Qadir, Programme Coordinator

Geo TV

Farrukh Tanveer Malik, Senior Assignment Editor

International Crisis Group

Samina Ahmen, Project Director

International Federation of Journalists – Pakistan, (IFJ)

Muhammad Farouk, Project Coordinator

Internews

Adnan Rehmat, Country Director

Matiullah Jan, Consultant

Ministry of Information

Shabbir Anwer, Principal Information Officer

National Press Club

Tariq Mehmood, President

Online, International News Network

Aneela Riazuddin, News Editor

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA)

Dr. Abdul Jabbar, Executive Member

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ)

Mazhar Abbas, Secretary-General, Islamabad

Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS)  
Muhammad Amir Rana, Director  
Muhammad Azam, Associate Editor PIPS Research Journal  
Safdar Hussain, Coordinator, Conflict and Security Section  
Sajjad Azhar, Media and Event Coordinator

Peshawar University, Departement of Mass Communication and Journalism,  
Altaf Ullah Khan, Assistant Professor  
Aurangzeb Khan, researcher and journalist

Radio Power 99  
Najib Ahmed, Director and Editor

South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA)  
Nusrat Javeed, Pakistan Chapter President  
Mustansar Javed, General Secretary

The News, Peshawar  
Rahimullah Yousaf Zai, Editor in Chief

Uks – Research, Resource and Publication Centre on Women and Media  
Tasneem Ahmar, Director

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