



REUTERS
INSTITUTE for the
STUDY of
JOURNALISM

Caught between five extremes: Reporting Pakistan

Razeshta Sethna

Thomson Reuters Fellow
Hilary and Trinity Terms 2015

Acknowledgements

The opportunity to learn at the University of Oxford is invaluable. I would like to thank the Thomson Reuters Foundation for their generosity, interest and faith, without which this research paper would not have been possible. Your excellence, commitment and passion to develop the best practices in journalism have contributed to the very best experience of my professional and academic life.

My supervisor, Caroline Lees has been more than generous with her time and patience, and while doing so shown huge amounts of curiosity for my difficult world. Thank you, Caroline. You always make it appear easy to accomplish the most difficult of tasks. I would also like to thank James Painter and David Levy for their interest and encouragement; for making the Institute an oasis of diversity in the midst of a traditional center of learning. And a thank you to the wonderful Reuters staff for ensuring my two terms at Oxford were exciting, stimulating, and packed with excellent food.

This study would not have been possible without the many conversations with writers, editors and reporters; and the stories told by brave, committed journalists and friends who agreed to be interviewed; sometimes over cups of coffee and cake; sometimes over crackling connections on Skype and Facetime. Thank you, Ayesha Azfar and Bahzad. Thank you, Hameed Haroon and Nilofer. Not just for your interest in showing me the importance of debate, reading just about all I can get my hands on, but with trusting me and teaching me. Without the editors who always threw me into the deep end and continue to do so, I would never love what I live to do – Owais Tohid and Abbas Nasir, you never stopped pushing and encouraging us.

I hope Pakistan will progress with tolerance and wisdom, and crush the forces that threaten its younger generation and when that happens – or as that happens – the media will tell the important, lesser-told stories with independence and responsibility to inspire a new generation of chroniclers.

I dedicate this writing to two inspirational women, my Mother and my Grandmother.

“I received threats from the Military Intelligence (MI) when I was in Pakistan. I have also received threats through anonymous callers who had warned me against writing against the army’s actions in Balochistan. ... Those who reach out to you; keep coming to you again and again on different occasions. ... There is a lot of psychological pressure involved in these tactics.

I have never been picked up by ‘unknown people’. Every time they picked me, they clearly identified themselves as personnel of the Military Intelligence. They took me to Quetta Cantonment area ... It was not ‘picking up’ in the kidnapping style. They would tell me in advance that they had to take me to the ‘cantonment’ for investigation. I did not want to go with them but there was no way I could say no. I had to agree to go with them. They would come outside Quetta Press Club, park at a corner and call me on the phone to go with them silently without letting anyone know where I was going and with whom I was going. They were scary encounters. I would call all those episodes as involuntary meetings.” – Baluch journalist living in exile

“We are caught between the devil and deep blue sea. ... Journalists in Pakistan have had no prior experience of conflict reporting which has caused the deaths of several and this is ongoing. Every single reporter works in a conflict zone in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. Islamabad is not safe anymore as well.” -- Reporter, Baluchistan

“...What worried me was something else. I got a call from someone, an ex-army man and he told me he lives in Lahore, and who had serious reservations about our objections to death penalty. I didn’t say much but listened. He said that we were not supporting it and that was going against the tenets of the majority faith. I just listened, and it was that kind of tone when they try to intimidate you.” – Senior editor, Karachi

“Sometimes it’s not threats that define your editorial policy but the fear of such threats.” - Desk editor, Karachi

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	6
1.1 Pakistan's war on the media	
1.2 Attacks on journalists	
1.3 Method	
2. The historical relationship between the media and the state	17
2.1 The first martial law under General Ayub Khan (1958-69)	
2.2 The beginnings of media repression	
2.3 How the 'Press Advice' system has endured	
2.4 Misreporting the wars with India	
2.5 Media support for Bhutto in the 1970s	
2.6 Islamization and media censorship under Zia: 1978-88	
3 General Pervez Musharraf's 'Enlightened Moderation': Post-2001	27
3.1 Tenuous relations: the state and the media in 2007	
3.2 State of emergency: 2007	
3.3 Beginning of the end: Live coverage brings down Musharraf, 2007-09	
3.4 The Geo TV case: Baluchistan in Karachi	
3.5 Print censorship: Publishing blank newspaper pages	
3.6 Under pressure from the army: Military-media relations after August 2014	
3.7 Detained by the intelligence services: January 2015	
4 The MQM and the Karachi media	46
4.1 Losing reluctant media patrons: 1980-2015	
4.2 Fear and compliance: terrorizing the media, 1990s- present	
5 The militant in the media	53
5.1 State complicity: Promoting an Islamist national discourse	
5.2 Threatened by the Taliban: <i>Fatwas</i> , attacks and hit-lists	
5.3 Detained by the Taliban in Mohmand Agency: 2008	
5.4 Deadly nexus: The Taliban, sectarian groups and their Islamist 'handlers'	

6. Reporting AF-Pak	61
6.1 Focus on FATA: the militant backyard after 2001	
6.2 Tribal journalism: lack of security and training	
6.3 From Waziristan to Islamabad: targeted and harassed, February 2015	
6.4 Balochistan: A cemetery for journalists telling the truth	
7. Postscript: Why the chroniclers of history are killed	70
7.1 Recommendations	
Acronyms	76
Appendix: Survey Questionnaire	79
Bibliography	81

1. Introduction

1.1 Pakistan's war on the media

*It can be said that a country gets the kind of press it deserves. If the politics of a country is dirty, the country's press cannot remain immune from it.*¹

The fortified media offices of *Dawn*, Pakistan's first English-language newspaper have a history entwined with pre-Partition India. The founder of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, began publishing *Dawn* as a weekly from New Delhi in October 1942, to represent the view of Hindustan's Muslims. Most Fridays the thoroughfare on which the *Dawn Group's* Karachi offices are located is blocked because the chief minister's colonial-styled residence is in close proximity.² Armed security guards, crouched under the barrel of a machine gun behind sandbags, are a familiar sight in the car park for *Dawn's* employees. Fridays are more dangerous, requiring greater security as police cordon off main roads. Extremist groups with a sectarian agenda are more likely to attack mosques when the city takes a few hours off for afternoon prayers.

In 2008 and 2009 I was a presenter for *Dawn TV*. We worked to a 24/7 news cycle to whet the nation's appetite for news as it got up and went to bed. An ordinary weekday prime-time news programme competed for ratings with other private channels. We were reminded to present the facts; not polish them to boost the channel's ratings. Each Friday for months, I reported with my colleagues on Taliban and sectarian attacks on churches, Shia *imambargahs* (a congregation hall for Shia commemoration services) Sufi shrines, the police, crowded markets, military installations and government infrastructure.

There was no respite from the horror of reporting on body counts, innards strewn on the roads, hands stuck on electricity poles after bombs had exploded.

¹ Report of the Press Commission, Government of Pakistan, 1954, Karachi, p 181

² The Dawn Media Group publishes Pakistan's oldest English-language newspaper, *Dawn*; the monthly *Herald*, a current affairs magazine; *Spider*, an Internet magazine and *Aurora*, a bi-monthly, marketing and advertising magazine. The Group also owns a 24/7 news channel in Urdu since 2010, which was previously an English-language channel that was launched in 2007; and operates an FM radio channel .

Injured civilians were taken to hospital emergency units which were also then attacked, even as the wounded were being treated. Such scenes of carnage were a reminder of the lack of state security and protection for ordinary citizens increasingly impacted by violent attacks, which have since become even worse.

*

The beginning of the War on Terror (October 2001) was a turning point for Pakistan's media. General Pervez Musharraf's regime (1999-2008) had allowed the proliferation of the private broadcast media by issuing new media licenses. Cable operators were authorised to broadcast channels by the Pakistan Electronic Media Authority (PEMRA).³ Before Musharraf came to power, there had been no private satellite television in Pakistan.

The results were revolutionary for a society that had shut itself off from the world for so long and was ravenous for local and international news and entertainment. For the first time in the history of Pakistani TV, viewers were able to access content that was previously unavailable on state-run TV. Programming was a diverse blend, with live news, satire, fashion TV, soap operas and music.

The media also started reporting on religious conflicts, criminal networks, the War on Terror in Afghanistan, drone attacks in the country's north-west and the role of Pakistan's intelligence agencies. This, as well as reporting of the 2008 general election, quickly attracted criticism from Musharraf's government and other groups.

Journalists, often inexperienced and untrained, were suddenly reporting on a war that would have serious consequences for Pakistan's internal security. Their questioning and provocative coverage soon exposed them to violence, threats and intimidation not only from militant, religious and sectarian groups but also from political parties, the military, government security agencies and the state itself.

The increasing number of attacks against media workers in the last ten years has led to Pakistan being labelled as one of the world's most dangerous places for journalists.⁴

³ Pemra or the Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority is an independent and constitutionally established institution responsible for regulating and issuing licenses for print and electronic media. It is tasked with improving the standard of information, education, and entertainment.

⁴ See 'Attacks on the Press: 2014 Edition', *Committee to Protect Journalists*, New York, <https://cpj.org/2014/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2013.php>; World Press Freedom Index 2014, *Reporters Without Borders*, <https://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php#>; 'Pakistan and Syria Loom Large in Violence which Killed 118 Journalists and Media Staff in 2014,' *International Federation of Journalists*, 31 December 2014, <http://www.ifj.org/nc/news-single-view/backpid/1/article/pakistan-and-syria-loom-large-in-violence-which-killed-118-journalists-and-media-staff-in-2014-says/>

*

This paper poses the following questions: who is responsible for the attacks against Pakistan's news media? What effects has the violence had on the quality of reportage in Pakistan? What are the self-imposed boundaries that journalists have been forced to follow as a result of intimidation?

Beginning with a historical framework, the paper describes the role of the media and its relationship with the state since the first military intervention of General Ayub Khan in 1958 (October 1958-March 1969)⁵. I explain the emergence and subsequent legacy of military dominance over the media. I, then, extend the narrative to later decades when the military, and its 'informal subsidiaries,'⁶ continue to attempt to control the media.

The study demonstrates that while militant and terrorist groups use violence to control journalists, the state and its security apparatus is also responsible for repressing and threatening the media. The paper implicates the state in the harassment and the murder of journalists. It also questions why the state appears to allow a rise in the level of impunity for perpetrators: Pakistan is ranked nine on the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) 2015 Global Impunity Index, which "spotlights countries where journalists are slain and the killers go free."⁷

Other forces that attempt to control the media are also identified. Focusing on the years after 2001 and the start of the War on Terror, the paper discusses broader geopolitical and economic drivers, including the complex collusion between the state and militant groups.

⁵ General Ayub Khan was Pakistan's first military ruler and second President. He came to power in 1958 through a *coup d'etat* until he was forced to resign in 1969.

⁶ 'Informal' subsidiaries' has been used here in reference to Islamist (militant) organizations and proxy militant and sectarian groups who have long been the military's religious allies. These groups - with links to the Pakistani Taliban and Al-Qaeda - have provided foot soldiers for wars fought in Kashmir and Afghanistan with support - financial, logistic and ideological - from certain right-wing elements within Pakistan's military. Following the events of 9/11, Pakistan's military government decreased its support and revised its domestic policies that had fostered militancy and religious extremism in the country and internationally. Militant organizations such as the Haqqani Network, headquartered in North Waziristan, had fought the Afghan war against the Soviets in the late 1980s with financial assistance and training from Pakistan's intelligence services. But when General Musharraf began working with the West in the decade after 9/11 (especially with the US administration), the Haqqani Network caused grave concern to Nato-led forces as jihadi fighters supported by the militant group crossed from Pakistan into Afghanistan to fight foreign forces.

⁷ CPJ's 2015 Global Impunity Index 'Spotlights Countries where journalists are slain and killers go free,' *Committee to Protect Journalists*, New York, 8 October 2015, <https://cpj.org/reports/2015/10/impunity-index-getting-away-with-murder.php#more>, last accessed 20 October 2015

The title of the paper is in reference to the media caught between ‘five’ extremes or the forces that repress and intimidate journalists – the state, its security apparatus (to include the Inter-Services Intelligence or the ISI and Military Intelligence or MI), political parties, militant organizations (the Pakistani Taliban) and religious-right Islamist groups.

I also identify intimidation tactics used on journalists by various actors and discuss self-censorship, including the use of specific words and language by the media.

The paper examines if the media can be free, fair and able to contribute to public discourse at a critical moment in Pakistan’s history as it grapples with religious extremism and insecurity.

In conclusion, it notes the apparent lack of responsibility on the part of certain media owners who prioritise their commercial interests over the safety of their journalists. Although many journalists and editors have retained editorial integrity in the face of mounting pressure, others have not been able to remain objective. Where a media organisation aligns itself to a particular political party or reflects a certain religious ideology, either for fear of recrimination or for commercial reasons, this has led to unprofessionalism and biased reportage as well as conflicts between media organisations. Large business corporations who also own and run media companies have learnt that controlling the media helps to protect their corporate interests and therefore their advertisers.

The paper also provides recommendations for media houses to ensure the future safety of their employees.

1.2 Attacks on journalists

Conversations with journalists for this paper reveal that the media is currently, in 2015, in a particularly alarming phase. Journalists are regularly intimidated, harassed, brutally attacked, even raped and killed and those responsible for threats and abuse are not being held accountable. The lives of journalists who resist attempts to control them are in danger, and media freedom is threatened.

For years, Pakistan has been ranked by media watchdog organisations as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists to work. In 2014, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) ranked Pakistan as the fourth most dangerous country in the world for journalists.⁸ Reporters Without Borders placed the country 158th out of 167 documented countries in its World Press Freedom Index the same year.⁹ Also in 2014 the International Federation of Journalists ranked Pakistan as the most dangerous country for journalists.¹⁰

Pakistan has earned these ratings through recognition that the media faces violence from militant and sectarian groups, political parties, feudal lords, separatists, the military and intelligence services. Over fifty-five thousand Pakistanis have been killed in terror attacks in the past decade, including over one hundred journalists. This is the highest number of journalists killed in any single country for this period.

Caught between the state, the military, militants, and other actors, journalists across Pakistan take risks every day. The provinces of Baluchistan,¹¹ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)¹², and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)¹³, are the most difficult and dangerous areas for the media to operate. Journalists are often

⁸ 'Attacks on the Press: 2014 Edition', *Committee to Protect Journalists*, New York, <https://cpj.org/2014/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2013.php>

⁹ 'World Press Freedom Index 2014,' *Reporters Without Borders*, <https://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php#>

¹⁰ 'Pakistan and Syria Loom Large in Violence which Killed 118 Journalists and Media Staff in 2014,' *International Federation of Journalists*, 31 December 2014, <http://www.ifj.org/nc/news-single-view/backpid/1/article/pakistan-and-syria-loom-large-in-violence-which-killed-118-journalists-and-media-staff-in-2014-says/>

¹¹ Baluchistan is one of the four provinces of Pakistan located in the southwestern region of the country with Quetta as its provincial capital. It shares borders with Punjab and FATA to the north-east, Sind – another province – to the south-east, Arabian Sea to the south, Iran to the west and Afghanistan to the north. The low-intensity conflict between the Baluch insurgents and the government is based on the fact that the Baluch nationalists demand autonomy, a greater share in natural resources and an equal distribution of resources and some groups, are fighting for complete independence from Pakistan. It has been noted by Baluch journalists and observers that the current insurgency is 'stronger' than in previous years and decades because unlike past resistance movements, it has forced women and children to organize as part of protest rallies countrywide. They demand an end to human right violations and enforced disappearances of young men from the province.

¹² Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or KPK is one of the four provinces of Pakistan in the north-west previously known as the North-West Frontier Province with Peshawar as the capital. It serves as a frontline for the fight against militancy in Pakistan as KPK and certain adjoining districts are under the influence of the Pakistani Taliban that has attacked members of the provincial government and the police over the past decade.

¹³ The Federally Administered Tribal Areas or FATA is a semi-autonomous tribal region in north-western Pakistan bordering Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan to the east and south. It also shares a border with Afghanistan eastern and southern provinces of Kunar, Paktia, Khost, Paktikha. FATA has seven tribal agencies and six frontier regions FATA is also the region which served as a jihadi incubator – North and South Waziristan – after 9/11 providing Taliban and Al-Qaeda linked fighters to fight the NATO-led forces across the border in Afghanistan.

unable to travel and report independently in these tribal areas and most media organisations offer negligible support to reporters there - especially local freelancers and stringers.

Extremist groups threaten media organisations that refuse to air their views; the state regulates freedom of expression by banning reporting of certain issues.

But while the government attempts to control journalists with legislation, it cannot enforce the law against powerful, violent non-state actors. A recent example illustrates the dilemma this poses to the media: in August 2015, attempting to control political news reporting, the state regulator imposed restrictions on the coverage of terrorist and hostage incidents. The regulator introduced the Electronic Media (Programmes and Advertisements) Code of Conduct 2015 - a list of 24 guidelines, issued by Pakistan's Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). The CPJ protested against the 'sweeping nature' of the code of conduct, saying such guidelines should be developed in conjunction with journalists, not handed down by governments.¹⁴ The guidelines, which are a revision of a 2009 Code of Conduct, state that broadcasters "shall air only such information as may be warranted by the security agency in charge of the operation." The rules also set controls for political discussion shows; for "hate speech" and for denunciations of religious beliefs - broadly interpreted by the state as against Islamic values.

However, militant groups, such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)¹⁵, are able to break these codes because the state and its security apparatus either turn a blind eye or are intimidated by them. This enables the militant groups to use violence to force the media to publish their press releases.¹⁶ In May 2013, seven newspapers in Baluchistan published a LeJ press release. Soon afterwards police authorities filed a complaint against those newspapers for violating Pakistan's terrorism laws.

Media organisations suffer reprisals if they do not provide air or print space to militant groups such as LeJ, the Taliban, and political parties such as the Muttahida

¹⁴ 'Pakistani government mandates guidelines for broadcasters,' *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 21 August 2015, <https://cpj.org/2015/08/pakistani-government-mandates-guidelines-for-broad.php>, last accessed 20 Oct. 2015

¹⁵ Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is a Sunni jihadi militant organization operational since 1996 and based in Pakistan but with a limited presence in Afghanistan. It is an off shoot of the anti-Shia sectarian group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and formed by former SSP leaders such as Riaz Basra. It has claimed responsibility for various attacks against the Shia community in Pakistan such as the Quetta attacks targeting the Hazara community in 2013 that killed over 200 people. It has also been linked to the abduction of the Wall Street Journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 and the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore in 2009.

¹⁶ 'Electronic Media Code of Conduct 2015: Regulating the Media,' *Dawn*, 25 Aug. 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1202651>, last accessed 17 Sept. 2015

Quami Movement (MQM)¹⁷. But they also suffer reprisals if they print something the military or government do not like, or anger a religious group. Journalists say all sides complain regularly about critical reporting but how these groups take their ‘complaints’ further has become increasingly dangerous.

In the last five years numerous media offices have been ransacked by Taliban gunmen, political party workers, and the intelligence services. Digital satellite news gathering vehicles have been attacked and TV crews killed and injured.¹⁸

On February 17, 2014, three Karachi-based media organisations were attacked with hand grenades and other explosives. The offices of the Express Group (*Express News*), the Aaj Group (that publishes the daily *Business Recorder*) and Nawa-i-Waqt Group (*Waqt TV*) were attacked on the same day. A blast outside the main gate of the *Aaj* offices injured a security guard and an unexploded device was later found outside the *Nawa-i-Waqt* Group’s offices in Karachi. The grenade that exploded outside the *Aaj* Group offices was thrown by unidentified motorcyclists.¹⁹

Government censorship

Websites and blogs discussing sensitive national issues are routinely blocked, for example websites based in Baluchistan are blocked within Pakistan. YouTube has also been banned across the country since September 2012.²⁰

¹⁷ The Muttahida Quami Movement or the MQM is a secular political party based in Pakistan with its voter base being Urdu-speaking Mohajirs or Muslim immigrants who came from India to Pakistan. It was founded in 1978 by Altaf Hussain, who lives in exile in Britain. Concentrated around the province of Sind, with its voter base in Karachi and Hyderabad, the MQM has retained its political influence by forming key coalitions with ruling political parties over decades since the 1980s. MQM parliamentarians are also known to resign during periods when the party has faced crackdowns targeting its criminal elements. It is known for its violent street politics and holding Karachi hostage. For more, see Chapter Four, ‘The MQM and the Karachi media’.

¹⁸ Ali, Imtiaz, ‘Samaa TV DSNG van attacked in Karachi,’ *Dawn*, 20 Sept. 2015 – Earlier, in Sept 2015, a Geo TV DSNG van was attacked in Karachi leaving a media worker killed and another injured.

¹⁹ *Express News* is a part of the Express Group owned by the Lakson Group of Companies. It is an Urdu language TV channel launched in January 2008. *Aaj News* is a 24/7 news channel in Urdu launched in 2005 by the Business Recorder Group. This Group is one of the most prominent media groups in Pakistan with a 40 year history specializing in business reporting. On April 22, 2007, Pemra served a show cause notice on *Aaj News* for airing news and programming on the judicial crisis and threatened it with closure. The Nawa-e-Waqt Group first started an Urdu fortnightly periodical in 1940 which then transitioned into an Urdu daily newspaper in July 1944. It has a 24/7 Urdu news channel, *Waqt News*, and an entertainment channel. The Group also publishes an English-language daily, *The Nation*.

²⁰ This ban was in response to uneasiness about a controversial anti-Islam film, ‘Innocence of Muslims’. The Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) blocked YouTube in Pakistan after it failed to remove a trailer of the above film. However, there were temporarily bans since 2008 for so-called ‘objectionable videos’ but those had been lifted over time.

In March 2014, Bytes for All, Pakistan, a think-tank for information and communication technologies, filed a petition with the Lahore High Court stating the government must end its YouTube ban because it violates freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Constitution. However, there is no sign that this ban will be lifted. Facebook also concedes to Pakistani government requests to block content.

The current government (in 2015) of Nawaz Sharif excels at imposing digital censorship to quieten secular discourse. However, it has not tried to enforce a permanent ban on hate speech by militant groups. Sectarian terror organisations targeting Shias are allowed to thrive on social media, promoting hate campaigns that further polarise society. It is widely recognised that leaders of banned militant groups, such as Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) and the Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)²¹ operate with virtual immunity on social media, use text messaging for disseminating militant ideologies of violence and intolerance and have sought to enter electoral politics aligned to mainstream political parties.²²

Editors are often given guidelines or informal directives by the state, political parties or the military, about where to place certain front-page stories, or which topics they are allowed to cover. These guidelines deal in particular with political and religious issues judged ‘sensitive’ by the government.

Newspapers and broadcasters that seek to make politicians accountable risk being closed down - and at the very least denied advertisement revenues. Individual journalists have been banned, dismissed, physically and verbally attacked, and editors pressured.

The state’s repression of the press requires journalists to present a particular narrative for ‘security reasons’, measures which curb public debate and dissent. One young journalist living in the U.S, whom I interviewed in April 2015 said, “It is strange living away from Pakistan yet nonetheless being dominated professionally by fear. For every article I write, I spike ten others. It’s intellectual genocide. I’m not writing jihadi literature. Jihadi supporters have all the freedom of expression, even on television. I have respect for human rights, peace and reconciliation, why can’t I pursue my profession?”

Self-censorship

²¹ Formerly the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat or ASWJ is a militant and an anti-Shia organization established in the early 1980s. It was banned as a terrorist organization in 2002 by General Musharraf and in March 2012 the government once again banned the SSP. However, in 2014, the Supreme Court removed this ban. The SSP has held parliamentary seats in 1993 in the Punjab and one of its members has served as a minister.

²² Sethna, Razeshtha, and Rehman, Ur Z, ‘Karachi’s Sectarian Backyard,’ *Dawn*, 20 January 2014

Lest they gravely offend the military, politicians, or the Pakistani Taliban journalists must select their words carefully, for example using the term ‘alleged,’ removing the words ‘outlawed’, ‘militant’ or ‘terrorist’ for reports on the Taliban.

Some newspapers resort to self-censorship. At the English-language daily *The Express Tribune*,²³ known for its cutting-edge journalism and young, enthusiastic reporters, the editor once warned the team to tone down their language, after a local, tribal reporter had suffered repercussions from the Taliban for a front page story: “Do you want to be responsible for the death of your colleagues by publishing this story?” he asked.²⁴

*

You don’t have to be a journalist to realise the impact of increasing violence that has become synonymous with Pakistan. Thirty years ago, when my driver taught himself how to read Urdu, the news media never used the word ‘terrorist’ or in Urdu ‘*dabshat gard*’. I would find an alphabet book and a newspaper tucked between the two front seats of the car. Now, he watches news on television and discusses the extortionate price of petrol, lack of law and governance, and how American dollars bolstered Taliban militants and terrorism in Pakistan. He warns me to be careful in my writings, though he is unable to read them in English. He angrily regrets that the Nawaz Sharif government was unable to bring security to the country. It’s the army, he says, that have genuinely worked to rid the city of Karachi – to a small degree – of militancy and violence, making it safer for the news media to operate.

This traditional man of Pashtun origin who has expressed his political emotions for thirty odd years from behind the wheel, no longer attends his local mosque every Friday for fear of being killed by a sectarian group. He worries for his eighteen-year old son serving on the frontline with the Frontier Constabulary in Waziristan²⁵ tasked with eliminating militants on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

²³ *The Express Tribune* is a daily English newspaper and part of the Express Group owned by the Lakson Group of Companies. It was launched in April 2010 and is in partnership with *the International New York Times* of which it reprints a selection of articles and columns daily as another pull-out broadsheet.

²⁴ Interview with a former desk editor at *The Express Tribune*, April 2015

²⁵ Waziristan is the mountainous area covering North and South Waziristan agencies, Frontier Region Bannu, and the western part of Tank in north-western Pakistan, and the Janikhel, Gurbuz and Barmal districts of eastern Afghanistan. It is populated by ethnic Pashtuns and mostly the Wazir tribe. Most of this region forms the southern

1.3 Method

This study draws primarily on interviews I conducted with more than 30 key figures in Pakistan's media (including editors of national and regional papers, reporters, desk editors, writers, intellectuals and three foreign correspondents) to identify connections between violent politics, state violence, and harassment by the intelligence services and the media. Interviews were conducted in 2015.

Interviewees were a cross-section of representatives from various news media organisations (in Urdu and English/print, broadcast and radio). I also looked for local reporters, especially those who had worked in the tribal region after 2001, in an effort to focus on how stories from the Afghanistan-Pakistan (AfPak) region are reported.

To document the frequency and type of attacks against the media, including levels of severity, I also surveyed 25 journalists both inside and outside Pakistan who had been intimidated in the course of their work. The survey was conducted between March and July 2015.²⁶ The respondents recorded their stories, some previously untold.

The respondents agreed to be interviewed without sharing their names or/and certain specific details of the beatings and torture they endured. Fear of repercussion was greater than I expected as many refused to identify those directly responsible and why. Some spoke about their experience for the first time: a Karachi-based independent multimedia journalist said she has not spoken publicly about her detention in Peshawar.

Survey questions included the kinds of threats received (whether through email, phone, text message or in person); when they started and how long they persisted; whether instances (of illegal detention and attacks) were reported to the police, local and international press freedom advocacy groups or elected representatives. My

part of Pakistan's FATA region. For administrative purposes, it is divided into two agencies: North and South. It borders with eastern Afghanistan and so Taliban and foreign militant presence after 2001 became a bone of contention between Pakistan and the US. The latter was fighting militants who were infiltrating the Af-Pak border regions.

²⁶ Conducted countrywide, including the Federally Administered Tribal Agency, bordering Afghanistan, survey respondents were aged 20 and above. Respondents included journalists working in various languages covering national politics, security, terrorism, enforced disappearances, art, culture, gender. A sample survey questionnaire is attached as part of the appendix.

findings revealed that journalists require their stories to be told so that we acknowledge the vast proportion are intimidated and killed for their work.

One of the key questions was whether journalists felt safe to work without self-censoring, or whether they stopped reporting because of the impact of violence and threats of further violence targeting their lives and families was.

Of the 25 journalists who had been intimidated or harassed most said they had been threatened through phone calls, social media, face-to-face meetings or physical attacks.

More than half (15/25) had received death threats via social media, or in person (by telephone). Nearly half (10/25) said they had been detained illegally, questioned and periodically warned outside their offices or in person. Five journalists had been detained, blindfolded, interrogated, and tortured and one had his daughter kidnapped for a brief period in 2014.

Four of the 25 journalists said they were forced to leave Pakistan following persistent harassment and threats.

Despite the dangers they had all faced, none of the 25 said they would give up their profession; even if forced to leave the country, they would continue to do the same work. All had been questioned, threatened or tortured in the period after 2001.

I also tracked attacks and incidences of harassment, until the most recent in June-August 2015, using Twitter and Facebook as a source.

2. The historical relationship between the media and the state

2.1 The first martial law under General Ayub Khan (1958-1969)

The formation of a structured media dates back to pre-Partition in British India, where newspapers were established to promote a communalistic or Partition agenda. The oldest English-language daily, *Dawn* was founded by Jinnah in 1941 to counter “anti-Muslim propaganda”. The Urdu-language *Nawa-e-Waqt*²⁷, established in 1940 as the voice of Muslim elites was also among the strongest supporters for an independent Pakistan. In essence, the print media had a mission concurrent with political ambitions at the time: to promulgate the idea of Pakistan as a separate homeland for a Muslim minority in British India, in the hope they would survive an onslaught from the Hindu majority.

In 1950s Pakistan, the shift from elected to non-elected institutions witnessed the failure of parliamentary democracy and the slightest, if any, opposition to dictatorship. The first military coup on October 7, 1958 resulted in the first President of Pakistan, Iskander Ali Mirza (1956-1958) abolishing the constitution and declaring martial law.²⁸ The National Assembly was dissolved and General Ayub Khan was chosen as the chief martial law administrator with executive powers. Mirza resigned – it is widely noted that he was forced to do so by Ayub Khan and his loyal generals – and was exiled to London where he resided until 1969, dying virtually penniless.

Ayub Khan filled his cabinet with technocrats, military men and diplomats, including Air Marshal Asghar Ali Khan²⁹ and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a future president (1971-73) and elected prime minister (1973-77). Unlike Generals Zia-ul-Haq (1978-88) and Pervez Musharraf (2001-08), Ayub Khan did not hold the position of army chief and president at the same time.

²⁷ *Nawa-i-Waqt* is an Urdu daily newspaper in Pakistan launched in 1940. When it first appeared as a fortnightly periodical it supported the All India Muslim League. The Nawa-i-Waqt Group also publishes a daily English newspaper, *The Nation* and operates an Urdu TV channel, *Waqt News*.

²⁸ Major General Iskander Ali Mirza was backed by the establishment when he took power as the first president of Pakistan in 1956. This would make sense. Mirza was a three-star general taking on the position. His presidency was marked by political instability and civil unrest; and he was known to mistrust civilian and parliamentary rule. He began the martial law period with General Ayub Khan as his army commander, but both held differing views on dealing with the new situation emerging in the country, although they were both responsible for bringing about the change from civilian rule to military dictatorship later on in 1958.

²⁹ Air Marshal Asghar Khan was the youngest commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Air Force from 1957 until resigning in 1965 before the Indo-Pak war. He began a pro-democracy political party in 1970 that eventually merged with that of Imran Khan’s Pakistan-e-Tehreek-e-Insaaf party in 2012. He was also declared a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International and won various democracy-related awards through his life.

Newspaper editorials initially praised General Ayub Khan's regime (October 1958-March 1969) for its achievements. Journalists, like many others, were led to believe martial law would bring civic and political progress. Media conglomerates and the military even worked closely together in the early part of Ayub Khan's regime. This allowed military rulers to control the press for national propaganda.

This first military intervention in 1958 set a pattern for the future. When political parties were periodically weakened, unable to safeguard national and security interests, the military would step in. Ayub Khan would simply state that the Pakistan Army would "take no nonsense from politicians or the public to ruin the country."³⁰

After Ayub Khan declared martial law in 1958, his regime established the Bureau of National Research and Reconstruction that later became the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The Bureau was known to hire journalists writing in support of government policies.³¹

2.2 The beginnings of media repression

Various measures to control the press had been introduced even before the start of Ayub Khan's regime. In 1956, the Safety Ordinance Act, 1948, which allowed detention without trial and also allowed the government to publish its own version of events in the media, was made part of the Constitution. Between 1952 and 1953 fifty newspapers were warned about 'publication of objectionable matter or violation of press laws.'³² Newspaper editors were ordered to obey official directives or face punishment.

In 1954, the government set up the Press Commission³³ to examine the shortcomings of the press. It made recommendations to the government and focused on the economy of the media. Because state advertisements could be stopped at the discretion of the government, newspapers had their advertising pulled if they

³⁰ Noted by historian, Ayesha Jalal in *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics* where she quotes correspondence between American diplomats in Pakistan and the Department of State, 1951-1954

³¹ Nawaz, S, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army and the Wars Within*, Oxford University Press: Karachi, 2009, p. 173

³² Niazi, Z, *The Press in Chains*, Oxford University Press: Karachi, 2010, p 97

³³ The Press Commission was set up in 1954 after a resolution was passed by the Central Legislative Assembly in 1953 to improve conditions for the press. A second press commission that was set up in 1958 went on to recommend the Working Journalists Ordinance, 1960.

published anything that displeased the state. When *Dawn* newspaper reported its newspaper, *Evening Star*, had lost government adverts, it lost even more advertising.

Soon after coming to power in 1958, Ayub Khan appointed Qudratullah Shahab as his top media point man. He was later replaced by 39-year old journalist and writer, Altaf Gauhar as information secretary.³⁴ Gauhar was Ayub's top 'spin doctor' in the 1960s, similar to the role played by Alastair Campbell to British Prime Minister Tony Blair.³⁵

When Ayub decided not to contest the elections in 1969, Gauhar remarked: "Pakistan has committed suicide." This revealed how far out of touch the regime was from reality. Ordinary people wanted Ayub out of power as much as the elite. Ayub had contempt for politicians and intellectuals and over the next few years the state increased its control over the press, nationalising it over the next nine years.

In 1959, under the Security Act, Ayub Khan took over the publishing group, Progressive Papers Limited (PPL). PPL was a publishing group that owned progressive newspapers such as the *Pakistan Times*, first published in February 1947. The group was co-owned and managed by the leftist, Mian Iftikharuddin.³⁶ Ayub Khan's move effectively silenced one of the few remaining secular, pro-democratic voices within the press. The government accused PPL and its subsidiaries of endangering the security of the country. To ensure state control of the press, *Pakistan Times* was handed overnight to the then information secretary, Qudratullah Shabab.³⁷

³⁴ Altaf Gauhar joined Pakistan's Civil Service in 1948. He was the main ghost writer for President Ayub Khan's autobiography, 'Friends not Masters' published in 1967; and later Gauhar wrote a biography titled, 'Ayub Khan: Pakistan's First Military Ruler.' When Gauhar quit the civil service, he was editor for the English daily, *Dawn* and was imprisoned twice when Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto was the martial law administrator. He went to London when out of prison and started two journals affiliated with London-based *The Guardian* newspaper.

³⁵ Journalist and author, Alastair Campbell was the director of communications and strategy for Tony Blair between 1997 and 2003.

³⁶ Mian Iftikharuddin, a secular politician struggled for civil liberties and opposed the 1956 declaration of martial law. He was the major shareholder of *Imroḡ* and *Pakistan Times*, two Urdu newspapers under Progressive Papers Limited, set up to propagate the view of the Muslim League, even before Partition in 1947. *Pakistan Times*, with its editor Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the renowned poet, was patronised by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

³⁷ Qudratullah Shahbab was an eminent writer and civil servant who held various government positions after Partition. He was appointed the principal secretary during Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan's regimes among other positions. He was Pakistan's ambassador to the Netherlands in 1962 and later was Secretary of Information and Education. He failed to agree with the policies of Yahya Khan's regime and went into self-exile to Britain.

In 1960, the military regime introduced the Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO), which has since been renewed by successive military and civilian rulers. Under this Ordinance, the government was permitted to confiscate newspapers, close down newspapers and arrest journalists. The PPO enabled the regime to exert control over the news media by holding not only editors and publishers liable for punishment if they published content unsupportive of government policies, but also printers and distributors.

In 1961, the regime nationalised the official news agency, the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) in order to further control the flow of news reports to the media. In 1964, the government formed the National Press Trust. It absorbed all the newspapers that had been published previously under the PPL. This was another route to control a number of newspapers, including exert pressure on policy matters related to recruitment, editorial practices, and the distribution of newsprint and government advertisements.³⁸ This state controlled media advertised the regime's successes. It did not talk about the silencing of intellectuals and writers, especially those supportive of communist ideologies.

Pakistan Television and Radio were established by the government in 1964 as public broadcasters, and were state controlled. The regime's firm control over the flow of information had been successfully implemented.

After 1969, Gauhar, who had worked on repressing the press during the Ayub regime, publicly apologised for the draconian laws that had targeted the press in those years. In 1969, Gauhar became editor of *Dawn* newspaper. He was imprisoned twice afterwards (during the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) while editor (at *Dawn*) for opposing military dictatorships.

Ayub Khan's moves to suppress press freedom and control the media during the eleven years he was in power set a pattern for later governments. Successive civilian and military rulers continued to use state machinery to control content in the news media. Measures included draconian press laws; direct control of news agencies (state-supported Associated Press of Pakistan); quotas on news print; alloca-

³⁸ Journalists working for the National Press Trust – with nine newspapers under its wing – supported military policies through successive regimes. In 1969, the group welcomed General Yahya Khan's takeover. He remained the third president of Pakistan until 1971 – the period that also witnessed the creation of Bangladesh. Newspapers belonging to the NPT enjoyed a substantial chunk of the government's advertising budget.

tion of government advertising; closure of private TV channels by suspending licenses; banning influential presenters; monetary and other support to certain journalists and columnists and direct pressure on media owners and editors.

2.3 How the ‘press advice’ system has endured

In 1959, President Ayub Khan’s regime introduced the ‘infuriating’³⁹ press advice system as a way to control and monitor content published in newspapers. It may read as a phrase with little long-lasting impact, but the term ‘press advice’ constitutes various mechanisms used over decades for controlling media content – print and, in later decades, the broadcast industry.

In the 1960s, government officials regularly instructed newspaper publishers and editors on what stance to take on certain key political issues of the time, and what to publish. The government established rules regarding what journalists could report. Newspapers did not always accept the government directives. Publishers and editors of the *Dacca Times* and *Ittefaq* (Dacca), for example, often and unsuccessfully tried to sue the East Pakistan government over the banning of news coverage of protests against federal and provincial policies.⁴⁰

After the return of democracy in 1988, the basic mechanisms of the Press Advice system were preserved and they continue to be used as a way to manipulate media content. The previous Nawaz Sharif government (February 1997-October 1999) used the Press Advice system extensively, though informally and without prescribed penalties to ensure compliance, unlike the martial law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977- 1988).

A senior editor of an Urdu daily newspaper recalls how, during the second Sharif government (1997 - 1999), he would receive regular calls from the information ministry asking him to remove or emphasise certain news stories. Editors have told me that they have little choice but to compromise when asked to remove news items or tone down their significance. Often if a story was significant the government might ask for it to be placed on the back page, and given single column

³⁹ They were termed ‘infuriating’ by editors and journalists who worked within the media at the time and who have been later quoted by historians and writers documenting the regime under Gen Ayub Khan.

⁴⁰ Newberg, Paula, R, *Judging the State: Courts and Constitutional Politics in Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2002, p 91

space. Editors say owners complied for fear of losing government advertising revenue.

Broadcast news editors are faced with similar problems, except they must learn to cope with demands from various actors who want their version on air. In recent times, they claim that press freedoms are at risk from the army and indirect threats mean they must appear to show support for an army public relations campaign that is determined to rebuild the image of an army fighting Islamic militants at home.

Channels will edit out and mute sound when analysts, or even TV anchors, criticise the army. When Malala Yousafzai, the schoolgirl awarded the Nobel peace prize, gave an interview on *Aaj* television in August 2015 saying Prime Minister Sharif had told her he couldn't spend more money on education because he was pressured to fund the military operation, she was quickly silenced. Television channels are required to have a delay mechanism on live programmes so that they are able to edit out criticism of the armed forces and the judiciary.

Journalists have noted the press advice system as one of the most insidious threats against their independence. In the Zia years, the system was buttressed by strict censorship regulations specifying that whoever "contravenes any provision of this regulation shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine or stripes [lashes] not to exceed twenty-five." Editors recall they would comply one night out of five. Their explanation: the more the press agreed to go along with such directives the more the government could get away with suppressing the media.

2.4 Misreporting the wars with India

Domestic coverage of the 1965 war between India and Pakistan (April-September) was heavily biased in favour of Pakistan. Stories about how the Indians had surrendered were circulated by Pakistani reporters returning from the battlefield. Official propaganda published stories about how one Pakistani soldier was equal to ten Indians. A letter, published in the Urdu daily newspaper *Jang*, went so far so as to claim the Prophet Muhammad had been sighted in Medina riding a horse 'Going for Jihad to Pakistan.' Such coverage helped to cultivate support among ordinary people, showing a sense of national solidarity in West Pakistan. But in reality

Pakistan was fast running out of war power and had signed a United Nations-sponsored ceasefire on 22 September 1965. Official media reports made it sound like Pakistan had won the war.

A report by the Press Commission, (est. 1954), stated: “A national press is the mirror of national politics. The politics of the country, therefore, do have a bearing on the country’s Press. ... It can be said that a country gets the kind of press it deserves. If the politics of a country is dirty, the country’s Press cannot remain immune from it. ...”⁴¹ This legacy carried on to infiltrate the news media over decades as it developed and expanded in parallel to other state institutions.

2.5 Media support for Bhutto in the 1970s

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was deputy prime minister when the terms of the ceasefire resolution was being carved out in early December 1971 and was the logical choice as president and the first civilian martial law administrator. Bhutto arranged for Pakistan Television to broadcast a film on the army’s surrender in Dhaka on 16 December 1971 to reveal the military’s humiliation and consolidate his hold – though temporary – over the army. A self-styled populist, Bhutto, later the leader of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP),⁴² was no different than previous military rulers in how his regime handled the press and how the state narrative was promoted to curb opposition.

The early seventies also saw Wali Khan’s National Awami Party (NAP)⁴³, part of the coalition government in the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, oppose Bhutto’s political ambitions. In March 1973, Wali Khan started a movement to restore democracy, asking for press censorship to be lifted and Bhutto’s rule to be ended. *Pakistan Times*, by then a state-controlled newspaper, ran a story attributing the arrest of Baloch nationalist leader, Sher Mohammad Marri to his role in raising a guerrilla force in coordination with NAP. Bhutto accused NAP of working in tandem with Afghanistan and NAP was accused of chalking out what

⁴¹ Report of the Press Commission, Government of Pakistan, 1954, Karachi, p 181

⁴² The Pakistan People’s Party or the PPP is a social democratic political party founded in 1967. It has been voted into power five times since 1970. It is one of the largest political parties in Pakistan and is presently chaired by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of Benazir Bhutto.

⁴³ The Wali Khan faction of the National Awami Party was founded in 1967. It has been banned twice; in 1971 and 1975. But later it was resurrected as the National Democratic Party. And more recently, as the Awami National Party or the ANP. The latter has its voter base among secular Pashtuns and is concentrated in KPK, although it suffered a blow in the last 2013 election because of attacks by the Pakistani Taliban on its leaders and campaign offices in Karachi which meant candidates were unable to go on campaign trails.

came to be known as the ‘London Plan’ advocating the disintegration of Pakistan. The media constantly focussed on Bhutto’s personal appeal, but this was against the backdrop of armed revolt in Baluchistan and opposition to the PPP from the religious right. In an interview to *The Times*, (London) correspondent in April 1977, a defiant Bhutto criticised ‘myopic men’ grabbing power.

2.6 Islamization and media censorship under Zia: 1978-88

The relative strength of Pakistan’s contemporary press is particularly remarkable in a country that has spent more than half its life under military dictatorships. General Zia’s regime again brutally suppressed the media with strict censorship controls, including jailing journalists who tried to assert their independence. Many senior journalists made great professional sacrifices during the Zia years when censorship was direct, and nowadays guard their freedom all the more fiercely because of this history.

During Zia’s regime newspapers and magazines regularly published blank pages after the censor⁴⁴ cut paragraphs from stories, as a form of protest. Intellectuals and civil rights activists were usually forced to meet underground. Female presenters on PTV were ordered to wear *chadors* (shawl-like coverings) covering their head and popular TV serials portrayed working women as objects of disdain who broke up families.

Journalists were unable to report on events unless cleared by the government’s press information department. Press credentials were taken away, if the regime was displeased with reports. When Zia gave his historic address to the United Nations, the Ministry of Information banned local media from reporting on anti-regime demonstrations outside the UN in New York.⁴⁵

Further media censorship was introduced in the 1980s in the form of amendments to the Pakistan Press Ordinance. These noted that the publisher [of a newspaper] could be liable for persecution if a story did not meet the approval of the

⁴⁴ Veteran newspaper journalists explain that the censor was someone in the information ministry who would examine the newspaper every evening before it went to the publishers to remove or blank out objectionable content and images.

⁴⁵ As President of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq gave a speech before the 35th session of the United Nations General Assembly on 1 October 1980 in New York.

authorities, even if it was factually correct. These amendments were used to promote Islamist leanings and demonstrated the alliance between the military and religious leaders.

In a 1990s interview with A.S. Ghanvi, the government's Director of Information during Zia's regime (1978 - 88), Zamir Niazi, a journalist revealed how Zia controlled the press. Press Advices were handed down by the government's principal information officer in Islamabad, and processed by the staff of the press information department, whose job it was to "ensure that nothing against the directives crept into the press," Ghanvi notes. Information Department staff sent written notices to newspapers outlining these directives, and telephoned editors when necessary. "Sometimes we were asked to see that a certain story got full coverage or was played down and on which page," Ghanvi describes.⁴⁶

The Islamisation of the media had begun. Historically, the establishment had nurtured its ties with Islamist political parties and radical militant organisations used to fight proxy wars in Kashmir, or Afghanistan. Supporting the concept of strategic depth since the 1970s - given Pakistan's role as a US ally in the Soviet-Afghan war - it is apparent the Zia regime used state-controlled media to promote an orthodox Sunni version of Islam. Turning Pakistan into a frontline state in the war left the country with parallel arms and drugs economies, a large refugee influx and a legacy of violence.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and America trained, funded and armed mujahedin groups to fight the Soviets creating the first generation of radicalised jihadi fighters from the Deobandi school of Sunni Islam.

At that time *PTV* was the country's only broadcaster reaching 90 million, poor and illiterate Pakistanis who were mostly fed with highly biased and Islamised (Wahhabi Islam) news coverage. It aired religious lectures by a pro-regime propagandist and television evangelist, Israr Ahmed on prime-time every night, warning people to adhere to Islamic tenets. "In retrospect it appears that the introduction of the mullah to the idiot box was just the beginning of a trend that would have more dangerous repercussions in the coming decades" writes Zohra Yusuf, head of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan⁴⁷. She notes "women's rights, even

⁴⁶ Niazi, Z, *The Press in Chains*, Oxford University Press: Karachi, 2010

⁴⁷ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan is an independent, non-profit organization formed in 1987 to mobilize public opinion, lobby government on rights abuses and work for the protection of women, minorities, vulnerable groups and the media.

the curtailed version granted to them, were definitely anti-Islam and those women active in the nascent women's movement of the early 80s were special subjects of his [Israr Ahmed] ire."⁴⁸

Those who protested against Zia's regime included students who confronted police to protest bans on student unions; women's rights activists demonstrating against regressive anti-women laws; and lawyers, journalists, artists and writers expressing outrage at the clampdown on dissent and state-promoted religiosity. Punishments included public floggings for expressing their fundamental rights as journalists.

A code of morality was enforced on filmmakers, and cultural activity, including dance, banned under cultural policing. Newspaper readers read between the lines. Writers like Manto and revolutionary poets who opposed suppression, like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Habib Jalib and Ahmed Faraz were blacklisted. The status of women was reduced to that of second-class citizens.⁴⁹ Yet, despite the repression against women and the media, both emerged from Zia's time stronger and more assertive than at any other period in Pakistan's history.

Journalists protested publicly for the first time during the 1980s. Women activists fought against laws that took away their equality and dignity. Since the Zia years, the media and women's activists have continued their struggle in the face of adversity. In a way those formative years sowed the seeds of activism.

⁴⁸ Yusuf, Zohra, "Media's role in promoting religiosity," *The Express Tribune*, 19 October 2010, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/64220/medias-role-in-promoting-religiosity/>

⁴⁹ Women took to the streets to protest against Islamisation and regressive laws, such as the Hudood Ordinances. This draconian law, for example, reduced a woman's evidence in cases of rape to half that of a man's. It still remains in the statutory books, despite the return of democratic governments.

3. General Pervez Musharraf's 'Enlightened Moderation:' Post-2001

"I refuse to live in fear of my own state. The very people who are supposed to be protecting me were the ones to do this, so that shook me up a bit." - Anonymous

3.1 Tenuous relations: the state and the media in 2007

General Pervez Musharraf came to power after a military coup that deposed the civilian government of Nawaz Sharif in 1999. He pledged to bring democracy and 'enlightened moderation' to Pakistan, yet held authoritarian control over those who opposed his policies during a troubled decade, when the war on terror consumed the country.⁵⁰

When parliament finally met, three years after the coup, in 2002, General Musharraf was sworn in as President for a five-year term. The General went from military leader to President at a time when Pakistan served as a key ally in the American-led war on terror being fought in Afghanistan. Gen. Musharraf revived the constitution that had been suspended in October 1999 but with amendments that gave him sweeping powers to dismiss parliament. It also gave the military a say in affairs of the government.

Four months after the World Trade Centre attacks in New York on the 11 September, 2001, Musharraf had openly promised to condemn terrorism and combat extremism in his country. Subsequently, Pakistan received American aid to bolster its military, totalling \$10 billion over the next decade. Musharraf later held a referendum to legitimise his presidency but was denounced by pro-democracy campaigners and political parties.

⁵⁰ General Musharraf was on a visit to Sri Lanka when he received word that Mr Sharif and his intelligence chief, General Ziauddin were secretly meeting in Islamabad that morning to sack him and make it appear as a retirement. Meanwhile, Mr Sharif had already formally appointed Gen Ziauddin as the head of the military. When Gen Musharraf rushed back to Pakistan, Mr Sharif had refused to allow the plane to land in Karachi at first until the military took over control of the airport and the plane landed safely. Gen Musharraf, a retired four-star army general was the tenth President of Pakistan from 20 June 2001 to 18 August 2008, when he resigned to avoid facing impeachment. When Musharraf took over in 2001 in a military coup, there were no organised protests countrywide though the international community criticised the ousting of a democratic government. Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations, He was known to be a liberal, whiskey-drinking ruler who became a favourite of western governments – especially the Americans – at a time when they needed an ally in Pakistan to ensure NATO supplies went through the country for troops in Afghanistan. More important, they pressured Pakistan on numerous occasions to do more to stem extremist camps, infiltration of fighters and militant outfits on the Af-Pak border.

In previous decades the military had successfully used the media as its mouth-piece and General Musharraf may have assumed the same would be possible under his tenure. The relationship between the media and Musharraf's regime had started well. After 2001, political changes in Pakistan had pushed General Musharraf to liberalise the broadcast media by issuing licenses for private TV and radio channels.

By 2002, for the first time, millions of Pakistanis had access to independent information provided by private broadcast media channels. State-run television faced competition and as a result, updated its formats and coverage to incorporate news tickers and live updated news every few hours.

General Musharraf's decision to allow private TV channels was prompted by the popularity of Indian channels that Pakistanis were watching through satellite and cable. His government issued 89 broadcasting licenses in eight years.

He later came to regret this move as the media began to criticise his regime and policies.

In 2002, during parliamentary elections, *Geo Television*, Pakistan's first private Urdu TV channel to obtain a broadcast license, held debates between candidates, and aired opposition views.⁵¹ It also aired political satire shows mocking General Musharraf among a variety of entertainment programming.⁵²

3.2 State of Emergency: 2007

President Musharraf declared the state of emergency in November 2007 as an attempt to extend his time in power. He suspended the constitution, dissolved the Supreme Court and suspended the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Muhammed Iftikhar Chaudhry, along with other judges. This move caused protests, led by the Lawyer's Movement, until Chaudhry was reinstated on 22 March 2009. Continuous press

⁵¹ Owned by the Independent Media Corporation and founded by Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman, *Geo Television*, which is part of the Jang Media Group, is a private Pakistani TV channel that first went on air in autumn 2002. It changed Pakistan's media landscape to impact the course of political history in the following decade. In doing so, it has incurred the displeasure of political parties, ruling governments, and the intelligence agencies. It first transmitted from Dubai with studios and anchors working out of Pakistan. In 2007, at the height of the state of emergency when Geo TV was forced off cable channels, it was forced to transmit from Dubai. It currently transmits to Europe, North America, the Middle-East and Canada. It has launched other channels over the years for sports, entertainment, headline news coverage and an English language channel, Geo English that was closed down in 2008.

⁵² Waldman, Amy, "Pakistan TV: A New Look at the News," *The New York Times*, 25 January 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/25/world/pakistan-tv-a-new-look-at-the-news.html?pagewanted=all>, last accessed 4 October 2015

coverage of these protests showed an autocratic military ruler clamping down violently on protesting lawyers and the media.⁵³ Despite government attempts to control the media the *Jang Group* began dictating the narrative, setting the agenda, while other private TV channels with licenses to broadcast – ironically handed out by the Musharraf regime – lobbied for the restoration of the chief justice and a return to democracy.

Geo TV, part of the Jang Group, had called for the restoration of the judiciary and was subsequently banned from covering the lawyers' protests, along with other outlets. At *Dawn News*⁵⁴, an English language broadcaster, around the clock live reports were closely followed by an international audience. As a result of this critical coverage, many private channels were thrown off air in the ninety days after the declaration of the state of emergency.

The former secretary general of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, Mazhar Abbas notes that President Musharraf began controlling the media before declaring the state of emergency in November 2007. On 28 September that year, channels received a show-cause notice stating, "No programme shall be aired which contains, (a) aspersions against the judiciary and the armed forces (b) any material amounting to contempt of court (c) contain any abusive comments that when taken in context, tend to or are likely to expose any individual or group or a class of individual to hatred or contempt." This was the start of an 88-day movement against a ban on the media. Journalists gave the regime until December to lift the ban on TV channels or else they would protest.

Termed as 'emergency plus,' the ban on the media and the judiciary – two institutions that had gained ground the same year – eventually put the regime in a position where they were compelled to review this ban.⁵⁵

Musharraf also invoked the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Ordinance of June 2007. this Ordinance curbed press freedom through decrees that barred publishing or broadcasting "anything which defames or brings

⁵³ The Lawyers Movement or the Movement for the Restoration of the Judiciary was a popular mass protest movement initiated by the legal fraternity in response to General Musharraf's illegal suspension of the Chief Justice. Musharraf had been irked by the fact that under Chief Justice Chaudhry, the security agencies had been asked to produce hundreds of missing persons and the intelligence agencies were found to be complicit in these disappearances.

⁵⁴ *Dawn News* started as a 24/7 English language news channel in 2007 and is based in Karachi. It is a subsidiary of Pakistan Herald Publications Limited, Pakistan's largest English language media group. In 2010, it switched to airing in the Urdu language. *Dawn News*' test transmission was inaugurated by General Musharraf in 2007. Part of the Dawn Media Group, it was Dawn News that first broke the story about the nationality of the surviving Mumbai attack gunman, Ajmal Kasab in 2009 as being Pakistani.

⁵⁵ Abbas, Mazhar, 'When Musharraf Silenced the Media,' *The Express Tribune*, 2 November 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/459782/when-musharraf-silenced-the-media/>

into ridicule the head of state, or members of the armed forces, or executive, legislative or judicial organs of state.”⁵⁶ During the Lawyer’s Movement, the broadcast media was instrumental in mobilising public support and became a target of this ordinance. The government could take action against television channels, confiscate their equipment and seal off their premises. .⁵⁷

When dozens of TV reporters covered the protest rallies that were aired live on private television channels, the police began cutting camera wires and beating and tear-gassing journalists. By liberalising the media early in his regime, Musharraf had perhaps been naive. Maybe he believed it could be kept under control, however he had underestimated its power. He had unleashed a media keen to adopt progress and best practices and had also encouraged the launch of Urdu, English and regional language channels with a keen focus on 24/7 news and current affairs. For better or worse, the impact of allowing for a free media would be far-reaching.⁵⁸

3.3 Beginning of the end: Live TV coverage brings down Musharraf, 2007-09

Unprecedented live television coverage of protests in support of the Lawyers Movement caught the regime off-guard. Examples of police high-handedness were aired for a short period by private television channels and international media. *The Committee to Protect Journalists* reported that on 16 March 2007, after Musharraf first tried to oust Chief Justice Chaudhry, riot police used tear gas and batons as they swept through the Islamabad offices of the *Jang Group*, which houses *Geo TV* and newspapers *Daily Jang* (in Urdu) and *The News* (in English). The raid came less than a day after the government ordered *Geo TV* not to air coverage of street protests against the Chief Justice’s dismissal.

Six weeks later, certain channels were permitted back on air after they agreed to restrict criticism of the head of state. Some stopped airing talk shows by journalists unpopular with the regime. Television presenters Hamid Mir and Asma Shirazi were on the banned list. They had spoken against the regime’s clampdown on the

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch, ‘Pakistan: Media Restrictions Undermine Election,’ 17 February 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2008/02/15/pakistan-media-restrictions-undermine-election>, last accessed 25 Apr. 2015

⁵⁷ PEMRA had been formed in 2000 as a media regulatory body to facilitate private channels but has essentially operated like a license issuing office and obstructed press freedoms Musharraf used PEMRA in a way as a thoroughfare that would allow for the liberalization of the electronic media industry. In 2008, there were 50 privately owned TV channels in Pakistan. In 2008-09 according to figures released by the Ministry of Finance, ten new licences were issued by PEMRA which meant 71 TV licences had been given out.

⁵⁸ Pakistan has more than 100 private TV stations, 125 privately-owned radio stations and the print media include more than 600 privately owned newspapers, including dailies and weeklies in Urdu, English and regional languages.

press. The state's vision was at odds with that of pro-democracy advocates, the judiciary and the media.

In November 2007, Shirazi was barred from presenting her TV programme, *Parliament Cafeteria*. When she went onto the street with her talk show, she was “given a message that if I didn’t stop doing outdoor talk shows, I would not be able to walk home.” She talks of that brief interlude when the establishment attempted to control the freedom of the press. “At the time Major General Rashid Qureshi⁵⁹ was Musharraf’s press secretary, [still his spokesperson in 2015] and Shaukat Sultan, the head of the ISPR. I got two calls from Mr Qureshi informing me that because I was a woman my career will be cut short, if I don’t compromise with them,” she tells me.⁶⁰

“Azhar Abbas, news director for *Geo TV* advised me against striking a deal with the ISPR. If I agreed to their conditions to appear on television, I would have to continue doing the same throughout my career.”⁶¹ She says the ISPR have the ability to engage ‘friends’ to talk to you and then contact you directly when you don’t relent. While reporting during an attack on the Supreme Court when prominent anti-establishment lawyers, Asma Jahangir and Ali Ahmed Kurd were beaten by the police, Shirazi was also beaten and gassed. “I was live on air while there was tear gas shelling. They [the regime] didn’t know how to block us from transmitting so they cut our cables, and I was about to faint with the tear gas but managed with handkerchiefs and ice cubes.”

In 2007, the government’s treatment of the media had become the story. General Musharraf had given the impression that he was a benevolent military ruler who had allowed the media to flourish, but in reality the regime acted against media houses that refused to submit to his control. This behaviour was a reminder of the actions of previous military regimes against the media. In Karachi, protestors camped outside the *Jang Group*’s headquarters for weeks, demanding press freedom; champions for a free press also went on hunger strike. 180 journalists were arrested in November 2007, and many others beaten and tear-gassed outside the Karachi Press Club. I was amongst the hundreds of protestors holding banners and wearing black armbands demanding the reinstatement of press freedoms. We

⁵⁹ General Qureshi, a former director general of the ISPR in 1998, known for his regular press briefings, maintained personal contact with most media organisations and journalists during the Musharraf years.

⁶⁰ Interview with the author, April 2015

⁶¹ A TV presenter for 15 years, Asma Shirazi barred from appearing on TV did her show outdoors on Constitution Avenue, also known as Shahra-e-Dastoor in Islamabad.

linked arms peacefully, and distributed roses to baton-wielding policemen. A young media had assumed the role of advocating in favour of democracy, civil rights and against state pressure to tone down dissent against Musharraf's dictatorship.

Well-turned out anchors were transformed into overnight stars. Competitive presenters even came together on television to discuss the state's repression of the media. This illusion of safety to be found in numbers was instant and adrenaline-charged, but not destined to survive in an industry driven by commercialism.

Describing the situation as 'uncertain', a leading Pakistani lawyer and a special rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, Asma Jahangir, who was served with a 90-day detention order by Musharraf, was critical of the 'strong crackdown on the press and lawyers.' She wrote in British newspaper, *The Independent*: "Ironically the President (who has lost his marbles) said that he had to clamp down on the press and the judiciary to curb terrorism. Those he has arrested are progressive, secular-minded people while the terrorists are offered negotiations and ceasefires."⁶²

Pakistan's image plummeted particularly after 2007 with mounting terror attacks inside the country. Editorials questioning the state's commitment to fighting terrorism, advised Musharraf to hold elections. Playing both sides of a risky political game, Musharraf was losing allies. Militant groups, that had been trained and used by the military as proxies in Kashmir and Afghanistan, were angry when Musharraf took action against them at the behest of the US in its War on Terror. They turned on their erstwhile state sponsors with suicide attacks. President Musharraf was becoming ever more isolated.

The situation dramatically escalated in June 2007 when radical seminary students from the Red Mosque (Lal Masjid) in Islamabad took seven Chinese and two Pakistanis hostages, accusing them of running a brothel and demanding that a hard-line version of Sharia law be enforced. The nation was glued to their television screens as the army's Special Services Group besieged the mosque between July 3 and July 10th, when negotiations failed and the army attacked the mosque complex.

⁶² 'Asma Jahangir: Musharraf has lost his marbles and is targeting progressives', *The Independent*, 17 November 2007, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/asma-jahangir-musharraf-has-lost-his-marbles-and-is-targeting-progressives-398989.html>, Accessed last 5 Aug, 2015

Despite heavy gunfire 465 women escaped from the mosque unhurt when they ran outside during the firing. The operation resulted in 154 deaths, and 50 militants were captured. It also prompted pro-Taliban rebels along the Afghan border to nullify a 10-month-old peace agreement with the Pakistan government. This event triggered the third Waziristan War, which marked another surge in militancy and violence in Pakistan and has resulted in more than 3,000 casualties.

It was a huge media event. *Geo TV* hosted a live telethon with presenters booked all day. I recall presenting a live discussion with public call-ins and email questions where political analysts supported the crackdown, but criticised the numbers killed during the siege.

Later, the media entered the mosque when the siege ended, reporting on the destruction and bodies. Media support for ridding the mosque of militant fighters swiftly shifted to a weird sympathy for the gun-wielding militants and hundreds of female seminary students who had been shown menacingly holding sticks and pledging to fight western secularism. Women and children were believed to have been killed in the fighting and newspaper editorials accused the army of being too violent and heavy-handed in the way they tackled the siege.

*

In January 2008, *The Economist* ran a cover with a picture of a grenade with 'Pakistan' written on it, and an article entitled 'The world's most dangerous place'. The issue was published in the aftermath of the December 2007 assassination of Benazir Bhutto who was shot in Rawalpindi while campaigning.

The article said that the abolition of press reforms by President Musharraf in November 2007 would take years to undo. Yet it also paradoxically portrayed Musharraf's regime as a harbinger of change, noting the two dozen private television channels that had launched between 2002 and 2008, broadcasting news, entertainment, sports, religion, lifestyle and culture. Whilst Musharraf's economic reforms had attracted much positive attention, his press freedoms endured only as long as news channels took a pro-regime position.

When television channels aired criticism and allowed call-ins from the public, asking Musharraf to resign they were ordered off air. As long as the General wasn't questioned by the media at home, he accepted a 'free' press. The international community did not denounce the press freedom violations. In fact, the American

administration paid private channels in Pakistan to air news programmes in Urdu. “He [Musharraf] was not questioned by the international community regarding violations targeting the media because of his coveted role in the war on terror. The demand for stories, especially from FATA grew multifold. And because young journalists were not trained in conflict reporting, there have been greater number of casualties in the last ten years and more,” Iqbal Khattak, a former Peshawar bureau chief at *The Daily Times* newspaper tells me.⁶³ The War on Terror changed core press working conditions, alliances with geopolitical stakeholders, and stifled criticism of the military and intelligence services.

Musharraf’s dwindling political will to fight terrorism at home and the regime’s duplicity in harbouring militant groups was obvious to the US administration. Summits between India and Pakistan were futile during this time. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke determined to stop the war in Afghanistan, insisted Pakistan needed economic assistance, and that the US should deepen engagement with a country he assessed as the region’s most dangerous incubator of extremism and anti-Americanism. Holbrooke ensured non-military aid was tripled. Washington and Islamabad discussed issues like energy, water, and women’s rights. “Post 9/11 bought conflict and media development at the same time. But, if you have hundreds of private TV channels that remained controlled, and no access to information, then the job is half done. We have not prepared young military officers and bureaucrats to deal with the media. I suggested that military officers at the Pakistan Military Academy [at Kakul in Abbottabad] should be given an introductory course in journalism. If you are unable to handle the media as a state and as its military, then the press will become a target,” said Iqbal Khattak, a former Peshawar bureau chief for *The Daily Times*.

3.4 The *Geo TV* case: Baluchistan in Karachi

The government’s crackdown on the media, including well-known journalists, has continued under Nawaz Sharif’s third tenure (May 2013-present). Harassment in the name of nationalism is not new to the media but it took a deadlier turn after the attack on *Geo TV* journalist, Hamid Mir on 19 April 2014 in Karachi. In the months before the attack, the government’s peace talks with the Pakistani Taliban had failed, resulting in increased militant attacks within the country, targeting army and civilian institutions.

⁶³ Interview with the author, 2 July 2015

The media was not exempt. Attacks by the Taliban and sectarian groups on independent newspapers and journalists have escalated dangerously under Nawaz Sharif. The Taliban claim the media portrays them as terrorists and fails to air their version of events. (See Chapter 5, "The militant in the media") And given the civil-military dissonance, it appears that Nawaz Sharif has little say in how the army and its security apparatus handle the media. Known to use repressive tactics to teach its rebellious elements a lesson if they fail to listen to informal military directives, the military has shown its displeasure when journalists criticise state and security policies.

In 2014, prominent *Geo TV* journalist Hamid Mir sent a taped message to the CPJ, citing elements within ISI who had threatened him for broadcasting programs on enforced disappearances of young men in Baluchistan. The province, in Pakistan's south-west, has been embroiled in a low-intensity insurgency for more than a decade. This conflict, between security forces and separatists, has a history can be traced to Partition when the Baluch tribes were forced to become part of Pakistan.

Human rights groups have alleged that that security forces are responsible for the disappearances of young men, often held in detention for year with no information regarding their whereabouts. Baluch men have been killed and dumped in the last three years.

In February 2014 Mir had supported a long protest march from Quetta to Islamabad, led by seventy-four year old activist Qadeer Baloch and his eleven-year old grandson, to protest against enforced disappearances. Mir, and *Geo TV* faced increased pressure not to cover Qadeer Baloch's march, but he continued. That month the Secretary of Defence told the Supreme Court that the number of missing persons in the Baluch insurgency was 1100. The *Voice for Baloch Missing Persons* movement initiated by Qadeer Baloch, estimates numbers to be far higher, at between nineteen and twenty-three thousand.⁶⁴

In April 2014, Mir was shot at six times outside Karachi airport, but survived. He was in Karachi to present a programme on the impact of 100 days without drone attacks on ongoing Taliban peace talks. Before leaving for Karachi, Mir had informed *Amnesty International*, government officials, his colleagues, and family of

⁶⁴ Qadeer Baloch has told the Pakistani media that more than 21,000 people are missing from Baluchistan and more than 6000 are confirmed dead in military operations in the province. In 2014, he marched 2,800 miles with Baloch activists and relatives of missing young men drawing attention to the increase in the number of missing persons. Baloch activists allege the security services are responsible for abducting young men, many of whom have not been produced before a court. They remain missing for years.

the threats to his life. He had also written an email to the editorial board of his channel stating that if he was attacked and killed, those responsible would include the Director General of the ISI, Lieutenant General Zaheer-ul-Islam, (March 2012-November 2014).

The gun attack on Mir prompted accusations by his brother, Amir Mir, against the ISI chief. *Geo TV* flashed pictures of General Islam for hours, airing accusations by Mir and his family that the ISI were responsible for the attack on his life. At the time, media analysts termed the Jang Group's reaction as emotional and unprofessional. In May 2014, an anticipated ruling by the media regulatory body, PEMRA to shut down the channel, led the Jang Group to issue a front page apology in its English-language newspaper, *The News* and in Urdu in the *Daily Jang* stating its coverage had been 'excessive, distressful and emotional.' At the behest of the army, even the state regulator had come under pressure. Cable companies downgraded or removed *Geo TV* and it lost its audience share. Other media rivals accused it of being anti-nationalist and accused Hamid Mir of being outspoken and controversial.

This was not the first attempt on Mir's life. In November 2012, a bomb had been found under his car in Islamabad and defused. One month before, in October 2012, Mir had supported Malala Yousafzai after she was shot by the Taliban in Swat. The Taliban later claimed responsibility for his attempted assassination — ironic because in 2007, President Musharraf banned Mir from appearing on television, accusing him of being pro-Taliban.

Shortly before Mir was shot in Karachi, a delegation from the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) had a meeting with Nawaz Sharif. As always Sharif agreed to improve security for the media, but failed to follow through. The CPJ advised Nawaz Sharif to include the protection of journalists as criteria in talks with the Taliban [in 2013-14] so that attacks on the press would stop. The CPJ had proposed the formation of a media complaints commission, a joint government-journalists' commission, and the appointment of special provincial prosecutors to investigate attacks.

The CPJ delegation included the well-known and respected journalist, Ahmed Rashid, and also the CPJ's Asia Programme Director Bob Dietz. Dietz told me

that Sharif appeared to understand the severity of the problem and that he was ready to find a solution.⁶⁵

Earlier in 2014, two Indian journalists had been given a week's notice to leave the country: one had interviewed Qadeer Baloch in Islamabad. Their visas were cancelled, despite pledges to 'make Pakistan accessible to journalists'.

A subsequent investigation into the shooting at Karachi airport did not identify Mir's attackers. Since then two arrest warrants have been issued against Mir for anti-army reporting. *Geo TV* has also faced ongoing challenges from the military, angry at the station's accusations against the head of the ISI.

The failure of the investigation - led by a judicial commission made up of three senior judges - into the attack on Mir, and also of other investigations into attacks against journalists has only increased the dangers faced by journalists and media workers, and increased the number of threats against them.

A senior, anonymous media executive, who also appeared in front of the judicial commission into the attack on Mir, confirmed he had also faced pressures from military and intelligence officials to prevent him from highlighting enforced disappearances, from criticising the security agencies for their involvement in the treason trial of Musharraf and the involvement of powerful intelligence officials in terrorising the media. He also complained the Karachi police and security agencies had not cooperated with the commissions.

The judicial commission investigating the attack on Mir also questioned Iqbal Khattak, the former Peshawar bureau chief at *The Daily Times* newspaper. He was told to explain why the media and state institutions are adversaries. Unable to disclose the details of these proceedings, Khattak told me he had explained that the media and the judiciary were alike in that no matter how good a story is, someone would be unhappy. He believes Mir was targeted because he had often freely and publicly criticised the government.

⁶⁵ Dietz spoke to me in April 2014 in a telephone interview after he visited Pakistan to lobby the government to investigate the killing of journalists.

The judicial commission was mandated in April 2014 to submit a report in three weeks. However one year later nothing has yet been published⁶⁶. Khattak plans to send a reminder to CPJ requesting that they should probe into this delay. “The problem is that the Prime Minister, [Nawaz Sharif] – Mir spoke to him – doesn’t take this issue seriously. They believe the media is not part of the state. Since the Peshawar School attack [December 2014] and the National Action Plan to combat terrorism, five tribal journalists from North Waziristan have been abducted and harassed; a Baluch journalist with the daily *Intikhab*, Zafar Baloch, has been murdered in his home, shot with a single bullet to the head. The media has become the main target in the past year to prevent from asking any questions,” said Iqbal Khattak⁶⁷

Some media analysts believe it was unprofessional journalism for *Geo TV* to directly allege the head of the ISI was behind the attack on Mir. Following these reports, the *Jang Group* was compelled to make compromises because *Geo TV* was banned in the country’s cantonment⁶⁸ areas as were the *Jang’s* print publications. *Geo TV* was subjected to a concerted campaign of defamation by competing TV channels and newspapers. *The News*, the English-language daily under the *Jang Group* lost government advertising, and pro-establishment writers stopped writing for the group’s publications. These actions have since forced the *Jang Group* to tread a softer line.

Talat Aslam, editor of *The News* explains that no one in Pakistan – politicians, the establishment or the militants – is yet accustomed to an independent, robust press. The establishment has favoured columnists within newspapers, even reporters. Aslam suggests *Dawn* newspaper is comparatively independent because it has an editor, rather than an owner-editor. This is not the case with *The News* and the relatively young entrant, *The Express Tribune*. The *Jang Group* is more vulnerable because *Geo TV* has access to the masses, and therefore the establishment wants control over it. Whilst the older media empires have learnt over the years how to deal with the establishment, younger media conglomerates must yet learn ways of dealing with those groups and political parties.

⁶⁶ In April 2014, a judicial commission was formed by the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif comprising of three Supreme Court judges to investigate the attack on Hamid Mir.

⁶⁷ Interview with author 2 July 2015

⁶⁸ Cantonments are permanent military stations or garrison areas that comprise a significant civilian populations and even businesses. They are usually administered by military authorities. There are 56 such cantonments in Pakistan.

3.5 Print censorship: Publishing blank newspaper pages

In 2013, when Sanam Maher began working as a Karachi-based sub-editor for *The Express Tribune*, the newspaper faced pressure from intelligence agencies, political parties, and extremist groups. Additionally, media markets were rapidly changing in response to online audiences. Political actors, government officials and intelligence officers regularly attempted to exert control over content through unofficial guidance to newspaper editors and owners, and intervened over the placement of front-page stories, political opinion, terminology, and permissible topics of coverage. The fear of reprisals resulted in strong self-censorship.⁶⁹

Large gaping spaces can often be seen on the pages of *The International New York Times* published in Pakistan as an insert in *The Express Tribune*. On 21 March 2014, a giant white space appeared instead of a story by journalist Carlotta Gall on Pakistani government's relationship with Al-Qaeda. Missing articles or images can be found online if they represent a story the editors perceive as controversial or offensive, for example, news stories on Israel, columns about gay rights, Pakistan's blasphemy law, or nudity in art are removed. These white spaces remind of restrictions during the Zia era. Then, directives would be sent to editors that would lead to blank pages being published as a sign of protest.

3.6 Under pressure from the army: Military-media relations after August 2014

Ayesha Azfar, a journalist at *Dawn*, has edited its opinion and editorial pages for more than a decade. She rarely submits to pressure, not even by anonymous callers purporting to be army colonels who disapprove of the newspaper's columnists or editorials. Over the past decade, journalists inquiring into certain subjects have risked getting killed: the religious-militant nexus, militant infiltration of the military; enforced disappearances in Baluchistan, drone strikes, blasphemy laws, Pakistan's relationship with America, India, Afghanistan and the western world represent contentious issues. Although the press has little choice but to tread carefully, often

⁶⁹ Interview with the author, April 2015

relenting to state control, Ayesha emphasised the strong commitment amongst media professionals towards hard-won press freedoms.

The press must muzzle itself when writing about the military and the ISI. The situation has worsened since the 2014 attack on Hamid Mir and editors say criticism is not acceptable. Footage showing the army chief as a dynamic general supporting his troops in Waziristan as they fight Taliban militants is regularly broadcast, and a social media campaign in support of the army has also bolstered its image.

Establishment pressure has forced senior editors to exercise self-censorship and caution on several positions considered too liberal and secular in the English-language press. The same censure is applied to analysts who go to lengths defending democratic freedoms and human rights when appearing on television. Ayesha received a telephone call from someone wanting to submit an article ‘in the national interest’ on how safe Karachi’s nuclear energy plans were—no doubt in response to recent articles on how unsafe they are. The article was under a vague name, with no credentials; the editor was not keen to accept. Others in the same media group had received the same request. She surmised this must be common practice. What worried her more was a phone call from a former army-man from Lahore, who had serious reservations about her paper’s objections to the death penalty. He said such opinions were against the tenets of the majority faith, in a tone intending to intimidate. Some days later, she received another call from the same man, inquiring after security matters – and surmised he had been charged with monitoring, pursuing, and pressuring certain papers.⁷⁰

In April 2015, I interviewed the political scientist and security expert Dr Ayesha Siddiqi in London, and we discussed her strong opinions on the relationship between the intelligence services and the media. “They control information, power and resources. They have different methods for different people,” she told me. “It is an open secret that journalists who do not heed their warnings are admonished. Some are threatened, others killed. They attack those who work for them, and also those who don’t.”

Dr Siddiqi writes frequently on the military and the ISI. In 2009, she refused to meet the ISI chief General Shuja Pasha when she was summoned to the military

⁷⁰ Interview with the author, April 2015

headquarters in Rawalpindi. Her request to meet at a neutral venue was refused. The last two years have become harder because the army has used its power to ensure that newspapers do not publish her articles about the military or ISI. She believes the army has also blocked her from appearing on popular political TV programs.

In 2010, Dr Siddiqā's name was purportedly found on a list alongside those of senior politicians and bureaucrats, when the government arrested Taliban militants in Lahore. After the publication of her acclaimed book *Military Inc.* in 2007, she said the army had pursued a policy of intellectual murder against her. In addition, she has received threats from Sunni extremist groups. "I live near a particular group's headquarters in Punjab" she told me. "Everyone advised me to leave or risk being killed. I thought if I left my home, I'd always be running. What's the worst they can do? Kill a woman? I doubt that. Hurt or kill my husband or someone close to me? I stayed."

Dr Siddiqā points to a deadly triangle between the intelligence agencies, the Taliban and the state. In the course of my research and work, I have met so many journalists who have suffered from this nexus. Some work anonymously, take steps to protect their lives, others more daringly say what they will and can afford to leave the country till the dust settles, and there are those who live and publish in exile.

3.7 Detained by the intelligence services: January 2015

On 12 January 2015, the army chief, Raheel Sharif attended a commemorative service at the Army Public School in Peshawar paying tribute to the bravery of students and teachers who lost their lives in the attack by the Pakistani Taliban.⁷¹ The media was camped away from the school's immediate periphery. The night before, an independent multimedia journalist had travelled from Karachi to Peshawar to document the story of a young survivor and his family. She had planned a 'feel-good' multi-media story for *the New York Times*. Many reporters did similar stories

⁷¹ More than 152 people were killed; and out of them 133 were children in the attack by the Pakistani Taliban on the Army Public School on 16 December 2014. More than 120 were left injured. Seven attackers with bomb vests cut through a wire fence to enter the school. The Taliban said the attack was in response to the military offensive in North Waziristan in June 2014. In the aftermath, the government established military courts and removed the moratorium on executions.

that month. She was unaware the assignment would end in detention and interrogation. She hasn't spoken about this publicly, to protect 'family' connections that helped in her release.

Her ordeal, not dissimilar to countless others narrated by journalists reporting on conflict, illustrates the growing disconnect and mistrust between the media and the intelligence and security apparatus. State paranoia makes it impossible for journalists – foreign journalists included – to work without fear and self-censorship. Journalists say the state has yet to recognise the need for a functioning free media. They believe they have become the 'other' victims of the state, the military and the Taliban.

“It was an easy narrative of a child going back to school after the attack. I needed access from the ISPR to shoot footage at the school, so I registered as a freelance *NYT* video journalist and sent in an online form on [the ISPR website] 26 Dec. 2014 with basic information and a photograph. The day after I sent in this form, I received a call from an unknown number. The caller said he was 'Major Ali' from Military Intelligence and wanted to meet me. He came to my house at 11 am the following day, my home also being my office. He came without identification, dressed in plainclothes, and asked me all kinds of questions. I asked him why was I being interrogated by MI. They failed to understand the concept of freelance journalism but instead asked if I had dual nationality; whether the house I lived in was owned by my father; and whether I had ever been to India.”

She received another call from 'Major Ali' that afternoon asking her to obtain a 'character' certificate from the local police station. “I managed to do that and called Colonel Askari who was listed on the ISPR website. Later, 'Major Ali' called me and said why hadn't I given the police (or bribed the police) Rupees 200 for the certificate to get it done without hassle.” That same evening her father was asked questions about the property the family lived in. The family has a military background. With this over, I thought it was the end of my harassment, she tells me. Sometimes she talks quickly, other times she thinks through her thoughts.

The day before the commemorative service at the school she travelled from Karachi to Peshawar. With time to spare before the ceremony she decided to visit the family that had consented to be filmed for her short documentary to explain more about the story and her work. “A couple of gentlemen from the ISI came into the

family's house whilst I was there with the cameraman the day before the school reopened. They took our ID details and were cordial. As we were shooting footage with the family, they asked me what I was doing and I told them it was a video story.”

The following morning, she arrived at the family's house at 5:30 am to capture more footage. Then, things started going wrong. While another cameraman was dispatched to shoot footage of the young boy going to school and returning after the ceremony at 10:30 am, she got a ride to the hospital where the boy's father worked to capture some more shots. This was when her cameraman was picked up with the driver of the rented hotel car. They had parked unknowingly in a high security zone to repair a flat tyre.

“I got a lift from the hospital administrator who left me outside the school. Nobody had seen the rented white Toyota Corolla. School was out at 10:30 am. All media vans were behind the check posts. Families and their children walked out after the ceremony. At 11:30 am, with no sign of my cameraman, I knew he had been picked up. Reporters on the scene made calls to their ISPR contacts,” she continues. Then, at noon she received a call. “I was standing with another Associated Press cameraman, Inam, whom I knew, when a white Hilux pulled up. A burly major in a *shalwar kameez* and vest, and another holding a weapon showed me no ID and told me to come with them. Inam managed to get into the car with me so I wasn't alone.”

The major got into the front, while Inam, another man and herself, were packed in the back seat. Inam was told to wear a balaklava hood. When they asked her to do the same, she refused because it was dirty. So they told her to close her eyes and put her head down. They drove for thirty minutes. During the journey her father called her.

When they reached a one storey safe house, it appeared to be an army barrack. Taken into a big room with a gas heater and sofas, they were asked if anyone had high blood pressure.

There were two coffee tables. Making no eye contact with her, she was questioned by Major Abdullah, a bearded man in his forties, dressed in a *shalwar Kameez* with a vest and a brown Peshawari cap. The problem was they [her interrogators] were embarrassed the rented car had got through the red [high security] zone, gone through three check points and shot footage of the child right outside the school.

After a lot of calls were made back and forth she was told by Major Abdullah that she shouldn't take assignments from the *NYT*.

“He told me this may be footage for us but when the Taliban sees my photographs, they plan attacks. Get real do the Taliban even check the *NYT* website? When Colonel Askari called me on my phone I gave it to the Major and heard loud yelling through my phone. Major Abdullah was annoyed he was being yelled at in front of me and asked to be called on a secure line. I was questioned whether I was married, where and with whom I had spent the previous night. After all the yelling, my cameraman and the driver finally appeared.” She was released that same night with the cameraman and driver.

The cameraman had been kept in a room where torture equipment made from metal was lying around. He was asked lewd questions the journalist and whether he shared intimate relations with her.

She was later told to make sure it was a positive story, if she went ahead with it. Not being in the business of doing fluff stories for the army, she told me, she agonized for hours about what to do. At 9pm, a high-level individual from the ISPR called her, asking to tell him what this story was all about. “So I tell him it was a profile of a boy going back to school, story of loss, and courage. He told me that with my footage of the neighbourhood if shown online could become a target, which was nonsensical of course. I didn't pursue the story.

“The strange thing is that I now want to do hard political stories. As a freelancer, I feel I had no institutional support. I got out of my predicament because I used contacts and the highest contacts I could get to.” In certain parts of Pakistan, it becomes even harder working as an independent journalist given the various actors involved in controlling the presence and access of the media. Video freelancing makes it one step harder because of the equipment, everyone is curious once you have cameras, microphones, lights and all the gear out. Sometimes she wishes she could just tell her stories with a notepad. “I refuse to live in fear of my own state. The very people who are supposed to be protecting me were the ones to do this, so that shook me up a bit.”⁷²

As many journalists working in Pakistan will acknowledge, some more openly than others, the state's security services pose challenges and threats that makes

⁷² Interviewee requested to be unnamed, April 2015.

them rethink their security while at work. This has made the country dangerous for journalists covering issues even remotely linked with security and militancy.

4. The MQM and the Karachi media: 1980-present

4.1 Losing reluctant media patrons: 1980-2015

Through the last three decades, the Karachi-based political party, the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), has effectively exerted control over the city, including the print and broadcast media, through intimidation, violence or its media sympathisers.⁷³ In April 2015, the army launched an operation to ‘clean-up’ Karachi’s militant elements. This curtailed the MQM’s influence. This allowed news channels and newspapers to report on the MQM with a free hand - as a result they also increased their profits.

Competition for TV ratings makes breaking news a significant portion of news programming. However, broadcasters often fail to corroborate their facts. During the army’s April clean-up operation, one (anonymous) senior Karachi newspaper editor I interviewed felt certain the MQM’s setback was temporary and the army would ease them into a deal. The editor chose to put his personal safety first, and so would not share all his information. For this reason, he still has ‘friends’ and informants within the MQM. One month after the clean-up, in May 2015, another senior editor, (also anonymous), described exchanges of information between military representatives and the media as being quite normal. Inferring the political role the state, and the media are forced to play, the editor described how months before Operation Zarb-e-Azb began (in North Waziristan, June 2014) the military decided that Karachi’s political stakeholders should change. It wanted to weaken the MQM’s power over the city, by cleansing it of its more extreme militant elements.

2015 was difficult for the MQM. In London, the party’s exiled leader, Altaf Hussain, visited Scotland Yard for questioning in relation to money laundering charges. The MQM was also investigated for the murder of a senior party member, found dead in London’s Edgware, after rumours of a rift with Hussain. Earlier this year, police in Pakistan registered a terrorism case against Hussain after he made

⁷³ The leader of the MQM, Altaf Hussain has lived in exile in London since 1991 and is a British national. Critics maintain that from its inception the party, also said to be the fourth largest political party in Pakistan has used street violence and extortion [extracting money from businesses in Karachi through threatening, coercive tactics] to consolidate its power base in Sind, predominately in Karachi and has also made key alliances with various political parties. In recent months, it is widely believed the army-led operation in Karachi is focused on weeding out corrupt criminal elements from within Pakistani politics while others say it is to pressure Altaf Hussain to quit the party leadership. There is talk of splits within the party, with one faction wanting Hussain to quit. Incidentally, in the past, he has announced his resignation countless times through the press only to take it back later.

comments criticising the military establishment. Hussain retaliated through telephonic speeches to party workers, relayed through loudspeakers, accusing the paramilitary forces of torturing and murdering party workers. His party's Karachi headquarters were raided by paramilitary forces in March 2015 where weapons were recovered and suspects arrested.

Those arrested during the raid included Faisal Mehmood. Mehmood, had been sentenced to death *in absentia* in March 2014 by an anti-terrorism court for the murder of *Geo TV* reporter Wali Khan Babar in Karachi in 2011. The case against Mehmood had been hard to prove because he was in hiding and so did not appear in court to answer charges. Also, five witnesses to the murder were killed between April 2011 and November 2012. These witnesses included two policemen, the brother of an investigating police officer and an informer. All were shot dead. The informant, who had identified four out of the five murderers of Babar, was called outside his house and shot dead. In 2012, the only remaining witness was also killed. He was due to testify in court two days later. In March 2014, an anti-terrorism court sentenced six defendants for their role in the murder of Babar. Two of the six, including Mehmood, were given death sentences.

Babar was a Pashtun reporter with *Geo TV* when he was killed. He began working with *Geo English* [the English language 24/7 news channel which was closed down by the Jang Group] in 2007 and then joined *Geo News*, Urdu, in 2008. Babar had been threatened while covering political turf wars, extortion, targeted killings, and land grabbing in Karachi.

Editors who have been forced to provide airtime to Hussain know well the MQM's methods. The MQM dominates Karachi, Pakistan's economic powerhouse, and has long been able to bring the city to a standstill, even from London, its base-in-exile, despite military operations against it.

In the 1980s, the MQM had been backed by General Zia who saw his support as a way to damage the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). He had seized power in a military coup that overthrew the PPP and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Gen. Zia's support emboldened the MQM. The party started burning newspaper offices in Karachi and attacking opponents, turning the city's streets into

dumping grounds for mutilated bodies. Journalists were openly threatened for ‘non-compliance’ if they did not write in favour of the MQM or its violent tactics.

Hussain also demanded that editors travel to Nine Zero, the party’s Karachi headquarters, to ask forgiveness for their ‘misdemeanours’. With a solid vote bank - due to the fear they engendered across the city, the MQM brutalised rival militants and anyone who criticised the party, journalists included.

It was the MQM’s coalition with the Nawaz Sharif-led Islami Jamhoori Ittehad government in 1990-92 that brought the party to the peak of its power.⁷⁴ This resulted in the press becoming an MQM target, particularly in the cities of Karachi and Lahore; party workers burnt thousands of copies of *Dawn* newspaper, looted the offices of the *Jang Group*, and attacked journalists’ homes. The MQM was in a powerful position and demanded prominent coverage of its activities in newspapers and punished those editors and newspapers that failed to oblige.

However, it was during Benazir Bhutto’s second term (1993-96) that ethnic violence increased in the city of Karachi. In a bid to counter this violence, her government refused to make a deal with the MQM as previous governments had done. Instead, Bhutto pursued a clean-up operation [named Operation Blue Fox]⁷⁵ to purge the MQM of its violent elements. Thousands of party workers were killed during this operation, led by Bhutto’s interior minister Naseerullah Babar in 1993 - 1994.

In a way the tables were turned against the MQM, the party that had terrorised Karachi for decades. The press, especially those sections of the media that had previously been victimised by the MQM, reported on these human rights abuses. This unbiased reporting surprised many, not least the MQM.

4.2 Fear and compliance: terrorising the media, 1990s-present

The MQM had a particularly fraught relationship with reporters and editors at the *Herald*, a political monthly published by the *Dawn Media Group*. In March 1991,

⁷⁴ The Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (Islamic Democratic Alliance or IDA) under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif won a majority in parliament in the 1990 election and it was the first time that the conservatives began to rule the country. But their government splintered in 1993 with pressure from the opposition led by Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan People’s Party.

⁷⁵ Operation Blue Fox or Operation Clean-Up was an armed military intelligence programme led by the Sind Police and Pakistan Rangers with assistance from the army to cleanse Karachi of ‘anti-social’ elements and the MQM was the target in 1993-94. The army’s search and destroy operation led to the discovery of armed caches and torture chambers in Karachi. The city witnessed street fighting in those years. Thousands of MQM workers were killed and many went missing.

Herald reporter Zafar Abbas, who later joined the BBC and subsequently became editor of *Dawn* newspaper, was viciously attacked at his Karachi home and hospitalised. On 28 March 1991, an editorial in the Lahore-based English weekly newspaper, *The Friday Times* by Najam Sethi discussed a meeting between members of news agencies and the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Sethi observed that in private, members of news agencies thundered against the MQM's excesses, whilst publicly yielding to Altaf Hussain "who hectored them into a refresher course on the dos and don'ts of responsible journalism." In his editorial, Sethi lambasted Nawaz Sharif for his inability to protect the press: "When the press was muzzled under the long years of martial law, during which he [Nawaz Sharif] enjoyed his Chief Ministership of the Punjab without having to worry about the press, the question of any transgressions on our part didn't arise, of course. Later, however, when he was doling out plots to a bunch of greedy hacks and successfully urging them to have a go at the PPP, a 'free press' was absolutely the first word in his refurbished public vocabulary. But it seems now that those long years of life under the umbrella of the Generals has left an indelible mark on his politics. He is rapidly reverting to form. And we may have to wait a long time before someone else arrives on the scene and 'looks into it'."⁷⁶

In 1994 the *Herald* published stories of police and army raids, massive round-ups and siege-and-search operations for MQM leaders, of human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and MQM torture cells. *The Herald* had predicted the MQM had gone underground during Benazir Bhutto's Operation Clean-up [1993-94]⁷⁷ but would reassert itself at a later date.⁷⁸ On 29 June 1995, Karachi's provincial Sindh government, which was dominated by the MQM, invoked the 1960 Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance and banned six Karachi-based Urdu language newspapers for sixty days because of their "sensationalist reporting, and incitement against the government".

This muzzling of the press represented the harshest crackdown since the Zia years. In August 1995, police raided the home of Razia Bhatti, editor of the independent political monthly, *Newsline*, and searched the paper's editorial offices.

⁷⁶ Sethi, Najam, 'Editorial', *The Friday Times*, 28 March 1991, Karachi

⁷⁷ Operation Clean-up was launched under the direction of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in 1992 and followed later by Benazir Bhutto when she took over the reins of government after Sharif. She pursued the Operation in 1993-94 as part of her internal policies in Sind, especially in Karachi to purge the city of violence perpetuated by the MQM.

⁷⁸ *Herald*, July 1995, pp 34-35

Charges were brought, then dropped, against Bhatti, also against *Newsline's* publisher known to be critical of the government's role in Karachi's violence, and also the journalist and writer Mohammed Hanif who had been highly critical of Kamaluddin Azfar, Sindh's newly appointed governor.

Many other reporters, editors and publishers had sordid experiences with the MQM in the nineties. Insecurity is so deeply ingrained that journalists, convinced the MQM will avenge all criticism, reluctantly curtail their reports. However, media narratives quickly change when the establishment does not protect the MQM. For example, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI)⁷⁹ has young supporters who do not endorse violence in the way the MQM does, and there is a definite establishment patronage of the PTI. Nonetheless PTI workers have attacked and verbally abused female presenters reporting on political party rallies after August 2014.

In 2015 the MQM is out of favour in Karachi and the media can, for now, report freely about them. But no one is sure how long this hiatus will last. Or what role, if any, the media should play in keeping them out of power through negative reporting.

Major General Asim Bajwa, Director General of the military's Inter-Services Public Relations, posted a series of tweets dated 1 May 2015 condemning statements made by Altaf Hussain following the army's Operation Clean-up. Hussain's statements were broadcast on most private channels, which upset the establishment.⁸⁰ When PEMRA later threatened to issue TV channels with notices for airing Altaf Hussain's statements, media experts noted the 'selective interest' in applying the law that prohibits hate speech by militants. Then, in September 2015, the Lahore High Court ordered the media regulator to ban all coverage and even photographs of the leader of the MQM.

*

In 2013, it became evident that the Pakistani Taliban had tightened their grip over certain Pashtun majority suburbs in the city of Karachi – the latter clearly the political domain of parties such as the MQM working in coalition with another

⁷⁹ The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) formed in April 1996 by the former cricketer Imran Khan is said to have 10 million members in Pakistan and abroad. Since the May 2013 general election it has led a coalition government in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It claims to be based on an model of an egalitarian Islamic welfare state advocating equality for all in terms of education, jobs and economic and political opportunities.

⁸⁰ "Karachi MQM leader Altaf Hussain feels heat from the military," *BBC News*, 24 March, 2015

party such as the PPP – especially areas closer to the province of Baluchistan. Impromptu Taliban courts were set up to settle disputes in poor semi-urban districts. The local administration doesn't intervene and the police are fearful of taking actions against them.

This has contributed to the ongoing militant violence in urban centers, especially as the Taliban join up to pool resources, and manpower, with violent Sunni extremists groups in Sind and Punjab. It was the MQM which was the first to voice their concern over this development in Karachi that has resulted in turf wars between rival ethnic and political groups [*Geo TV* journalist Wali Khan Babar was allegedly killed while investigating these].

Murders of reporters escalated under Taliban dominance of Karachi. But many journalists told me the MQM is more lethal than even the Taliban in its retaliation against newspapers who will not do as they are told.

One Pashtun journalist told me he did not write exclusively on Pashtun politics for fear of being labelled a sympathiser of the Awami National Party (ANP). The ANP is a secular Pashtun party that has been targeted by the Taliban in Karachi, especially during the 2013 election when leaders were killed and forced to quit campaigning. This would make him a Taliban target. Nor would he visit Nine Zero, the headquarters of the MQM in Karachi for fear of his safety.

It is well-known that when Altaf Hussain addresses his followers by telephone from London, TV channels are compelled to air hours of incoherent rambling from a political leader allegedly intoxicated and inarticulate. If any channel does not air the speech, the MQM's media committee pressures the news editor and forces cable operators to 'demote' the channel. In some instances, Hussain has been known to telephone newsrooms.

In May 2013, I was privy to the making of a *BBC Newsnight* report on the MQM by journalist, Owen Bennett-Jones. Through many of Hussain's speeches transmitted in Karachi he had threatened journalists and editors; other political parties and their representatives. The *BBC* team exercised caution regarding the potential consequences of the report on their offices in Karachi. The report, broadcast in July 2013, focused on money laundering complaints that the London police were investigating; and that Hussain was using the UK as a base to incite violence, especially against journalists, in Karachi. MQM leader, Dr Farooq Sattar was interviewed in

the documentary which began with Hussain's warning to journalists: 'We will prepare your body bags.'

In June 2015, just before a second report by Bennett-Jones on the MQM's alleged Indian funding was due to be aired, several journalists tweeted that the *BBC's* offices in Karachi were temporarily closed. Bennett-Jones told me he worked with Pakistani senior editors who wanted him to do the story because they could not do it themselves. He confirms the offices were closed for fear of backlash from the party. The army is looking to place the blame for accepting Indian funds on the London leadership of the MQM. This indicates there is a desire to change the party's local leadership, and the timing is perfect for the change. "I thought Pakistani journalists cannot do this story. The head of the party [MQM] is sitting in London, ringing people up to kill people, it's not acceptable," Bennett-Jones told me. He believes journalists (both foreign correspondents and local journalists) in Pakistan, were not the target until the murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Karachi in February 2002.

Since the start of the War on Terror, followed by the extremist-jihadi influx, working as a foreign correspondent in Pakistan has become even more challenging. Bennett-Jones has not been to Karachi for two years and believes he has also been targeted by the MQM. "In 2013, after the first report on the MQM aired on the *BBC*, I had my London and Oxford homes broken into and computers taken. Not sure who did it or why," he said.

5. The Militant in the media

5.1 State complicity: Promoting an Islamist national discourse

During my time at the *Herald* (2010-14) I met Raza Rumi Ahmed. His stories on architectural landmarks in Lahore for a 2012 special annual issue earned accolades for the newspaper. Raza also authored a book, 'Delhi', is a respected editor for weekly English newspaper, *The Friday Times* and has co-hosted a talk show with a cleric on *Express News*. His tweets challenge intolerance and militant Islam. I met Raza in 2013 in Islamabad on the afternoon of the suicide bombing at the All-Saints Church in Peshawar.⁸¹ We met again in February 2014 and talked about books.

The following month, on 28 March, 2014, I heard he had been shot at while leaving the television studios in his car. More than 20 bullet casings were found by the police. The attackers killed his young driver, and left his bodyguard injured. Raza miraculously survived. He was subsequently not offered protection by the channel's owners or by the state and was forced to leave the country for fear of another attempt on his life.

Raza was not attacked for his writings in English-language newspapers but for his views on mainstream Urdu TV channels. His co-host, a religious cleric was not enough for Raza's right-wing, hard-line detractors. Radical clerics have often advocated death sentences on TV for those incorrectly accused of blasphemy and also encouraged violence against Ahmadis (a community banned as non-Muslim in Pakistan's Constitution) and Shias. Certain private broadcasters and the national media regulator have failed to take action against hatred and violence advocated by these arm-chair militants. But when journalists talk of democracy, human rights, they risk attacks on their lives.

Desk editors are instructed not to use the word *masjid* (mosque) for an Ahmadi place of worship, or to take a harsh editorial line regarding the North Waziristan military offensive. Often, in such cases of self-censorship, it is not actual threats that define editorial policy, but fear of threats.

⁸¹ Twin explosions occurred when two suicide bombers detonated their explosive-laden vests inside the All Saints Church in Peshawar killing 80 and wounding 100, many of the victims were women and children.

Educationist and physicist, Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy's secular views in the mainstream media have earned him death threats for years through email and on the telephone. He said his TV appearances caused the most controversy. "I never felt my writings have provoked reaction [from Islamists] and I have no Facebook or Twitter account. But my TV appearances have provoked threats."⁸²

However, attacks on progressive thinkers are part of the effort to silence them in the media. This increases space for clerics and Islamic radicals with the state complicit in promoting an Islamist nationalist discourse. Explaining that television is a reflection of general culture, he says the media has failed to provide an alternative culture with science and art. "Virtually the only content on TV is political dialogue, talk shows and localised news. It is completely introverted." This, he believes, has led to a high level of anxiety among the population. Without a free and intelligent media, democratic values will find no space. He partly attributes the state of the broadcast media to corrupt practices with anchors trying to please owners. According to Raza Rumi "media barons operate like tin-pot dictators and do not adhere to a code of ethics." Raza Rumi attributes this to cross-ownership of the media - when Musharraf's government issued TV licenses to private channels at the beginning of his regime, five or six group owners became oligarchs.

5.2 Threatened by the Taliban: Fatwas, attacks, hit-lists

Raza Rumi had been a policy analyst in the civil bureaucracy when he decided to work as a journalist in 2008. "After the return of democracy, I thought there was more space and a correction of the narrative was needed so it was time to jump into the fray," he said. He had spoken to *Amnesty International* about being named on a Taliban hit-list in March 2014. Rumours had circulated of a Taliban list of press clubs that could come under attack in 2011.⁸³ A *fatwa* (or ruling) was re-issued by the Taliban in October 2013 threatening the media. The Taliban accused the media of promoting secularism in their coverage of the war on terror, and were angered by them refusing to use the term 'martyr' when reporting on dead extremists.

⁸² Interview with the author, 5 July 2015

⁸³ "Taliban threat worries Pakistani media," *BBC News*, 17 October, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19978021>

Journalists were once again caught in the crossfire, between the government forbidding reporting on banned armed groups, and the Taliban demanding coverage. The attack on Raza Rumi was the fifth on a journalist from *The Express Media Group*. Three staffers of the same Group had lost their lives in January 2014. The staffers – a driver, technician and security guard - were attacked when gunmen ambushed their parked *Express Group* van in Karachi. They were sitting inside when they were targeted and shot multiple times.⁸⁴

One year earlier, on 16 August 2013, gunmen fired at the *Express Group*'s Karachi offices, injuring a female staffer and security guard. In another attack, in December 2013, gunmen fired at the same offices and threw home-made bombs, injuring a guard. Despite these attacks, the police were unable to arrest the perpetrators explaining they were not equipped to deal with terrorist attacks. However, the Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, TTP) claimed responsibility. Its spokesman, Ehsanullah Ehsan, telephoned Express News (the TV channel associated with the same group) and went live on air to say that the media needed to 'mend its behaviour' and not oppose their [the Taliban's] ideology, or risk facing more attacks. He said: "this is a war of ideologies, whoever opposes us will play the role of enemy and we will attack them." To the dismay of liberals at the newspaper, Ehsan was assured the station and newspaper would present the TTP's position if its reporters were protected. These attacks and threats did succeed in curbing criticism of Islamic militants. Editor of the *Express Tribune*, Kamal Siddiqi forbade senior staff from criticising any militant organisation or its allies.

Editors who protect their staff through self-censorship cannot be blamed, although self-censorship has compromised the quality of journalism and disrupted media work ethics. These trends are dangerous in societies where the state resorts to controlling information, and even deadlier when it comes to non-state actors.

After the 2014 murders of the media workers, Ehsanullah Ehsan, the TTP spokesperson phoned into a live radio talk show on *Express News* to claim responsibility. He complained that the media group was playing a propagandist role in the state's war against the Taliban. They had ignored his regular complaints to the channel, he said. To the dismay of liberals at the newspaper, Ehsan was assured,

⁸⁴ Khan, Faraz, 'Three staffers killed in attack on Express,' *Express Tribune*, 18 January 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/660249/3-staffers-killed-in-attack-on-express/>, last accessed 20 October 2015

live on air, that the station and newspaper would present the TTP's position if its reporters were protected.

In October 2014, the Taliban's Mohmand media wing⁸⁵ threatened journalists over their coverage of the ongoing North Waziristan operation.⁸⁶ In an email, the media was accused of "spread [ing] false and baseless news ... call mujahideen bad, disgusting and absurd names; blaspheme [against] Islamic traditions; not listen to our views; ... represent Islamic teachings in wrong and misleading ways; and judge us on every matter."⁸⁷ The TTP also issued warnings to media houses and reporters on social media and attacked journalists, including the BBC, after its Urdu-language service aired critical comments about the group's attempt to kill Malala Yusufzai in 2012. They claimed Malala had been attacked for promoting secularism.

Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy's believes that Islamists represent the greatest threat to the media, both outside [in the wider Middle-East] and inside the Pakistan. "The bulk of the Pakistani state is at war with Islamists, bombs are being dropped on the Taliban and their affiliates. We have lost more men fighting Islamists than in all wars with India. However, inside the Pakistani state there is a large segment of Islamists. While benefitting from modernity, they preach a non-tolerant way of life. They will agree that women need to be suppressed, for example, and Islam must be spread," he says.

5.3 Detained by the Taliban in Mohmand Agency: 2008

In December 2009, President Obama ordered a troop surge in Afghanistan as the Taliban gained momentum and Al-Qaeda retained its border safe havens. Pir Zubair Shah worked as a journalist for the *New York Times*. He had family in North Waziristan and worked in the region as a reporter until 2010, when he was forced to leave for the US.

⁸⁵ Mohmand is a district in FATA in the northwest. The TTP's Mohmand chapter is known to have a developed sophisticated media wing that deals with social media output as well. Headed by Omar Khalid Khurasani, it effectively uses Facebook and Twitter to release statements, engage with the media, and influences young people. It posts messages to threaten its critics using Twitter. The Pakistani Taliban has various 'regional chapters' across the country, each with their *de facto* leaders reporting to the head of the Pakistani Taliban.

⁸⁶ The North Waziristan military operation, also known as Zarb-e-Azb began in June 2014. It is a joint military offensive conducted by the Pakistan army against various militant groups, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), al-Qaeda, Jundallah and the Haqqani network.

⁸⁷ Ibid

He told me about his detention in a Taliban prison when investigating the takeover of the Ziarat marble quarry by the Taliban in 2008 in Mohmand Agency, in FATA. “I was detained by the Taliban for four nights in a prison. It was about a two-hour drive from the Afghan border in Chinarai where there were other shackled prisoners.”

Shah was held with photographer Akhtar Soomro after the Taliban became suspicious that they might be foreign spies. Shah did not tell them he was with the *NYT*. “This was a big story I was excited about. I told Soomro not to follow me beyond a certain point where they had a Taliban checkpoint. It was dangerous and I told Soomro to remain below the mountain ridge. But he camouflaged himself, pretending to be a local and attracted suspicion,” he told me.

“My local contacts had taken me to interview the Taliban in control of the mines. I was almost done when suddenly I saw Soomro making his way towards me. I knew we’d arouse suspicion, so headed straight back to our car.” It was too late. The Taliban wanted to talk to the photographer. Pir told them he was from Waziristan, but it made no difference and the two reporters were taken to a Taliban prison where they were held for four nights.

Many journalists who have covered war over the past few decades recall instances when they were able to talk their way out of difficult situations by explaining that if militant groups harassed or killed them there would be no one to tell their story. This doesn’t work anymore with the various different militant and sectarian groups in Pakistan, often working against the other, each peddling a more lethal ideology.

Shah smuggled a message to the *NYT* telling them not to publically broadcast his detention. He was worried because he came from a village where the Taliban had attacked local people and killed Mehsud⁸⁸ tribesmen. “Pakistan at the time had a new civilian government⁸⁹ that put pressure on the Taliban to release us,” he said.

⁸⁸ The Mehsuds are a Karlani Pashtu tribe based in South Waziristan. This tribe also has its members settled in Logar, Wardak, Ghazni and Kunduz provinces in Afghanistan. The Ahmadzai Wazir’s are the other tribe that dominates South Waziristan.

⁸⁹ Pakistan’s new civilian government at the time was led by the PPP leader, Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of the late Benazir Bhutto. The PPP won a landslide victory in the 2008 elections, remaining in power as the ruling political party until 2013 with Zardari as President. This completion of a full-five year term by the PPP and handing over power after a democratic election in May 2013 to the PML-N headed by the opposition leader, Nawaz Sharif was an unprecedented political development in the history of the country with a legacy of military interventions.

The Taliban commander had called *Voice of America* and the *BBC* to say they had journalists in custody. It was a coup for them. When we were released, the Taliban spokesperson said he had changed phone batteries twice a day because he had received many calls on our behalf, so the next time I wanted to come to interview them, I should inform them beforehand. Right after they released us, the government detained us to ask us questions for three additional nights,” he recalled.⁹⁰ In 2009, he shared a Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting at the *NYT* with Jane Perlez, Eric P. Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti.

5.4 Deadly nexus: the Taliban, sectarian groups and their Islamist ‘handlers’

In January 2015, Ihsan Ullah Ihsan, the Taliban’s central spokesperson, issued death threats to Zia ul Haq, the Peshawar-based assistant general secretary of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), also the news bureau chief of *ARY News*. Ihsan, using an international mobile number called Haq’s personal mobile and warned him of severe consequences if *ARY News* failed to propagate the Taliban’s views, and the PFUJ continued its opposition to the Taliban.⁹¹

It is known that the Pakistani Taliban is quick to respond with threatening messages or even targeted attacks when they see biased coverage by certain TV channels. This has been their way of browbeating the media. How much airtime must be given to the Pakistani Taliban has been a question that news editors have grappled with for years after 9/11, especially in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. There are no editorial guidelines on this especially when the violence perpetuated by the Taliban should find little mention on air. Finding themselves in the Taliban’s crosshairs, journalists tread carefully because they fear the consequences of critical reporting.

But it is not only the Taliban who threaten journalists. Sectarian militant groups, often working in tandem with the Taliban, also terrorise the media. Khudai Noor Nasar, a reporter for Radio Maashal, a station that broadcasts in the Pashtun lan-

⁹⁰ Interview with the author, 29 June 2015 – See, Pir Zubair Shah and Jane Perlez, ‘Pakistan Marble Helps Taliban Stay in Business,’ *The New York Times*, 14 July 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/14/world/asia/14taliban.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0. Pir Zubair Shah is the author of ‘Waziristan’ to be published by Knopf Doubleday Publishing.

⁹¹ ‘Taliban threaten Pakistan Journalist,’ *CPU Media Trust*, 3 February 2015, <http://cpu.org.uk/uncategorized/taliban-threatens-pakistan-journalist/>

guage, said reporters in the city of Quetta, where he is based, are regularly threatened. “As a journalist, I am mentally prepared that anything can happen to me in Quetta. Many journalists have left the city and region because of the restrictions and dangers of reporting,” he said.

Khudai Noor Nasar lists security agencies and Baluch separatists as the most dangerous to reporters, but said that in more recent times, the sectarian group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has also openly threatened journalists. Its political/militant wing Ahle Sunnat demands that the media give them adequate coverage. They regularly gather outside the Quetta Press Club, in view of the police, and threaten reporters. “They tell us they follow us when we travel on motorcycles and know where we live,” Nasar told me.

Taliban spokespersons contact local reporters by telephone and send group emails to claim attacks. They also use text messages. Khudai Noor Nasar remembered a recent conversation with the Taliban: “Ahmed Marwat, the TTP commander, phoned me about a year and a half ago, asking if they could do anything for me. This was in a way establishing cordial ties with the local press, in a bid to get their version out on radio. More often they call the KPK correspondent with their news. For instance, if they claim responsibility for an attack, we quote them directly. In one instance, when the news hadn’t been updated, announcing the Taliban had taken responsibility for a particular attack that had happened on the day, a Taliban representative called as a reminder because they were listening to Mashaal Radio,” he explains.⁹²

During an interview in July 2015, a Pakistani activist, academic and TV commentator (unnamed) was certain he had been threatened through anonymous phone calls made by militants from Afghanistan because he had appeared on a political talk show with a radical cleric. “These last two weeks (of June 2015) have been very tense,” he said. “For the first time, I’ve hired armed guards for protection although I’ve received sporadic threats over email and the phone for over a decade. I would get six calls a day that went down to two from anonymous numbers, each number was different. When I spoke to the authorities they said these calls were made using satellite phones and Skype and so untraceable.” He was advised to ‘be careful’.

⁹² Interview with the author, 12 July 2015 - Mashaal Radio, a news based broadcaster counters extremist radio channels in KPK, FATA and the border region with Afghanistan and operates under Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. In the tribal region, Mashaal News is on air every half hour for 3 to 4 minutes. It runs daily from 9 am to 6pm.

“They tell me, ‘I am an enemy of Islam,’ and that if I appear on TV, they would kill me.’ I attribute these calls to a programme on which I had a ‘bloody fight’ with a radical cleric. I didn’t know who else would be on this talk show. I was told that by criticising madressahs [religious seminaries], I had ceased to be Muslim.”⁹³

The establishment believes he is anti-military so they won’t let him teach at universities. “Unless you challenge these people [with radical, extremist thinking] they will have a walk over. They are very dangerous. In the long term, it will be wrong to remain silent,” he said.

6. Reporting AF-Pak

6.1 Focus on FATA: the militant backyard after 2001

On September 11, 2011, the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the ‘Government of Pakistan’ placed a half-page advertisement in *The Wall Street Journal*. It read: “Which country can do more for your peace?” Statistics were listed, revealing

⁹³ The interviewee requested anonymity, 5 July 2015.

the sacrifices made by the Pakistani army, and a photograph of the former assassinated Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. A blog in the same newspaper claimed *The New York Times* had refused to carry this advert because it was unable to clarify the source. Café Pyala, a Pakistani media-related blog alleged the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was behind the advert.⁹⁴

Whoever placed the advertisement, it reflected the narrative the military hoped to propagate to counter claims over its alleged links to militant groups in Waziristan. As a ‘security state’, the military’s dominance is not limited to security, but extends to the media. In Pakistan, one often hears the saying: “All countries have armies – but here, an army has a country.”

The military’s public relations wing, the ISPR frequently issues press statements and statistics to the media after combat operations targeting militants. Without direct access to Waziristan, the mountainous area covering North and South Waziristan agencies and populated by ethnic Pashtuns, and other tribal regions, journalists are unable to independently verify the numbers killed or captured.

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas, (FATA), which includes most of Waziristan, is 27,500 square kilometres on the border between the North-West Frontier Province and southern Afghanistan. FATA gained media attention after 2001 as an Al-Qaeda and Taliban base. Fighters from the Arab world, Central Asia, the Far-East and Europe congregated in the area for training, indoctrination and safe passage to attack American forces during the War on Terror.

Controlling militant movement across this border area was critical to the success of the NATO-led operation. Although Pakistan was told ‘to do more’ to help manage the area, this underdeveloped tribal region with a bulging militant economy and accumulation of foreign militants has remained a terror base.

The FATA region extends southwest into Baluchistan, which also has a history of political dissent and insurgencies by nationalist tribes. The Pashtun area of Baluchistan also served as home to the Afghan Taliban after 2001.

Over 70 percent of the local population in FATA listens to the radio, however in many districts Taliban groups have discouraged communities from watching TV. Nearly two thirds (60 percent) of FATA’s population is under 25 and media analysts believe consuming news from legally-run radio channels is a critical way to

⁹⁴ Siddique, Abubakar, *The Pashtun Question*, C Hurst & Co: London, 2014, p 126

deter young men from militancy. In the 1980s, Abubakar Siddique, a journalist and author, lived in Wana, South Waziristan's largest town. He recalls having only intermittent access to state-run *PTV* while at school and college. "Before the onset of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the tribal belt had no journalists," he said.

"Then, for the first time, international media organisations (the *BBC*, *Radio Free Europe* and *Voice of America*) arrived in the 1980s. *VOA* started a Pashtu broadcast in 1985 for about two hours per day, depending on where they were broadcasting from – London or Washington. Local bureaus were established in Quetta and Peshawar."⁹⁵

In the 1980s, the press was concentrated in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi. With the onset of the Afghan war (1979 - 1989), it expanded into Peshawar and international media organisations recruited local reporters from Peshawar and Quetta. When Abubakar Siddique was at school, he could buy newspapers that were a day old in Wana, transported from the nearby towns of Tank and Dera Ismail Khan.

News on the radio was Afghanistan-focused. Later on reporters moved to discuss Pakistan-centric issues linked to the Afghan war in the 1980s. But journalism was not a prized career. "We didn't have access to dailies until *Mashriq* newspaper expanded to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the 1990s," said Siddique.⁹⁶

Even today, in 2015, media experts say that without administrative and governance reforms, journalists working in FATA are not protected by the Pakistan government because the tribal region comes under the Frontier Crimes Regulation. The latter a special set of laws only applicable in FATA.⁹⁷ And because journalism is no longer a forbidden profession in FATA, that more young people are in danger of getting killed because of lack of proper training for young reporters working in conflict zones.

Pakistan's central media regulator, PEMRA, is not authorised to grant licenses for private broadcast media in FATA. And FATA does not have a media regulatory framework to issue licenses for private TV operations and FM radios. This

⁹⁵ Interview with the author, 1 July 2015

⁹⁶ The *Daily Mashriq* newspaper is published in Urdu in Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore and Quetta.

⁹⁷ Residents of Fata do not have the right to request a change to any conviction in court; do not have the right to legal representation; and the right to present reasoned evidence. In Aug 2011, President Zardari enacted a presidential order to amend the FCR or the Frontier Crimes Regulation which if implemented correctly would impact the civil and human rights of Fata residents.

means no newspapers or other current affairs journals are published from this region. Three legal radio stations are operated by the FATA Secretariat. Because of the lack of a regulatory framework, illegal, militant run radio stations and media outlets operate freely in the region.⁹⁸ According to local sources, certain of these illegal FM radio channels have indoctrinated women to become suicide bombers. It is in regions such as these, where extremists use radio to broadcast their propaganda, that official state-run terrestrial TV is often unavailable so there is nothing to counter extremist messages.

“FATA has been a war zone before the creation of the country. It is a unique part of Pakistan where all federal laws don’t apply. Pakistan inherited this from its British colonial rulers and then imposed their own restrictions [in the region] over decades. With the Afghan jihad, this region was turned into a dumping ground for weapons given the proliferation of small arms. You could buy a weapon for 300 [Pakistani] rupees in the 1980s. FATA was radicalised with varied Taliban groups emerging; the region was used as a launch pad for Kashmiri militants through the 1990s,” Abubakar Siddique told me.

6.2 Tribal journalism: lack of security and training

Before 9/11, journalists in FATA had worked at smaller bureau offices or as fixers with reporters in cities. They were school teachers and low-ranking officials who doubled as fixers and reporters learning from journalists in KPK (Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Islamabad. Rahimullah Yusufzai a veteran journalist who worked in the region through the 1980s and 90s, is one of the best known, and better connected of these journalists. After the Soviet war, there wasn’t much reporting from this region. In the 1990s, ammunition depots were dismantled and the mujahidin were no longer active. Hardly any non-conflict news came out of FATA in those years.

Then 9/11 happened. District and tribal reporters, who had previously mostly filed small stories placed on the back pages of mainstream newspapers, were suddenly in demand with TV channels, as local stringers across Waziristan. More reporters from the FATA region were killed than ever after 2001, with 30 journalists

⁹⁸ FATA is governed under the Article 247 (3) of the Constitution of Pakistan though the region has a parliamentary representative in both houses. The President holds direct executive authority in the area. Legislation passed by the National Assembly does not apply in this region although the President has the authority to extend the operation of any law to these areas. The most recent example of such exercise of the power is the FATA Reforms bill, which was promulgated in August 2011.

targeted for reporting on politics and human right abuses. Many of the region's five million inhabitants have been forced to leave their homes. Although the Tribal Union of Journalists has 250 members many have relocated because of the pressures associated with their profession, the lack of organisational support, financial insecurity and the demands of reporting from an active conflict zone for which they are not properly equipped nor trained.

Hayatullah Khan was among the first journalists killed in 2006. He had reported on a drone strike that had killed a key Al-Qaeda commander. Khan's report stated that Musharraf's regime had provided bases for US drone strikes. This contradicted the government's position. Hayatullah Khan had established the strike was a hellfire missile from a predator. He published photographs that provoked protests against Musharraf for tacitly allowing drone strikes.

Six months after Hayatullah Khan's reports, in December 2005, he was kidnapped by unidentified gunmen. His brother witnessed his kidnap. Six months later he was killed. Days before his kidnapping, a Taliban commander had been killed with four others in a blast in North Waziristan. The official version stated bomb making materials had exploded. But Hayatullah Khan' reported that the men were killed by a missile from an unknown drone.

While no one took responsibility for his abduction and death, allegations point to the fact that the intelligence agencies were involved. A judicial inquiry was conducted but never made public. In 2007, his widow was killed by a bomb that detonated outside her home. She had said in an interview that her husband had warned her he would be killed and he had named those who would know why he had been killed. Again it was assumed (and alleged) she was killed by security agencies. Five children were left orphaned when she died.

In early November 2015, Zaman Mehsud, a journalist from South Waziristan with the Urdu daily, *Daily Ummat* and the president and secretary general of the tribal Union of Journalists' South Waziristan chapter, was shot dead in the Tank district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. He was also the district co-ordinator for the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in Tank. The latter is an independent rights group investigating and documenting the role of all sides in the ongoing conflict in Pakistan. Zaman Mehsud was aged forty and leaves behind a widow and five young children. In a statement sent to the Reuters news agency, a Pakistan

Taliban commander Qari Saif Ullah Saif said the militant group claimed responsibility for the attack. His chilling message read: ‘We killed him [Zaman Mehsud] because he was writing against us ... we have some other journalists on our hit list in the region. Soon we will target them.’ This is yet another reminder that the state must investigate the killing of journalists no matter who claims responsibility.⁹⁹

Almost all journalists I interviewed working in hostile environments have not been trained adequately by their employers, nor paid sufficiently. Reporters often do not have letters of employment or press ID. Most felt threatened by both militants and security agencies. Without legal, financial and physical protection, they are unable to turn to government bodies or press associations for help when they face attacks. Intelligence agencies accuse reporters of working as spies. One Pashtun journalist from Waziristan told me he was detained near the Afghan border when investigating the refugee influx into Pakistan.

“In 2001, I was threatened when working in Khyber Agency¹⁰⁰, stopped at the check post and told not to go further to cover the story although I had an ID and proof that I was a journalist. They interrogated me for hours. I don’t want to recall those years. I didn’t feel like I had any rights that day. I was not beaten heavily. But given a lecture in patriotism and basically told to stop working. I was a freelancer and wanted to report on the humanitarian crisis,” Abubakar recalled.

Many journalists were threatened, detained and questioned after 9/11, most believe their interrogators were the military and security forces but they rarely identified themselves and there was little evidence. “At the time, most of the journalists, including myself were lucky to survive,” Abubakar said. “But later years when people started reporting on the Taliban / military nexus, reporters started getting killed.”¹⁰¹

6.3 From Waziristan to Islamabad: Targeted and harassed, February 2015

Until recently, Rasool Dawar, a journalist, reported for foreign news outlets and later, *Geo TV* from North Waziristan. He was detained and interrogated for the

⁹⁹ The Tank district where Zaman Mehsud was killed borders South Waziristan and is notorious for violence perpetrated by militants, including the targeted killing of journalists and rights activists. Also see, ‘Pakistan must pursue killers of Zaman Mehsud and bring them to justice, Committee to Protect Journalists, New York, 3 November 2015

¹⁰⁰ Khyber Agency is one of the eight tribal areas in the FATA region that is between the Tirah Valley extending to Peshawar.

¹⁰¹ Interview with the author, 1 July 2015

first time in February 2015. Two months later he was blindfolded and detained again, only to be taken to the same place he had been originally held. The second time he was held for more than eight hours, interrogated and warned not to report on militancy; drone attacks; internally displaced persons from Waziristan. He says he does not know, or is too afraid to say, who abducted him.

Soon after these two incidents, in May 2015, he sent an email to his bosses, copied to human rights organisations and senior government ministers, outlining threats and abuse he had been facing.

When I spoke to him in June [2015] he had moved to Islamabad and had stopped reporting on militancy but was being asked to return to Waziristan by his bosses. He refused to tell me ‘70 percent of what happened’ to him in detention in February 2015. “You will read ‘another dead journalist killed by unknown assailants,’ if I tell you everything,” he said. But he confirmed that he had been interrogated about the stories he had reported, how much he earned, whether India had bases in Afghanistan. “I am still trying to figure out why they detained me, called me on the phone to intimidate me, warn me. I am not a terrorist. I don’t work against the national interest,” said the father of five who started working as a reporter in 2007.

He told his interrogators that he would stop working as a journalist, and would leave the country, but they shrugged him off. “Their threatening attitude and ‘advice’ to leave town for some time has me gravely concerned about my safety as it’s still uncertain when all this is going to end. This is the first time in my nine-year journalistic career that I have experienced such a frightening situation when I was even physically harassed.”

6.4 Baluchistan: A cemetery for journalists telling the truth

The Baluchistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) claims 41 journalists have been targeted in the province since 2008. According to the union, “Baluchistan has become a cemetery for journalists, who perform their journalistic duties honestly and bravely.”¹⁰² These dangers keep younger reporters away from the profession.

¹⁰² Notezai, Akbar, Muhammad ‘The Dangers of being a Journalist in Baluchistan,’ *The Diplomat*, 4 November 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/11/the-danger-of-being-a-journalist-in-balochistan/>

Malik Siraj Akbar launched Baluchistan's first online English language newspaper, *The Baloch Hal* in 2009. Although the newspaper was banned and blocked in Pakistan in 2010, he has continued to manage it for six years, while living in exile. He was forced to leave Pakistan after years of threats and intimidation, which started in 2007 when he was at *The Daily Times* in Quetta and increased after he launched *The Baloch Hal* in 2009. At that time he also wrote for international publications, and spoke at various conferences on Baluchistan's human rights.

When Akbar informed Baluchistan's governor about the threats, he was advised to 'do positive journalism' on the government's development projects. Each time he was picked up, his abductors clearly identified themselves as personnel of the Military Intelligence, he told me. "It was not 'picking up' in the kidnapping style. They would tell me in advance that they had to take me to the [military] 'cantonment' for investigation. I did not want to go with them but there was no way I could say no. They would come outside Quetta Press Club, park at the corner and call me on the phone to go with them silently without telling anyone where I was going and with whom... They were scary encounters. I call all those episodes involuntary meetings."¹⁰³

I interviewed Malik in April 2015 in Washington, where he has lived in self-exile since 2011. When we spoke he was about to graduate from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He told me why he had decided to leave Pakistan. "I received threats from the Military Intelligence (MI) when I was in Pakistan. I have also received threats through anonymous callers who had warned me against writing against the army's actions in Baluchistan. Once the threats begin, they do not end. Those who reach out to you; keep coming to you again and again on different occasions. They just remind you that you are under their watch. There is a lot of psychological pressure involved in these tactics," he explained.

I asked Malik about how conditions have changed for journalists working in Baluchistan.

"When 9/11 happened, I was 19. I had never heard of violence against journalists in Pakistan or in Baluchistan. The first time I came across reports of violence against a journalist was when *The Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl was kid-

¹⁰³ Malik Siraj Akbar responded to the survey questions on 20 April 2015. I interviewed him shortly after.

napped in Pakistan. The reason I mention this is if I were a teenager in today's Pakistan where dozens of journalists have been killed in the past few years, I would never want to become a journalist. Pakistan is a haven for great stories. I wish there was no pressure or threat to one's personal safety. A lot of journalists have braved (all) to tell great stories. However, I think there would be far better coverage of these issues if there were no threats to journalists' lives. Many engage in self-censorship to continue their work but they are surely not able to do the kind of journalism they want to do. Everyone exercises some form of censorship."

Senior journalists say there is no longer any journalism in Baluchistan. For example, in Khuzdar, a district located in central Baluchistan, where mass graves were discovered in 2013, all the local journalists have left and the press club has been closed.

The pressing question is why journalists continue to be killed in this region, and why no one has been tried or even convicted for these murders. Reporters brave enough to stay on and work in the area say they have learnt to balance the forces that threaten them, given the complex map of political players. These include insurgent organisations, feuding tribes, sectarian groups (used by the state to counter nationalist insurgents), the Frontier Constabulary and the military and intelligence services.

Many of the press releases that claim responsibility for terrorist attacks contain death threats to specific individuals with instructions to publish without editing. Aurangzaib Khan, an experienced journalist, trains reporters from Baluchistan. He argues that in areas like Baluchistan the dynamics of the profession are intertwined with tribal politics. "In tribal agencies, the lives of people are affected by local forces and the military is very much a force to reckon with in Baluchistan and FATA. In those days after the war on terror, the military was just beginning to make inroads but the Taliban was already there. So by force or willingly, journalists had to do the bidding of local forces – Baluch insurgents [in Baluchistan] and Taliban in FATA," he said,

"Journalists are directly threatened by them if they don't comply. In Baluchistan, reporters are more informed but they can't go against the sentiments of their own tribes and community. Even the reporter will say the government is unfair, if the community has an anti-government stance. They relate to the larger conflict and

make sense of it differently. They have access to information, even though the information infrastructure is not present, such as the Internet and phones. Traditional societies are still well connected and information filters through as word of mouth but it could be censored.”

A decade ago, political talk shows on national TV would not openly critique the ISI or the army for its involvement in Baluchistan or even risk discussing Baluchistan’s enforced disappearances. Journalists, activists and lawyers have been summarily shot and their mutilated bodies dumped on the roadside, if they dare discuss these subjects. In my conversation with Malik, he agreed that the media has the freedom to criticise the civilian government but the military will not allow or tolerate criticism after a certain level. “When Hamid Mir covered the Baloch missing persons’ issue and invited Mama Qadeer Baloch [an activist campaigning against enforced disappearances] onto his show, showing solidarity with his cause, the ISI tried to kill him. Same is true for Syed Saleem Shahzad who was killed [in 2011]. I think the biggest challenge for the news media is to liberate people’s thinking from the military-driven national narrative, the army is still in control of that,” he said.

“Whenever something happens, the usual ‘analysts’ appear on talk shows and spread conspiracy theories telling us that US, India or Israel is responsible for the mess in Pakistan. In these ten years since the broadcast media was liberalised, that breakthrough has not come yet. People cannot still question the role of Islam on TV because that is something beyond our official narrative. When the media liberates itself from these controlling powers, it will do the country a great service.”¹⁰⁴

7. Postscript: Why the chroniclers of history are killed?

“If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to bear.” – George Orwell

¹⁰⁴ Ibid 54

This paper posed the following questions: who is responsible for the attacks against Pakistan's news media? What effects has the violence and intimidating tactics had on the quality of reportage in Pakistan? What are the self-imposed boundaries that journalists and editors have been forced to follow as a result of intimidation?

Based on research, including a study of literature and extensive interviews with journalists and media workers, this study concludes that the media is subject to attack from five state and non-state actors: militant groups and sectarian organisations, in particular the Pakistani Taliban, sectarian groups such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in Quetta, from political parties, particularly the MQM in Karachi, but also from the state and its security apparatus, including military intelligence (MI) and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

The state's security apparatus stands accused of subverting media freedom by threatening and harassing journalists – women reporters included – who dare write (and broadcast) about certain issues, including the military operation in North Waziristan, drone strikes, internally displaced persons and Baluchistan and its missing persons.

This study also concludes that those responsible for the threats and attacks against journalists, and the media as an industry, are not held accountable by the state. Many ask whether Pakistan's security and military agencies will ever be investigated for their harassment of journalists.

The violence directed at the media has inevitably had a negative impact on the quality of journalism in Pakistan. Evidence shows that the battle for control and influence between the press and state and non-state actors has driven segments of the media to become biased and even corrupt. This is because the state, political parties and the military have coerced the media into such a subservient position that any controversial opinion or stance or investigative reporting could lead to a loss of advertising revenue, or cause harm to staffers.

In many ways, the contemporary news media has failed the people as the fourth pillar of the state for its lack of fact and truth. Corporate influence, government pressure and political control have placed the media in a precarious position, often struggling to maintain professionalism in the face of commercial gain.

Abbas Nasir, a former editor of *Dawn* newspaper and *Dawn TV*, recently wrote about the media's 'willingness' to be used as a conduit for information or even 'dis-information' as the military intervenes in both creating and destroying political players. He was referring to the MQM's fall from grace and its recent fallout with the military. He accused anchor-driven news of bias, writing that while it kept up with the political narrative it often failed to be objective. His advice: "...even if some of the media is allowing itself to be used in the mistaken belief that it is serving a good cause, my humble suggestion would be: don't. No good cause is good enough or needs to be served with patent lies and unethical practices."¹⁰⁵

The fear of violence and recrimination has forced the media to adjust its behaviour. I found evidence through my research of many instances of self-censorship, biased reporting, and an overall lack of investigative reportage because of fear of retribution from political parties, militant and religious groups, the military; and even commercial advertisers, media bosses, and corporate businesses.

Reporters working in the tribal region of FATA have said they refrain from criticising the Taliban or use language that refers to them as militants. Many have told me that they feared retribution from the security forces if they commented on military policies; journalists covering Baluchistan will tread carefully when investigating topics such as enforced disappearances of Baluch activists and nationalists in the province.

Media groups have more recently been directed to stop reporting on the MQM, especially when the party's leader, Altaf Hussain gives telephonic speeches from London. These directives have come from the state regulator at the behest of the army that is 'cleansing' the violent elements from within the political party in Karachi, say editors. This kind of regulating of information has meant that corporate influence, government pressure and political control have placed the media in a precarious position, often struggling to maintain professionalism in the face of commercial gain or threats to the lives of journalists.

On the other hand, the paper also found that there are journalists in Pakistan who, despite knowing the dangers, have refused to compromise their standards

¹⁰⁵ Nasir, Abbas, "Why beatify some?", *Dawn*, 12 Sept. 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1206402>, last accessed 17 Sept, 2015

and their ethics. These journalists are prepared to pay a high price for the right to report truthfully and objectively.

Veteran commentators and writers, especially those who speak out against Islamic militancy and have been threatened for years, told me it is important not to stay silent as this would allow Pakistan to fall victim to violent terrorism.

At this juncture in the country's democratic experiment, as Pakistan fights Islamist militant groups, there are calls to reform the state and its institutions. This is where the media must re-evaluate its role and responsibility to preserve values of tolerance, progress and equality. It must also re-evaluate its own internal code of ethics and come up with a self-regulatory body that the industry institutes.

Although certain media conglomerates, such as the Dawn Media Group, have protected editorial independence, they are continually forced to reinvent methods to circumvent threats and censorship whether in print or for broadcast purposes. This self-censuring calls for a concerted effort to reclaim lost freedom and even objectivity. The media, especially the influential mainstream Urdu print and broadcasters [media groups such as the Jang Group and the Nawa-i-Waqt Group, for example], could be vitally important to how Pakistan's democracy develops in the future.

7.1 Recommendations

Private news media has paid a high price for pursuing an informed debate when it has done so. We underestimate the self-censorship behind the making of a newspaper or a political news programme or even a culture or science series. Journalists think twice about posting a tweet. Trolls are becoming more dangerous, issuing death threats on Twitter. Activists, bloggers and whistleblowers don't talk anymore. The impact is more visible and prevalent in Waziristan, Karachi or Lahore. When the security services pick one or two well-known names in the media, threaten them and hurt them, it creates fear. How must journalists protect themselves? Is there something they do that endangers their lives? How should media owners react to threats? Are media owners independent or actually part of the problem?

The safety of journalists in Pakistan must come first. Training for editors and reporters can help to achieve this, as can creating a safety net to protect the media against corporate interests. This could enable them to work without fear of commercial pressures.

Media professionals in Pakistan have never agreed, or worked to, a code of ethics. This paper recommends that in order to curb corruption and manage the impact of commercial interests, Pakistan's media should produce an ethical code to govern their profession.

Also, media owners must be accountable to an independent watchdog. If the political future of a regime depended on media coverage and the media was able to generate a shift in national temperature – a case being the 2007 Lawyer's Movement, General Musharraf's clampdown on the judiciary and the media that divided the nation – then it becomes even more important to report with clarity and courage. "At a time of internal conflict, each side is concerned about the information accessible. When stories are clear and balanced it becomes easier to stay safer as a journalist," Iqbal Khattak explains.

Khattak believes that Pakistan needs an independent organisation like the CPJ that can talk to the government directly on behalf of journalists. "I recommend that we handle sensitive stories more professionally, provided the government and state institutions are ready to understand the role of journalists. The tenuous relationship between the media and the state has impacted the quality of journalism," he says.

The best policy is to engage the military and the state. Khattak suggests that journalists should approach the military as a partner rather than as an opponent. "In Baluchistan, the situation is beyond serious. I believe the government is also willing to work with the media to fight the impunity with which reporters are killed. Six murder cases of journalists have been unsolved although a tribunal has been set up by the government. There is more than one perpetrator: insurgents, the state, tribal dynamics, drug mafias and sectarian groups. The security services make it into the top three on this list." Fighting impunity is about pressuring the state and security services to stop killing journalists and protecting perpetrators.

Recommendations by the Pakistan Coalition on Media Safety to improve the safety of journalists include the appointment of a special federal prosecutor to assist the Supreme Court in investigating attacks on journalists and provincial-level

prosecutors to deal with cases of attacks on the media. Media houses should be asked to adopt safety protocols based on best practices, and editors must enforce the message that no story is worth a journalist's life - even for TV ratings. TV reporters covering stories in hostile environments or during ongoing militant attacks must be trained to wear flak jackets, to identify themselves as press so they are not confused with militants and to evaluate threat levels in a given situation. These read as basic requirements for most, but for local reporters with no training in conflict reporting, such guidelines don't come easily and should be reinforced by larger bureaux they work with. Investment should be sought to set up journalism schools.

It is impossible to publish all names of dead journalists here. We can't tell all their stories of harassment, attacks targeting family and relatives, sinister telephone calls, beatings and torture and, then, untimely death. We can't point out all the perpetrators because they haven't been prosecuted and brought to justice. Zafar Baloch, shot dead by gunmen inside his home in Baluchistan on June 29, 2015 had been receiving death threats. He was killed during the week I set out to write this paper. Malik Mumtaz, 48, with *Geo TV* and *The News International* was gunned down on February 27, 2013 in his hometown of Miran Shah, North Waziristan. He had reported on the polio vaccination programme. An *Abb Takke* TV reporter, Shan Dahar was shot in the back on January 1, 2014 while filming outside a pharmacy near the Badah Press Club in Larkana in Sind, investigating the unauthorised sale of pharmaceutical drugs.

This is why the consequences of reporting the truth are becoming riskier with the state remaining willfully ignorant as freedom of expression and the media are under siege. And this is why the chroniclers of history in the present are being killed. Why and how this continues with impunity is what must be found and stopped.

I hope this paper can make a small contribution towards understanding why the state is failing to protect the media and identifying mechanisms that can be set in motion for making journalism safer in Pakistan.

Acronyms

ANP

The Awaami National Party was elected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2008-2012. It is a secular Pashtun party advocating strongly against extremism.

APP

Associated Press of Pakistan is a government operated national news agency

ASWJ

Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat is an anti-Shia Muslim religious group that is known to attack Shias in Pakistan

BLA

The Baluchistan Liberation Army is an ethnic Baloch armed group calling for the separation of Baluchistan from the rest of Pakistan and responsible for attacks in the province

BUJ

The Baluchistan Union of Journalists is the journalists' union for Baluchistan

ECP

The Election Commission of Pakistan is an independent, autonomous, and constitutionally established federal institution responsible for administering the general election

FATA

Federally Administered Tribal Areas is a semi-autonomous tribal region in north-west Pakistan bordering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan and south-western Afghanistan

ISI

The Directorate for the Inter-Services Intelligence is the military's intelligence service

ISPR

Inter-Services Public Relations is the official public relations arm of the Pakistan Armed Forces

KPK

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was formerly known as North-West Frontier Province and has its provincial capital in Peshawar

LEJ

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is a radical anti-Shia militant group with ties to the Pakistan Taliban and Al-Qaeda

MQM

The Muttahida Quami Movement is a political party based in Karachi with representatives in the federal and Sindh provincial parliaments and an exiled leader, Altaf Hussain living in London

MNA

Member of the National Assembly

MPA

Member of the Provincial Assembly

PPO

Press and Publication Ordinance is one of the regulatory and legislative mechanisms promulgated in 1962 by General Ayub Khan effecting the Pakistan media

RPPO

Revised Press and Publication Ordinance was issued by General Zia-ul-Haq in 1980

PCPO

Press Council of Pakistan Ordinance was issued in 2002 by General Pervez Musharraf

PEMRA

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority is the state's media regulator also tasked with issuing licenses to private broadcasters

PMLN

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz is the ruling political party in government from 2013 to present. It has had two previous terms in government.

PPL

Progressive Papers Limited

PPP

The Pakistan People's Party led a coalition government in 2008 to 2013 under the leadership of Asif Ali Zardari who is the late Benazir Bhutto's husband.

PTA

The Pakistan Telecommunications Authority

PTI

Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf party is political party led by former cricketer Imran Khan and has a larger presence in KPK

PTV

Pakistan Television Network (state-owned)

SSP

Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan was renamed Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat when banned by President Pervez Musharraf in 2002 as a terrorist organisation.

Appendix

Survey questionnaire*

(Please state who you work for, which city (cities), what areas you cover and when the threats/intimidations started)

1) Have you been threatened, intimidated by the state (political parties/Inter-Services Intelligence, the military) and/or non-state actors (Taliban; sectarian groups, criminal gangs)? If so, what kind of threats have you received, when did they start and for how long did they persist?

(As an editor of a major newspaper (or a news editor within a newsroom) have you been subject to verbal (phone), and/or written threats (email/text messaging) or tweets from the above, asking you to redact a story, stop reporters from following an investigation trail or simply threatened because of the opinions your organization supports?)

2) What action have you taken as a result (of the above) and who did you report these threats to within your organization and/or to the police/ government authorities? What was the solution given to you? Did they stop and do you feel safer at the moment and able to do your work without fear?

3) Have you been picked up, interrogated and beaten by ‘unknown persons’ as a warning that you should stop doing what you do as a journalist or stay away from a story you have been pursuing? Would you be able to identify those who have threatened you in the past and/or continue to do so?

4) What impact has this kind of physical coercion and violent intimidation had on your career and your safety and that of your family and your employer? Who has been responsible for this violence against you and what steps did you take to report the matter? Were the perpetrators identified openly and persecuted?

5) How do you view the media landscape for working journalists in Pakistan, especially if we look at the period after 9/11 when the violence, vulnerability and intimidation became more frequent, brutal and openly reported as well? Did that stop working journalists from getting the story or leave them more committed than ever before?

6) Do you believe the media has contributed to a more tolerant and democratized Pakistan in recent years by playing its role as watchdog, despite being restricted by a variety of political actors and non-state actors vying to shape public opinion? If you agree, then what role does the press play in Pakistan today? (Please give instances where media reportage has worked positively to highlight issues; identify problems and hold politicians/military to account)

7) How controlled is the media – broadcast especially – and how vulnerable to corruption and co-option?

8) Can you talk some about the list of journalists earmarked by the Pakistani Taliban for attack? Have you been named on such a 'list'; been privy to the contents/names; or been attacked as a result of being named a target by the Taliban?

*[This survey was conducted countrywide between March and July 2015. It was also taken by reporters working in the Federally Administered Tribal Agency, bordering Afghanistan, to collect a representative sample. Respondents were mostly aged between 20 and 45. Male and female journalists, researchers, editors and columnists were interviewed working or having worked for a cross-section of media [TV, radio, print and digital] in various languages and dialects; having covered topics from politics and security, to art, culture, social issues and business reporting. 'Journalist' refers to editors, reporters, columnists, writers, content producers]

Bibliography

Abbas, Mazhar, 'When Musharraf Silenced the Media,' *The Express Tribune*, 2 November 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/459782/when-musharraf-silenced-the-media/>

Akbar, Ali, 'Senior Journalist killed in KP's Tank district, *Dawn*, 3 November 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1217213>, last accessed 3 Nov. 2015

'Asma Jahangir: Musharraf has lost his marbles and is targeting progressives', *The Independent*, 17 November 2007, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/asma-jahangir-musharraf-has-lost-his-marbles-and-is-targeting-progressives-398989.html>, last accessed 5 Aug, 2015

'Assailed from all Sides,' *The Economist*, 24 May 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21602763-army-mullahs-and-imran-khan-try-close-popular-television-station-assailed-all>, last accessed 12 Aug 2015

'Attacks on the Press 2007: Pakistan', *Committee to Protect Journalists*, <https://cpj.org/2008/02/attacks-on-the-press-2007-pakistan.php>, last accessed 10 Jun. 2015

"Between Radicalization and Democratization in an Unfolding Conflict: Media in Pakistan," *International Media Support*, July 2009

Boone, Jon, 'Pakistan press freedom under pressure from army,' *The Guardian*, 14 September 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/14/pakistan-press-freedom-army-journalists-military>, last accessed 22 Sept. 2015

Buner, Shaheen, 'Journalists Paying High Price for Covering Pakistan violence', *Gandhara*, 11 May 2015, <http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/pakistan-journalist-threats/26996221.html>, last accessed 20 Jun. 2015

DeFraia, Daniel, "Between Conflict and Stability: Journalists in Pakistan and Mexico Cope with Everyday Threats," in *Attacks on the Press: 2014*, *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 27 April 2015

Dietz, Bob, "The Significance of Umar Cheema's Abduction", *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 9 September 2010, <http://cpj.org/blog/2010/09/the-significance-of-umar-cheemas-abduction.php>

“Director T2F Sabeen Mahmud shot dead in Karachi,” *Dawn*, 25 April 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1177956/director-t2f-sabeen-mahmud-shot-dead-in-karachi>, last accessed 28 Apr. 2015

Gall, Carlotta, “What Pakistan Knew About Bin Laden”, *The New York Times*, 19 March 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/magazine/what-pakistan-knew-about-bin-laden.html>

Hassan, Kiran, “The Role of Private Electronic Media in Radicalizing Pakistan,” *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 103, Issue 1, Routledge: London, 2014

Hassan Raza S, “Pakistan’s MQM wins by-elections, dismisses talk of troubles”, *Reuters*, 24 April 2015

Jalal, Ayesha, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: London, 2014

“Karachi MQM leader Altaf Hussain feels heat from the military”, *BBC News*, 24 March 2015

Lieven, Anatol, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, Penguin: London, 2012

Masood, Salman, “Danger Persists for Reporters in Pakistan, Despite Vow to Protect Them”, *The New York Times*, 10 November 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/11/world/asia/danger-persists-forreporters-in-pakistan-despite-vow-to-protect-them.html>

Nawaz, S, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army and the Wars Within*, Oxford University Press: Karachi, 2009

Niazi, Zamir, *The Press in Chains*, Oxford University Press: Karachi, 2010

Noorani, Ahmed, “What Cheema reported and paid for through his nose”, *The News International*, 5 September 2010 <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-386-What-Cheema-reported-and-paidfor-through-his-nose>, last accessed 25 August 2013

‘Pakistan government mandates guidelines for broadcasters,’ *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 21 August 2015, <https://cpj.org/2015/08/pakistani-government-mandates-guidelines-for-broad.php>, last accessed 12 October 2015

‘Pakistan: Media Restrictions Undermine Election,’ *Human Rights Watch*, 17 February 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2008/02/15/pakistan-media-restrictions-undermine-election>, last accessed 25 Apr. 2015

‘Pakistan’s Geo “should be shut” for Hamid Mir attack coverage,’ *BBC News*, 23 April 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-27125789, last accessed 22 Jun. 2015

Qarar, Shakeel, “Lal Masjid Protest: FIR registered against Maulana Aziz,” *Dawn*, 22 December 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1151858/lal-masjid-protest-fir-registered-against-maulana-aziz>, last accessed 30 Apr. 2015

Rehmat, Adnan, “Annual State of Pakistan Media Report 2006-2007,” *Global Media Journal*, Vol IV, Issue 1, Islamabad, Autumn 2010 and Spring 2011, http://www.aiou.edu.pk/GMJ/Pk_Media_comes_of_age.asp

Sethna, Razeshta, and Zia, Ur Rehman, ‘Karachi’s Sectarian Backyard,’ *Dawn*, 20 January 2014, Karachi

Siddique, Abubakar, *The Pashtun Question: The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan*, C Hurst & Co: London, 2014

“State of the Media in Pakistan: Key Trends of 2014 and Main Challenges of 2015,” *Freedom Network*, <http://www.fnpk.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/State-Of-Media-In-Pakistan-Key-Findings-of-2014-And-Challenges-in-2015-PDF.pdf>, last accessed March 2015

“Taliban threat worries Pakistani media,” *BBC News*, 17 October 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19978021>

‘Taliban threaten Pakistan Journalist,’ *CPU Media Trust*, 3 February 2015, <http://cpu.org.uk/uncategorized/taliban-threatens-pakistan-journalist/>

‘The World’s Most Dangerous Place,’ *The Economist*, 3 January 2008, <http://www.economist.com/node/10430237>, last accessed 22 Mar. 2015

Rumi, Raza, ‘Hundreds of Historical Buildings Across Lahore Await Attention,’ *Herald Annual Heritage Issue*, 21 August 2012, <http://razarumi.com/hundreds-of-decaying-historical-buildings-across-lahore-await-attention/>, last accessed 15 May 2015

Sethi, Najam, ‘Editorial: Defending Ourselves,’ *The Friday Times*, 28 March 1991, Karachi

Siddiqua, Ayesha, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan’s Military Economy*, Pluto Press: London, 2007

Simon, Joel, “International Journalists are in danger as Never Before,” *The Guardian*, 4 November, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2014/nov/04/international-journalists-danger-media-reporters-social-media>, last accessed 8 Aug 2015

Walsh, Declan, “Guardian journalist badly beaten for the second time in Pakistan”, *The Guardian*, 19 June 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/jun/19/guardian-journalist-beaten-pakistan>

Walsh, Declan, “Guardian journalist was abducted, blindfolded, beaten and burned”, *The Guardian*, 13 June 2011, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2011/jun/13/guardian-journalist-abducted-islamabad>

Yusuf, Z, “Media’s role in promoting religiosity,” *The Express Tribune*, 19 October 2010, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/64220/medias-role-in-promoting-religiosity/>