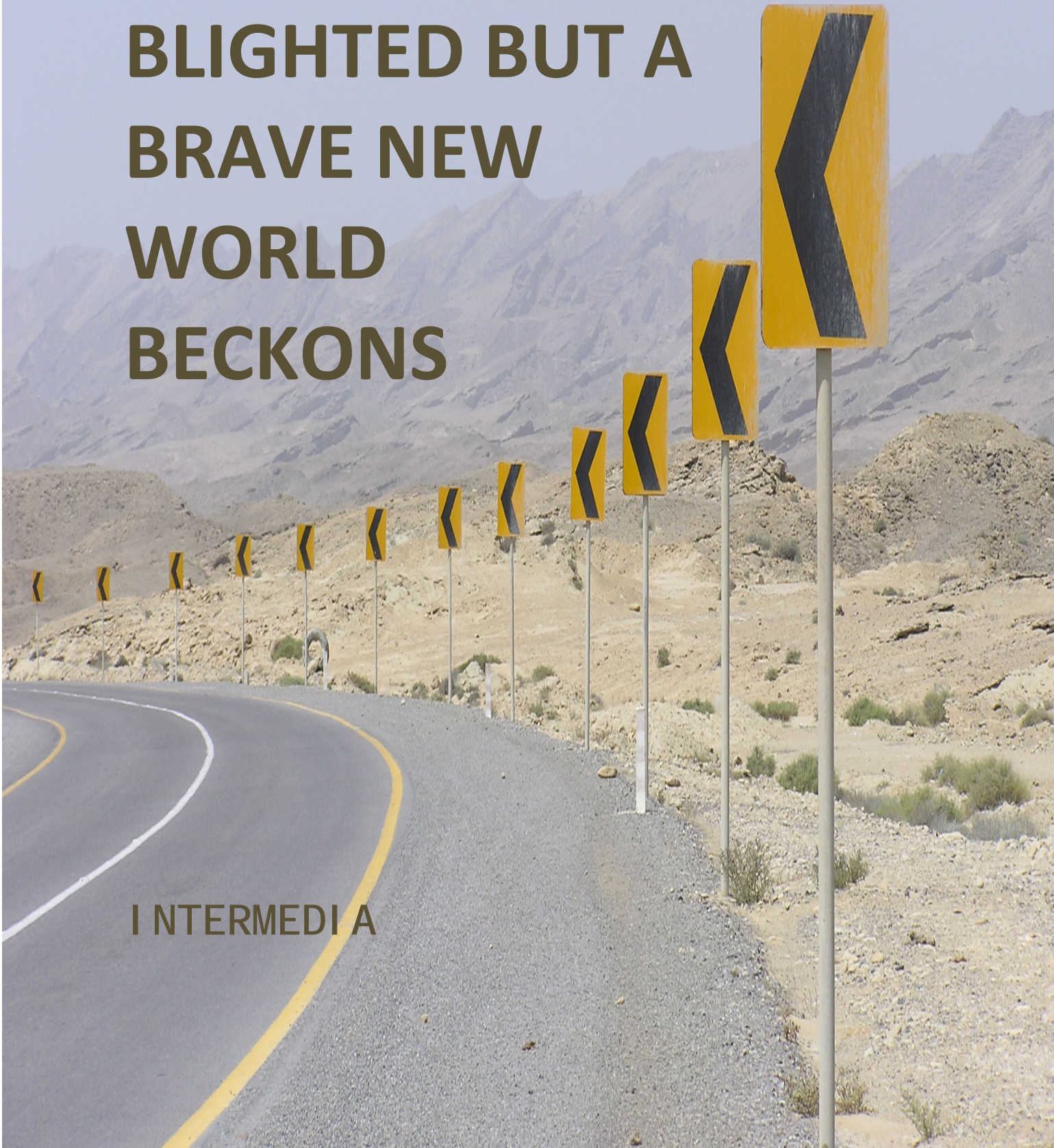


MEDIA IN BALOCHISTAN: BLIGHTED BUT A BRAVE NEW WORLD BECKONS

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2010

The author **Aurangzaib Khan** has been associated with the Pakistani development sector in general and media sector in particular since the early 1990s. As Media Development Manager for media support INGO Internews Network, for whom he worked for six years before joining Pakistani media development organization Intermedia in 2010 as Director Media Development, his primary work has included training print, radio and TV journalists across Pakistan but with a focus on North West Frontier Province, the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan and Balochistan. He also spearheads technical assistance programs for FM stations that include building newsrooms, news and current affairs production and theme-based features and documentary making. He works with universities in North West Frontier Province and Balochistan, helping with broadcast curriculum development, trainings for journalism faculty and students and working journalists.

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Cover photo: The Road to Gwadar

CONTENTS

Balochistan Media Backgrounder: From Tradition to Technology – A Slow Evolution	7
CHAPTER 1 – Balochistan Beginnings: Media for the Classes, Not the Masses	13
Oral Media	13
Newspapers sans News	14
Local Media, Foreign Owners	15
Journalists as Politicians, Politicians as Journalists	16
Hunting for Readers	17
Government Cracks Down on Media	18
The Airwaves Become Alive	19
Censorship of Dissent	20
Media Suppression Breeds Resistance	21
National Newspapers Squeeze out Local Media	22
Picture Perfect: TV Comes To Balochistan	23
Martial Media	24
Journalism Education	25
CHAPTER 2 – Hobbled Professionalism Stunts Media Development	31
Professionally-Deficient Media	32
Revenue over Responsibility	34
No Trainings, No Standards	34
Journalism Education: More Theory than Practice	35
CHAPTER 3 – Radio: More Music than Current Affairs	38
No News is Bad News	39
Discouraging News on Radio	41
FM Radio Prospects: 2010 and Beyond	42
Playing It Safe on the Airwaves	43
CHAPTER 4 – Television: The Picture Grows	47
TV Becomes News While There is Little Local News on TV	48
CHAPTER 5 – Working In Aid of Balochistan Media	51
‘Honorary’ Journalists	52
Wages of Journalism	53
CHAPTER 6 – Balochistan: Dangerous to Report from and Dangerous to Report On	55
The Years of Reporting Dangerously	56
Conflict Reporting	59
National vs Nationalist Media	61
Reporting From a Tough Neighborhood	62
Little Local TV	63

Coverage of local Conflict in National and Local Media	65
Role of Media - One Issue, Different Perspectives on Local and National Media	66
CHAPTER 7 – Media Blues in a Region on Red Alert	75
Vetted Articles	75
Dangerous in the Districts	76
CHAPTER 8 – Growing Media Pluralisms: Still Plenty to Cheer About	79
Balochistan’s First TV Channel	80
Survival of the Fittest	81
Local is the New National	82
CHAPTER 9 – Improving Journalism Standards and News Flows To and From Balochistan	85
Training District Correspondents	86
Building capacity of Journalists in Quetta	87

Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

Intermedia would like to thank a host of people who helped elaborate and articulate issues related to media in Balochistan. In particular, the author is grateful to: Ms Seemi Naghmana, former chairperson of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications of University of Balochistan; Mr Malik Siraj Akbar, the Quetta bureau chief of *Daily Times* and editor of online newspaper Baloch Hal; Rao Mohammad Iqbal, the chief reporter at daily *Mashriq*; Dr Mansoor Kundi, former dean of languages at University of Balochistan; Shahzada Zulfiqar, journalist and former Quetta bureau chief of *Samaa TV*; Siddiq Baloch, the editor of daily *Balochistan Express*; Mujeeb Ahmad, the Quetta bureau chief for *Aaj TV* and news editor at daily *Mashriq*; Rubina Azhar, former station manager of *FM105* Quetta; Fasih Iqbal, the editor of dailies *Balochistan Times* and *Zamana*; Mohammad Saeed Baloch, reporter for daily *Jang* in Noshki; Shah Baran Mandokhel, reporter for daily *Mashriq* in Zhob; Saleem Shahid, bureau chief of daily *Dawn*; Beram Khan, assistant professor at the Department of Mass Communication of University of Balochistan; Rao Mohammad Iqbal, the chief reporter at *Mashriq* in Quetta; Mujeeb Ahmad, the bureau chief for *Aaj TV*; Azizullah Marwat, reporter for *BBC Urdu Service* in Quetta; Ashfaq Jumani, the former director general of Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority in Quetta; Gohar Khan, the general manager for *Sabzbaat Balochistan TV*; and Zulfiqar Guramani, former bureau chief of *KTN TV* in Quetta. Special thanks also to Adnan Rehmat, formerly country director of Internews Network in Pakistan and currently executive director of Intermedia for the help with planning the research, supporting and editing the report.

The contents and pictures in this research report and the views expressed are of the author Mr Aurangzaib Khan. **Intermedia** or its donors and supporters do not necessarily have to agree with them.

This report has been made possible with funding and assistance from Internews Network and the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.



Dreamweaver: Selling Carpets in Quetta

Balochistan Media Backgrounder: From Tradition to Technology – A Slow Evolution

Media in Balochistan – the largest of Pakistan’s four provinces in land mass – in general and provincial capital Quetta in particular has visibly expanded since 2000 in a trend that largely reflects the shifting media landscape in the rest of Pakistan. With the doors thrown open to private ownership of the airwaves, independent TV channels and FM radio stations have come to be a part of daily life for many. And with competition has come the rush for news, to be the first to break news. Even though one still has to see a critical mass of private, independent TV channels and radio stations, locally owned and voicing local concerns in languages of Balochistan – something needed and often stridently demanded – media has crept into the consciousness of the people, if not through independent news and analysis then through the sheer volume of its presence. In a province long engaged in a monologue with itself - cut off as it is from the rest of the country through huge distances, lack of infrastructure and the Pakistani state’s Orwellian control over news and information from Balochistan - the proliferation of media in recent years has fueled a hunger for information, a desire to have a say and be heard.

As the rest of Balochistan waits to plug into the vibrant media scene, Quetta is

generating and consuming information quite regularly. It has become the provincial hub of media activity. National publications and networks like *The News*, *Jang*, *Geo*, *ARY One World*, *Samaa*, *Express*, *Dawn*, *DawnNews TV*, *Daily Times*, *The Nation* and *Nawa-i- Waqt* maintain offices in the city. Ranks of veteran print journalists eager to make the switch from print to electronic media are joined by fervent young turks raring to leave an imprint on the growing size of audience in the province.

The preponderance of TV news networks and availability of cable service in the Quetta has revolutionized the way people access information since 2002 when the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) issued its first licenses for private TV and radio in the country. Such is the addiction to real-time, daily news that when a controversial state of emergency was imposed by former president General (retired) Pervez Musharraf in November 2007 and a blanket ban slapped on current affairs TV channels, most people addicted to news channels didn’t know what to do with their time. This craving for current affairs and news is especially acute in the politically charged province that has seen much violence and conflict lately.

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Perhaps more vibrant in terms of representation of local needs and aspirations is the local print media with more than 150 newspapers and magazines published daily, weekly or monthly even though a large number of them are “dummy” publications, drawn to the lucre of the provincial government’s huge advertisement quotas. Years of troubles and a resurgent and assertive media has made the politically conscious polity of urban Balochistan information-savvy. From a city on the fringes of national politics and consciousness before the state’s monopoly on airwaves was abolished, media presence in Quetta has made the city and the province a regular fixture in the national news scene. No more is Balochistan the backyard of Pakistan ignored in matters of policy and governance. Voices that would have sent the state and the media it owns on a scissor-snipping spree some years ago now regularly feature on the private media based in Quetta, more so due to volatile struggle for rights and military operations to suppress the nationalist movement.

The Quetta Press Club, once an exclusive domain of print journalists, now attracts TV journalists who have joined the news networks that have come up in recent years. From a derelict building surrounded by government offices and courts, it was shifted to an impressive new one inaugurated in July 2007, built with generous support of the authorities.

However, where media’s glare is focused on Quetta, hub of political activity and home to provincial decision makers, the rest of Balochistan is where it blinks. Outside the city limits - where poverty, anger and discontent with the Islamabad’s neglect of the province and widespread deprivation is as stark as the harsh landscape of the province – there is a virtual absence of organized media activity and news coverage. Due to lack of interest and resources, huge distances, absence of organizational support to journalists and the forbidding labour and cost-intensive exercise that is news gathering, stories from the rest of Balochistan often fail to make it to the news bulletin.

Notwithstanding major developments – such as the assassination of charismatic former provincial governor and chief minister Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and other nationalist leaders, military operations and the killing of women in the name of honor etc. – to which publications and TV networks can only stay indifferent at the risk of losing audience loyalty, the human face of Balochistan remains eclipsed by political activities at Quetta, breaking news and tickers reporting strikes, bombings and target killings. Whether Quetta or the rest of Balochistan, news analysis and local voices – especially those opposed to discriminatory state policies – are in general absent from the national media discourse.

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However, national and international news networks are available to viewers in Quetta and major Balochistan districts through cable TV distributors. PEMRA's list of cable TV distributors in early 2010 show 68 companies providing access to TV channels in the Baloch populated areas of Lasbela, Mastung, Khuzdar, Kalat, Kech, Gwadar, Dera Bugti, Jhal Magsi, Jafarabad, Bolan, Naseerabad, Kharan and Sibi. There are none in the Pashtun districts of Pishin, Qilla Abdullah, Loralai and Zhob.

While newspapers and periodicals remain a popular medium of information, low literacy and weak buying power is a big hurdle in the way of people accessing and consuming information. Most newspapers play it safe while covering public opinion, mostly acting as a publicity tool for the government wherefrom it draws advertisements. The publication and circulation figures in the interior districts of Balochistan are vague and unimpressive because of illiteracy and low buying power of readers whose numbers are few. Even when there is demand for local papers at the local level, they still don't reach there in time due to huge distances. Whatever local media there is in remote districts, is limited in its outreach and representation for want of resources and professionalism.

Indigenous media growth and consumption in the rest of Balochistan,

despite a large number of independent publications that come and go depending on their financial health, has been tardy even though there is enormous hunger for information in the highly politicized and turbulent society of the province. Where Quetta is plugged into the mainstream national media, the rest of Balochistan virtually stays under a media black-out. There is perhaps more information coming out of the troubled tribal areas in the Northwest Frontier Province where journalists continue to brave hazardous conditions than Balochistan.

The newspapers, by and large, follow the same mould – covering statements, carrying reports from the news agencies, news conferences and legislative proceedings of the provincial assembly – with nothing in their content, makeup and layout to tell them apart. Analyses and investigative features are fewer still. Perhaps the only saving grace is newspapers and magazines in regional languages – Balochi, Brahvi and Pashto – and journalists that stand up for the cause of the people in the face of brutal state suppression. In Quetta though, readership of national papers (not published in the province but flown in from other provinces, principally Sindh) remain dominant. This is where radio as an effective and egalitarian medium of information comes into play. Radio in Balochistan province, which constitutes 55% of Pakistan's

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This is where radio as an effective and egalitarian medium of information comes into play. Radio in Balochistan province, which constitutes 55% of Pakistan's landmass but barely 5% of the country's population, reaches people scattered over great distances, transcending the limits imposed by illiteracy and income indicators. However, Radio Pakistan Quetta - the largest of state-run Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) operations - is the only local radio available to listeners far and away from Quetta. Its broadcast footprint covers Balochistan and large swathes of Iran, Afghanistan and the Middle East – with three channels simultaneously relaying programs in local languages that, according to one of its own officials, has “a national mindset, not local” and remains the state's mouthpiece, translating national news in local languages instead of doing local news, and limiting itself to promoting local languages and culture. In comparison, international radio networks like the BBC, VOA and Radio Kabul are much popular for their hard news and analyses.

Media, more noticeably in the rest of Balochistan but also Quetta, subsists in an environment far from ideal because of scarcity of trained workforce and resources and a near complete

stranglehold of the government on information flows and the organizations processing it. While news from the province feature more or less regularly on the networks and newspapers, real discourse and analyses on the troubles of the province is visible by its absence from the national media scene.

In terms of issues hampering media freedoms, Balochistan is perhaps next to the restive tribal areas in the northwest bordering Afghanistan where conflict, military operations and a conservative tribal milieu discourage free speech and access to information. Quetta, where most information is generated, remains a garrison city with a mistrustful security mindset shaped by decades of conflict and separatist politics stemming from resentment against the centre's neglect of the province. Journalists work in an environment marked by fear, rampant obstruction and intimidation. In many cases, information is vetted by security agencies and the state employs coercive tactics like restriction on advertisements and print material to browbeat media into submission. And if that doesn't work, there are disappearances, killings and shutting down newspaper offices, a trend that has registered an alarming spike in recent months and years in the backdrop of insurgency in the province.

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The Fruits of His Labor: A Vendor Awaits Customers Near The Mekran Coast

Chapter 1 – Balochistan Beginnings: Media for the Classes, Not the Masses

The prerequisites for sustenance of independent media have been absent in Balochistan from the beginning since Pakistan came into being. Even now, the province lacks organized social, political, civic, literacy and business make-up necessary for a vibrant media to take roots and operate professionally. Seen from a perspective of historical processes of oppression and resistance, one can imagine why media in Balochistan emerged more of a political movement than an industry to begin with.

The history of Balochistan before the British came to the sub-continent in mid-nineteenth century is a history of independent tribal fiefdoms and nomadic tribes with no central state structure that is a catalyst to media creation because state activities and initiatives need reporting and promotion. The absence of a central state structure kept the people of Balochistan oblivious to the need to establish a system for information access and dissemination.

Another contributing factor is that the Baloch were never actively engaged in trade and commerce that would have required an information network and reporting mechanisms in place. Mostly, they have been warriors preoccupied with ruling and conquering, their

literature extolling bravery on the front, a preoccupation with the sword and the shield. Whatever commerce in evidence was undertaken by “the Hindus [of pre-Partition India] or Afghans from Kandahar [in Afghanistan]”, a trend corroborated by the fact that even today few Balochs own or manage business activities in Quetta.

Oral Media

The oral tradition of relating major events and history in poetry and song that is still quite dominant among the tribes (along with dismal literacy indicators that prevents formal documentation) also kept media at the most basic in the province. In the traditional tribal society of Balochistan, Baloch and Pashtun tribes mostly communicate through “*hal*” – oral narration of the state of affairs. People exchange stories of travel and events through oral communication. It is a two-way communication where a person, be it an ordinary traveler or a noble, is required to share information about current affairs, news and information on developments that affect the social, economic and political aspects of tribal life. Those who don’t are viewed as “outsiders or suspects”.

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This system of communication, a sort of male bonding, is still there in the rural tribal societies of Balochistan and even in evidence in the urban centers where men come together in cafes and teahouses to talk about politics and current affairs. Long before formal media made its presence felt, the tribal society of Balochistan had its own informal system of information exchange and communication in place thanks to the oral tradition. Dr Seemi Naghmana, author of *Balochistan Mein Zarai Ablagh – Aghaz aur Irtiqa (Media in Balochistan – Origin and Evolution)*, labels this tradition as “slo-mo media through which news and information is disseminated without formal sources or organization”.

Newspapers sans News

The advent of British in the subcontinent formally introduced a newspaper culture in the region although arguably, the newspapers mostly focused on the interest of the ruling classes than the information needs or enlightenment of the ruled. In Balochistan, formal journalism came with the installation of a printing press for the first time in 1888 in Quetta, a military garrison, back then as it is now. The well-heeled and educated Zoroastrian community in Quetta set up the first of the printing presses in the city, kick-starting a social revolution that while admirable in its ambition and scope, remained restricted to the city. It

failed to spread beyond the boundaries of the garrison city and infect the real tribes of Balochistan with a passion for journalism and documentation, largely due to the insulated tribal structure, lack of means of communication, great distances and wide-spread illiteracy among the tribes. Among the historic presses that spearheaded the print revolution were the Albert Press, the Victoria Press and the Curzon Press, the former two owned and managed by Zoroastrians and the latter by a Sikh owner.

The Indian Press and Registration of Books Act (1867) was introduced in Balochistan in 1937, allowing the locals to install a press and print newspapers. Even though the newspapers started coming out with the establishment of the first press, they were mostly prompted by the administration’s social and political expediencies than driven by a desire to reflect the voice and wishes of the people. Still, this was remarkable considering there was no precedence or paraphernalia available in the province to achieve the success these newspapers did. In the end though, they were newspapers that were brought out to further the social and business activities of Quetta and kept to “safe” content that didn’t confront the government on policies. In fact, they stood for and represented the government policies and were, therefore, actively patronized by the British “sarkar”.

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The papers and the families that owned them were never politically active. These were mostly English newspapers, periodicals or magazines with an eye for advertisements, social happenings, news about official promotions and transfers, sports, business, news about life and affairs on the cantonment, races at the gymkhana, obituaries and anniversaries, weddings, dancehall parties, railway and steamer services, and goods and services that were the needs of a western lifestyle. Their titles – *The Monthly Balochistan Advertiser*, *Border Weekly Advertiser*, *The Balochistan Gazette*, *The Quetta Tradesman*, *The Balochistan Times*, *Balochistan Herald* and *Daily Bulletin* – betray their commercial scope and ambition. These papers did carry soft news in some cases but eschewed hard politics. Except for a couple of newspapers in Urdu, there were none in local languages.

Local Media, Foreign Owners

Of the 19 newspapers that came out during the British period (post-1888, when the first printing press was installed, till 1935 when the May 3 earthquake gutted the city), 15 were English language publications. They were owned by non-natives who enjoyed the support and patronage of the Raj. The newspapers were apolitical, given permission to print on the condition that they would not dabble in politics. In most cases, the editors of the newspapers were the owners of the press (Victoria and Albert presses). The newspapers were distributed free of cost and

contained little news, no analysis or opinion, most of the space taken up by advertisements. Save a couple, most were weeklies.

The distinguishing characteristic of journalism during the British Raj was an abundance of publications but absence of people's voices from them. The book *Balochistan Mein Zarai Ablagh – Aghaz aur Irtiqā* notes that one cannot call the publications of the time "newspapers" because "news" were sorely missing from the content. Researchers say it would be accurate to say that the journalism at that stage was geared to serve the ruling elite not the people, the classes not the masses. Says Dr Seemi Naghmana, author of the book: "In a traditional society, the media is always rudimentary because the environment in which it grows is not there. People are not educated, there is tribal seclusion due to lack of means of communication and poverty. Whatever media is there, it doesn't reach the people. The ruling elite treat media as a threat, not an asset. Since media is geared to mobilize the privileged classes towards nation building, there is little attention paid to educating and informing the public. That comes later when the ruling elite feels confident that the process of nation building is complete. The common perception is that in a traditional society people cannot be trusted to rule themselves nor do they expect to. Neither do the elite want to change that thinking through media fearing it might lead to expectations."

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The mass media in Balochistan during the British Raj is, therefore, seen by historians as not representative of the people or for the people but for the small class of ruling elite as it reflected their needs and served as a means of communication amongst them.

Journalists as Politicians, Politicians as Journalists

As newspapers and periodicals having little to do with local politics or aspirations prospered under the British patronage in Quetta, there was a parallel movement rearing to use the medium for political representation of the people and the province. This movement manifested itself in and around Quetta and was forcefully opposed, even gagged, by the authorities ruthlessly. Associated with this movement are the formidable figures of the freedom movement for Balochistan, leaders who were also journalists. Among them are Yousaf Aziz Magsi, Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai, Abdul Aziz Kurd, Ghulam Ahmad Shahwani and others who gave sacrifices for the political struggle and freedom of thought and expression in a province that, even then, was treated as strategic and sensitive by the authorities. Journalists, these personalities were also founders of political movements and parties in Balochistan. At a time when there were no newspapers in Balochistan to entertain their political views, they

looked towards newspapers in Lahore and Karachi, and publications even in the far off Delhi, to propagate their opinion about the British and their satraps in the Baloch states and British Balochistan.

This was the first time when Baloch and Pashtun leaders mobilized popular opinion against the British and their movements grew into a popular political force. They steered away popular opinion from waging armed struggle against the British to a political one. Political opinion of leaders of Balochistan carried in newspapers elsewhere along with political activities of party workers in the province precipitated a groundswell of popular opinion against the British who jailed these leaders time and again for speaking out against their policies. Even when they were in jail or sent into exile, they continued their political activities and were received as heroes by the people on their release and return.

Abdul Aziz Kurd and Yousaf Aziz Magsi wrote against the British in newspapers of Lahore – *Musawat, Azad, Zamindar* – for which they were jailed and it was while in jail that they formed the Anjuman Ittehad Balochistan – the first political party of Balochistan. Likewise, Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, known as the father of journalism in Balochistan, spent many years in jail for his outspoken views.

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It was Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai (the leader of National Awami Party-Pashtunkhwa, Anjuman Watan and National Awami Party) who after the 1935 earthquake when the people of Balochistan for the first time entered politics, sought to start an Urdu weekly newspaper *Istiqlal* to highlight the problems of the people and voice opposition to the policies of the British authorities. The Press Act of India came to Balochistan thanks to the efforts of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai who was able to wrench a declaration for his paper from the British authorities in Punjab. Since there was no skilled staff to run a paper in Balochistan, the editorial staff were brought in from outside. It was a time when the Baloch and the Pashtun formed a united front against the British and Urdu was chosen as the language to communicate because it was widely spoken and understood rather than Balochi or Pashto. Today, Urdu media still hold sway over popular imagination – even when the nationalist Baloch and the Pashtun would rather wish away any language other than their own because the centre has traditionally painted the myriad ethnic nationalities in a uniform Urdu culture to forge a “nation” that disregards the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Pakistani nationalities. Newspapers with hard hitting nationalist agenda, be they representative of the Baloch or Pashtuns, find more readers in Urdu than their own languages and continue to publish in that language. Perhaps not an imprudent policy because through Urdu they can hit across the

ethnic divide – especially in the policy circles – and bring their point of view home, which otherwise may be difficult because not everyone in the province understands Balochi or Pashtu, the two dominant languages.

Hunting for Readers

Even though formal journalism came to Balochistan in 1888 with the coming of printing press, historians say the English never wanted the local tribal population to become politically savvy. Newspapers were started only to close down. In the words of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, “it (journalism) began with troubles and ended with troubles.” It was not unusual for papers to start and close down due to pressure from authorities. Papers like *Al Baloch*, *Al Hanif* and *Balochistan Jadeed* were all voices of Balochistan but they had to be raised not from cities of Balochistan but from Hyderabad, Karachi and Jacobabad in Sindh province. In Balochistan, it was forbidden to hear such voices and these newspapers often arrived as mail hidden in envelopes to be read in secret.

Post-independence, newspapers continued publishing from Quetta and were distributed to other districts of Balochistan from here. Newspapers were not sold at newspaper stalls but distributed through mail. The newspaper editors or owners used to go deep into the remote districts to find buyers for their publications and receive payments.

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As important as publishing was the act of sending the newspapers by mail to readers. There were few dailies; most newspapers were weeklies or fortnightlies. Government advertisements were the only source of revenue in a province where private business was negligible. This was the reason why newspapers often played it safe while covering public opinion and mostly acted as a publicity tool for the government.

Till the 1960s there was no daily newspaper in Balochistan. A group of six weeklies – *Zamana*, *Nara-e-Haq*, *Meezan*, *Pasban*, *Qasid* and *Pukar* - came together to form the *Daily Group* whereby they would contribute to a daily newspaper. The plan was a great success, covered by *Time* magazine as a “Package Deal” offered by people of different school of thoughts and political philosophy coming together “under one banner” to provide information to readers. The scheme ran successfully for about a year and a half. It stopped when some of the weeklies became dailies.

Government Cracks Down on Media

From independence till General Ayub Khan’s martial law in 1958, different governments cracked down on dissenting newspapers and journalists at different times. Several newspapers were closed down and as a result of martial law, Ayub

introduced laws restricting freedom of expression such as the Press and Publications Ordinance and formed the National Press Trust. The tough stance of the bureaucracy towards the press became immediately visible in the first few years of independence when in 1948 the government closed down the newspaper *Bolan Quetta* and its press owned by the veteran journalist Mir Mohammad Hassan Nizami for criticizing the government.

Another well known journalist Abdul Samad Durrani, editor of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai’s *Istiqlal*, was arrested under the Public Safety Act and the publication, started in 1937, was closed down in 1950. In 1948, the Muslim League’s propaganda secretary and spokesman for Muslim Student Federation Fazal Ahmad Ghazi, who also edited *Khursheed* and *Al Islam* was arrested, resulting in closure of the two newspapers. When editor of the weekly *Nawa-e-Watan* Quetta, Ghulam Mohammad Shahwani, refused to reveal the source of a letter published in the newspaper, he was sent to jail and the paper forced to close down in 1955.

Following a defense deal between Pakistan and the United States in 1954, the Communist Party of Pakistan was banned in the country. Leftist writers, poets and intellectuals were rounded up and jailed without trial.

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In Balochistan, editors of the weekly *Chiltan* were arrested and the newspaper was closed down in October 1954 under the Public Safety Act. During the same period, several newspapers and weeklies were either closed down or their editors sent to jail for covering news that piqued the authorities. Among the publications closed down were the weekly *Ittehad Quetta*, the monthly *Mualim*, the weekly *Jamalistan*, the weekly *Gulistan*, the weekly *Paigham-e-Jadeed* and the monthly *Pashto Balochistan*.

The Airwaves Become Alive

The national newspapers coming in from outside Balochistan were popular in Quetta but they still had little by way of local information or opinion. They could not take the place of local newspapers that were representative of the local socio-political milieu. However, it was Radio Pakistan Quetta that truly networked the province with the national broadcast grid and reached far wider than any local or national newspaper. This it did through programming that spoke to people in their languages. Radio Pakistan Quetta was inaugurated on October 17, 1956 with only a few hours of programming in the evening. At the time, the one kilowatt transmitter reached a radius of 30 miles that was severely restricted by the mountains around the Quetta valley. The transmission was in Urdu and Balochi.

Even with its little resources, the station was able to emerge as a major cultural platform for the province with its information and entertainment programs. With the passage of time, it was able to become one of the biggest radio stations in the country with more regional language programming than anywhere else. In 1961, with a more powerful transmitter, its outreach multiplied manifold and Radio Pakistan Quetta was able to reach even the remotest regions in Balochistan. Soon, programs of national import were also broadcast on the Quetta station that increased the duration of its channels from a few hours to 30 hours. With another 150 kW transmitter fitted at Yaroo, 25 km from Quetta, Radio Pakistan Quetta's radius increased to 1,000 km.

The time for radio to leave a lasting impact on listeners was just right in the absence of TV back then and due to low literacy in rural areas, it fast become entrenched and popular. At a time when there was no daily newspaper and national newspapers used to arrive at Quetta 36 hours after publication and that too in languages not local, the communication was only one way, there was no medium for self expression. Radio broke the cycle with local language programming, giving people a voice and celebrating local culture.

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More than a medium, radio emerged as an intellectual, cultural platform that provided an opportunity for a two way discourse, something sorely needed in Balochistan. Radio Pakistan Quetta was able to plug a hitherto remote province into the national mainstream so that people elsewhere became aware of the languages and culture of Balochistan, and created a platform for creativity and expression. The results were immediate: while on the one hand the rest of the country became familiar with Balochistan, radio galvanized new trends in cultural and literary expression in the province itself. There was poetry, prose and drama in Balochi, Pashto, Brahvi and Hazargi languages, exploring new ideas and trends. As a result a new crop of young writers and poets associated with the radio sprang up who left a mark on the local scene and promoted expression in the diverse languages of the province.

The radio admirably introduced a platform to explore identity and expression for the people of Balochistan and gathered riches of material that would not have been preserved if not for Radio Pakistan Quetta. However, like elsewhere in Pakistan, radio kept its role strictly within the confines of parameters laid out by the state and was not community-oriented. At a time when Pakistan was undergoing birth-pangs, had suffered the first of its four martial law periods, and Balochistan that hoped

to become an autonomous part of the federation as a province was disillusioned when "One Unit" was controversially imposed (clubbing together the states of Balochistan and British Balochistan as part of West Pakistan, along with Punjab, North West Frontier Province and Sindh) by military ruler General Ayub Khan, the Pakistani nation was unaware of the turmoil in the province because the state controlled the radio and the newspapers. As the state embarked on crushing the political struggle in Balochistan against the unit through military operations during the "the darkest ten years of Balochistan's history, "all is well" was the underlying theme of the radio propaganda even as people seethed in anger against the state's policies.

Censorship of Dissent

State censorship was rampant and while on the one hand there were slogans of democracy, peace and justice, the entire political leadership of Balochistan was jailed for speaking out for their rights. Baloch leaders like Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, Sardar Ataullah Khan Mengal and Sardar Khair Bakhsh Marri, elected during the 1962 elections, spoke against the state's excesses in Balochistan on the floor of National Assembly. Their speeches, not carried by the radio or newspapers controlled by the martial law regime, were carried on All India Radio and Radio Kabul.

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The sardars were stripped of their titles and thrown in jail. Like elsewhere, the communist witch-hunt in the wake of Pakistan's defense deals with the United States and action against progressive leftist journalists and newspapers in Balochistan were events that remained eclipsed behind the shroud of state censorship. Hidden from the public imagination, Balochistan stayed the "rogue" province it is portrayed even now, a minor mention in the national bulletins as far as news coverage was concerned. From 1962 to 1968, the tribes of Jahalawan and Kohistan Mari and Bugti were practically under the army's control. The years between 1958 and 1969 were a time of confrontation between the people of Balochistan and the military and yet the problems of Balochistan, its struggle for provincial identity and autonomy, remained absent from media discourse and from the state owned PBC. As the province sunk deeper into isolation, the state manipulated Balochistan's absence from the national media.

Media Suppression Breeds Resistance

During the 1970s, even as democracy asserted itself elsewhere in Pakistan after the long military reign of Ayub, it brought military operations and miseries to Balochistan. Balochistan was given the status of a province on the dissolution of One Unit but that was as far as the

centre wanted autonomy to go. The fetters put on press, freedom of expression and political struggle – a hallmark of Ayub's era - remained in place. Even under Pakistan People's Party and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the country's first elected prime minister, fundamental rights were put on hold. But the conditions meant to suppress public opinion actually solidified it, even as it pushed the province and its people deeper into isolation, away from the political and intellectual discourse in the national mainstream. Political parties and student groups expressed themselves through graffiti and pamphlets. Intellectuals and writers in exile in Afghanistan took their opinion to Radio Kabul, an expression of mistrust in the state-controlled media in Pakistan.

The rise in political activity, however precarious and suppressed, did give a new impetus to a media held back by decades of state suppression. National newspapers like *Mashriq* and *Jang* started publishing from Quetta leaving a deep imprint on the way journalism evolved in the province. With the revival of provincial status came the right of adult franchise that softened the aggressive, agitprop stance of local media taken against One Unit and in favor of a nationalist sardari system. A new media mindset that sought to move away from the tribal system towards democratic ideals emerged.

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The establishment of a medical college, the Balochistan University, expansion of national media into Balochistan, coming of the state-owned *Pakistan Television (PTV)*, better education facilities and a competition to study there created a rift in the united political struggle this far: it drifted towards ethnic, nationalist fronts.

Along with the regional papers, political and student organization started competing for space in the national papers, often resulting in violence against the publications and journalists. They demanded coverage, often through use of force. It was during the same period that personalities who laid the foundation of journalism in Balochistan – Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, Mian Gulzar Ahmad, Maulvi Abdul Aziz, Abdul Samad Durrani and Master Kamal Ud Din Ahmad - passed away.

Pressures on the newspapers resulted in a common struggle that resulted in rebirth of the Quetta Press Club and formation of Council of Newspaper Editors and union of newspaper workers. The Baloch resistance also started informal papers, bulletins and pamphlets to express their views on the armed struggle against the centre's policies and military operation. The uncertain political scenario in which the PPP -led government sent packing the National Awami Party (NAP) government in Balochistan also spelt disaster for certain newspapers with political leanings.

NAP on coming to power stopped advertisements to daily *Aitimid* – a pro-Pakistan people's Party (PPP) publication – and NAP workers attacked the newspaper office, closing it down. Later, when NAP was removed from power, the newspaper resurfaced but the editor was put under house arrest by General Ziaul Haq (the country's second military ruler who proved to be the worst for media), its press was sealed, the newspaper workers arbitrarily punished with a year in jail and fined Rs 25,000.

As is now, it was not easy to criticize the sardari system and NAP, led by powerful sardars, didn't take a kind view of publications critical of its policies. One such paper was *Nawa-e-Watan* edited by Malik Mohammad Panah who campaigned fearlessly against the tribal system when the leading sardars were in power. *Nawa-e-Watan* emerged as a voice of Baloch people. During Zia's era, the editor was arrested for carrying an interview with Rasool Bakhsh Palejo, which was critical of the brutal martial law. The *Jang* office was first attacked in May, 1972 and again February 1973. In July 1972, the provincial government stopped the newsprint quota for *Jang* and the newspaper management was warned that if they tried to take out the newspaper, action would be taken against them under the harsh Press and Publications Ordinance.

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National Newspapers Squeeze out Local Media

Publication of national newspaper giants like *Mashriq* and *Jang* was a big boost to local journalism because they brought new technology and a network of journalists spread throughout the country. The pictures, features and analyses in these papers found big local audiences. The local papers could not compete and their business dwindled, while others that stood up to competition had to drastically change their makeup and outlook. The colorful weekly magazines encouraged local writers to contribute and their outlook, provincial till then, widened.

Says *Baloch Hal*, Balochistan's first independent web-based English language newspaper, which closed within a year of its launch in 2010, in its editorial on the state of media in Balochistan: "The people of Balochistan were forced for a long time to read newspapers that were headquartered outside the province and had a friendly stance towards every government. Unwilling to carry a single editorial or op-ed page article on Balochistan for several months, these newspapers never tried to raise the voice of the people. They did not protest over the military operation or the killing of Baloch leaders. They overlooked the violation of human rights. The only interest these newspapers had was to get official advertisements and

supplements from the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR), an organ of the provincial government, and Press Information Department (PID), a department of the federal government. Every government discouraged the rise of an independent media in the province by bribing the so-called 'national newspapers' with official advertisements. Since Balochistan does not have any significant industries, newspapers published from the province are very unlikely to get corporate advertisements. As the only source of revenue and sustainability for the Quetta-based newspapers is official advertisements, the government uses these advertisements as a tool to discourage professionalism and patronize sycophancy. This practice continues today as it has proved to be a very effective tool to muzzle the voice of the press and make it soft towards the government."

However, at a time when there was no journalism institution in the province, *Jang* and *Mashriq* trained a band of local journalist who contributed a lot towards strengthening and promoting local journalism. It was through the national papers that the salaries of the journalists were fixed in consonance with the Wage Board. These papers stood up to pressure from political parties, student groups, tribal and religious forces and the military by keeping a balanced approach.

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While they give coverage to conflicting forces, these papers have not done much to end those conflicts. The editorial pages of these papers are not prepared locally but came in from faraway Karachi in Sindh. While they do widen the scope of information provided to the reader, there is little by way of molding opinion. The editorials and analysis on the opinion pages have little to do with Balochistan.

Picture Perfect: TV Comes To Balochistan

All through the 1970s and General Zia ul Haq's martial law running through to 1988, newspapers whether national or local, were mostly engaged in a struggle for survival. It was a time of great upheaval in the province where the centre waged a war against Baloch insurgents in the mountains and yet the national media looked the other way, keeping quiet. The few local publications who gave a dissenting, alternative view of things were groaning under heavy-handed state suppression. It was only natural for the people to look up to foreign news networks for information. The *BBC*, *All India Radio* and *Radio Kabul* became favorite channels to find out about developments in Balochistan. However, there were a few developments that bode well for the journalism in the province and the industry as whole:

- The first advertising company Orient Advertising Agency came to Quetta in 1974
- *PTV's* Quetta station started transmission with five hours of programs daily, in 1975
- Balochistan Council of Newspaper Editors was formed in 1975
- The National Arts Council was set in 1976 to promote art and culture in Balochistan.

PTV came to Balochistan as a pilot project in 1974. On 2 January 1975, it started regular transmission. Its mandate was to keep informed the people of Balochistan about "development initiatives and the nation building process, to nurture and cultivate socio-political awareness, to promote local culture and languages, to provide healthy entertainment, to encourage regional culture and local artisans and artistes, and create a healthy environment for progress and development". In its very first year, *PTV* Quetta was able to start news and entertainment in five languages – Urdu, Balochi, Pashto, Brahvi and English.

In addition there were programs on current affairs. Arrangements were made to gather news and film footage all through the vast province despite difficulties in mobility and communication.

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The reach of the station at the time covered the districts of Quetta and Pishin. A transmitter at Lak Pass, at Sibi and at Ghazaband further increased the reach of PTV into the interior districts. PTV Quetta today has all the amenities needed for recording, production and airing programs but being a state owned medium, it is widely seen more representative of the government than the people.

Martial Media

With Zia's martial law, *PTV* was reduced to being a crass mouthpiece of the military dictatorship. While the quality of entertainment programs stayed pristine, that of news and information nosedived. When the *PTV* workers went on strike in 1978 to push for their demands, they were arrested and six of them were jailed for a year and punished with 15 whiplashes. Zia unscrupulously used *PTV* for self projection and attacks on the opponents. Objective analysis and dissenting views became alien concepts to *PTV*.

The 1980s were the worst of times for media in Pakistan. Religious and sectarian forces made their presence felt in the wake of Afghan Holy War against the former Soviet Union. The war, supported by Pakistan, the US and Saudi Arabia, called for Jihad to be treated as state policy instrument as Pakistan, then as now, became the front line state to bring the Cold War to its conclusion.

Quetta was always multi-ethnic but its population never posed any threat to peace. For generations the local population with a sizeable number of Shia Hazaras lived in peace. The city, like other border towns in the region, changed in the wake of Afghan holy war that brought many refugees, along with a culture of violence and drugs. However what the pro-Jihad policy and war in Afghanistan aggressively and dangerously undermined was the peace between the local Shia and Sunni sects that until then had lived in harmony despite differences. The differences were tolerated and even celebrated and owned, especially during the month of Moharram in the Islamic calendar when the two populations mourn the martyrs of Karbala. The Iranian revolution of 1979 and the Afghan Jihad widened the gap between the two populations. The Revolution led by Shia clerics influenced the Shia communities all over the world and in Pakistan, Tanzeem Fiqah Jafriya (TFJ- Organisation of Jafri (Shia) Law) was established to demand Sharia law. The Sunni clerics who viewed the demand detrimental to their sect reacted and extremist clerics responded by establishing the Sipah-e-Sahaba (Guardian of the Companions of the Prophet) in Pakistan. It was with the establishment of the two rival sectarian organizations in early 1980s that the Shia-Sunni conflict became organized and violent. Allama Arif Hussain Al Hussaini, founding leader of TFJ was assassinated in 1986.

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In retaliation Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, founder of the SSP was murdered. Since then sectarianism turned into an “internecine bloody vendetta” that can still be witnessed in Quetta, D I Khan, Kurram Agency, Hangu, Dera Ismail Khan, Bahawalpur, Jhang, and Karachi.

Zia’s Islamization policy directly influenced the media. Women on TV were required to cover their heads, dance and music programs were banned. As Pakistan and the United States joined hands against the Soviet Red Army that invaded neighboring Afghanistan, *PTV* and *PBC* were actively used as propaganda machines against the Saur Revolution. With American and Saudi backing, Pakistani territory was used to train and arm Afghan Mujahideen. As Jihad became a state policy, religious programming claimed more space than news and entertainment on the state owned media.

Like Radio Pakistan Quetta, *PTV* Quetta also restricted its role to entertainment and projection of local culture. The objective that it would cultivate socio-political discourse and awareness was there just on paper. Other than the news and information that leaves much to be desired, *PTV* does have to its credit popular shows, dramas and documentaries. Finding good talent in a tribal society is a grueling process through which every aspiring writer,

actor, singer and producer associated with *PTV* had to go.

PTV Quetta’s biggest contribution therefore is promotion and introduction of regional culture, literature, history, poetry and music to the wider world. Still the purists find reason to be unhappy with *PTV* and Radio Pakistan. Their biggest gripe is that the language and culture promoted by the radio and TV are not pristine and bear influences of other cultures and languages. *PTV* reaches almost 75% of the population in Balochistan thanks to the 15 boosters in the districts all over the province. It does programming of equal duration in the three big languages – Balochi, Pashto and Brahvi – spoken in the province.

Through the 1990s and 2000s, satellite TV and private news networks have upped the ante for *PTV* which has had to introduce news and information programming to claim public’s confidence. However, it is proving increasingly hard to beat the competition given the network’s reluctance to do independent hard news that people want.

Journalism Education

Where Zia’s martial law squeezed the space for media freedoms, it also brought the press in Balochistan out of its isolation.

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Eagerly, it took to the issue of restoration of democracy, political struggle and the question of provincial autonomy. Revolutions in Afghanistan and Iran and its fallout in Pakistan undermined the pro-communist nationalist forces because the support from across the border stalled. With the religious parties leading the nationwide witch hunt against the left, nationalist forces went underground and weakened as the fountainhead of their ideology, the Soviet Russia, disintegrated. An alternative leadership emerged that along with the sardars struggled to seek provincial autonomy, provincial control over resources and economic development of Balochistan. The end of the Cold War saw a politically active press in Balochistan which was so politicized that it often lost sight of its role to involve the people in the decision making process and the process of economic development.

At the same time, the new Balochistan University and later the establishment of a journalism department in 1987 went a long way in shaping journalism trends in the province. In 1989, the first batch of 32 journalism students graduated from the newly established department and joined the local media. For the first time,

a profession sustained by the passion and sheer dedication of writers and journalists - not formally trained as journalists - was shouldered by skilled and qualified journalists. Professionals emerged in every field and regional journalism took roots.

Even though *Jang* and *Mashriq* were there as national papers, their editorial and opinion pages were not published locally. In 1989, the daily *Intikhab*, published from Hub changed that. This was Balochistan's first newspaper that responded to the information needs of the Baloch populated territories of Sindh and the coastal areas of Balochistan.

The success of *Intikhab* prompted many publications in local languages. For the first time, journalism broke out of the confines of Quetta and asserted itself in the hitherto distant districts like Mastung, Hub, Sibi, Zhob, Panjgur, Pishin, Khuzdar, Kharan, Chagai, Jafarabad and Chaman. It was also during this time that eveningers, for the first time, started publishing from Quetta.

A recent survey of done by the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of Balochistan University showed that:

“Even though Jang and Mashriq were there as national papers, their editorial and opinion pages were not published locally. In 1989, the daily Intikhab, published from Hub changed that. This was Balochistan’s first newspaper that responded to the information needs of the Baloch populated territories of Sindh and the coastal areas of Balochistan.”

- All newspapers in Quetta had computers for documentation and designing albeit sometime operations were carried out manually
- Sources of information included news agencies, reporting, TV monitoring, press releases and handouts
- The ratio of international news was 12%, provincial news 50% to 55% and national news 30% to 33%
- In the absence of commerce and industry, political influence on the newspapers was visible. The language was confrontational.
- The number of readers was small
- *Jang* was the most popular newspaper
- A lot of papers were “dummy” papers, there just to claim

advertisements and not promote journalism

There are more newspapers and magazines published now from Balochistan than ever. They are published in Balochi, Pashto, Brahvi, English, Persian and Urdu as well as papers that publish in more than one language. Quetta remains the hub of all media activity – print and the newly emerging broadcast sector with independent FM radio stations and TV networks. Even though the size of broadcast media is greater than it was in the year 2000, , at the end of 2009, it was far from professional or assertive for a host of reasons including the government’s control over sources of information, intimidation and harassment of media and journalists, lack of technical expertise and trained broadcasters and journalists.



Life Over a Cuppa: Reading the Tea Leaves in Quetta

Chapter 2 – Hobbled Professionalism Stunts Media Development

Balochistan's share in Pakistan's growing media market is negligible because the province has little to offer by way of business, commerce and industry, advertisements or revenues. Local economy is driven by agriculture, livestock and smuggling – the undocumented economy – and how much advertising does one need for that? Absence of revenue in the shape of advertisements influences coverage of the province in national and local media: In the districts distant from Quetta, journalists have to fish for advertisements for their employers as part of their job. Often a percentage of the business they bring is their salary.

The media scene in Balochistan has evolved slowly. There are obstacles, real or perceived: radio stations can fall in hands of ethnic groups advocating rebellion, newspapers have to follow strict policies and “advice” from authorities if they have to stay afloat, there is threat from nationalist elements and sectarian groups that brook no opposition or criticism and conservative, tribal mores make it very hard for women to join media. In short, all that ails Balochistan also affects journalism and journalists in the province.

Journalists and media outlets are concentrated in Quetta to the point of

saturation. There are not many newspapers or TV channels needed to cover Quetta, a relatively small city with negligible business infrastructure. Journalists who study in the provincial capital prefer to go out to Karachi or Lahore, Pakistan largest two cities with a combined population of 22 million, where the job market in both journalism and advertising is big whereas in Quetta there is none.

The expectations from a journalism degree are low. Educationists feel there should be classes in the evening for students as demand for media degrees increases in response to the emergence of media as a career on the national landscape. However, others argue against this countering that this should only be done if there are opportunities for journalism students within Balochistan, if they are getting jobs and if the media market in the province is big enough to assimilate the growing numbers of media graduates.

Faculty members of the Journalism and Mass Communications Department at the Balochistan University point out that in the past two decades less than 10 women graduates have gone on to join media as career journalists.

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Most seem to prefer to go work for NGOs. The emerging FM stations and TV channels offer some hope for women to take up media as career but there too, they work behind the scenes. The newspapers don't provide environment comfortable for women and the social taboos undermine their aspirations. Editors refuse to take women on staff because of issues of honor. In a traditional, tribal society like Balochistan, there are restrictions on movement of women which makes it difficult for them to work in a profession that is requires them to look for news, interact with men and move freely around in a male dominated milieu.

Professionally-Deficient Media

Most newspapers carry press releases from "cantonment" [read: military authorities], government offices and political parties faxed to offices. There is little trend of doing "enterprise stories" or investigative field journalism. Journalists share news and pictures through emails or pass on verbal information to their colleagues instead of going out for coverage themselves. Often, news items are what are called "desk stories", where journalists just phone sources or friends at the end of the day to glean information to write a story. As the government controls the revenue lifeline, publications lean towards information from intelligence

agencies and government offices. Among the journalist community, many claim a majority of the journalists are on the government payroll but it is hard to verify. Certainly there are few confessions.

Most journalists and newspapers do not follow any code of ethics. Journalism graduates entering media is a very recent trend in Pakistan; more so in Balochistan where there are few opportunities. As a result very few journalists with a sound understanding and appreciation of the subject and its ethics enter the field. Especially in the districts, shopkeepers or teachers with no exposure to journalism principles or ethics at school or in the field are reporters. As elsewhere in Pakistan, journalism in the districts is often a shortcut to access status, money and favors in an environment marked by unemployment and absence of opportunity.

There is pervasive exploitation in journalism in Balochistan. Detrimental industry practices where journalists are not paid or very little also encourage unethical practices. Bribery is rampant because media organizations don't pay well or regularly and, therefore, have little leverage to push staff for quality and independent journalism. Journalists indulge in corrupt practices because they can't get by on the small salaries they get. There is little by way of job security.

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Newspapers don't issue appointment letters or pay regularly. Even though there is a Journalism and Mass Communications Department at the Balochistan University producing an annual crop of journalism graduates, few enter journalism as it doesn't pay. Contributors get as little as Rs500 (\$7) for an article, if at all. Some newspapers pay the same amount as salary, hardly an incentive for taking up journalism. But the job comes handy in a lot of other ways, for personal favors. When reporters have no financial or organizational support, they are dependent on local people with influence and can't afford to report against them otherwise their safety cannot be ensured.

Journalists don't get clear job descriptions or assignments and there are hardly any editors or editorial meetings to help reporters refine their art. Where journalists are assigned beats, they can't focus or specialize in them because they often get pulled into all sorts of assignments due to limited staff and resources. In case of small regional papers, there is little or no organizational support in terms of travel, communication and job security. Local newspapers don't have resources to afford foreign wire services. They lift international news from the Internet or from international TV networks, monitored, translated and carried.

There are no training or internship facilities for reporters. Newspapers and

news networks offer little opportunity for internship to journalism students. Those who are lucky enough to find one don't pursue it seriously because the newspapers or the university doesn't cover costs of internships. Lack of financial resources like regular salaries and support to gather news is a major impediment in the way of improving journalism in the Balochistan. Only outstanding local reporters get jobs. Getting a job is largely a matter of opportunity and having the right skills, both of which are often mutually exclusive. Reporters from outside Balochistan tend to be average too but the local say at least they have opportunities to get trained. There are also accusations of factions in the press club and journalists' union. It is alleged that local journalists get little space in and support from the press club.

Media's coverage of the wider Balochistan conflict is also compromised by lack of resources to hire and train professional journalists, the lack of commitment and knowledge of journalism of the district-based correspondents and the huge distances involved. If someone is hired for an average of Rs5,000 (\$70), the expectation that he would deliver is low, which has proved a disservice to the people and the profession.

"If you carry news like 'according to well-informed sources, it has rained in Loralai,' you can imagine the standards of journalism.

"Media's coverage of the wider Balochistan conflict is also compromised by lack of resources to hire and train professional journalists, the lack of commitment and knowledge of journalism of the district-based correspondents and the huge distances involved."

Media has increased in size and so has its coverage, but the standards have fallen. Journalists are in it for money and they justify their unprofessional conduct because they get paid so little. There is no incentive to do better,” is how a veteran journalist puts it.

Revenue over Responsibility

Another problem why reporters don't get trained and journalism standards stay abysmal in Balochistan is because there are no professional editors. Owners often take up the role of editors with little or no experience of journalism. When it comes to revenue or responsible journalism, they often err on the side of professional standards and quality. If a reporter brings in a good story, it is entertained not on merit but the risk factor: whether carrying would result in advertisement cuts? *The Nation, Nawa-e-Waqt, Dawn* and other dailies have suffered advert cuts because they incurred the wrath of authorities at one stage or another by playing up Balochistan in the news. This symbiotic relationship between the owners and the government underlined by commercial interests is a deciding factor in the way Balochistan and its central issues are covered in both local and national media.

Access to information in present day may not be as institutionally restricted as it was under General Zia's martial law in the late 1970s and most of 80s, however, the standard of journalism leaves a lot to desire. It's easy to see why. Journalists are often not paid well while editors of local newspapers tend to sing paeans to the government in power to ensure publication and circulation. Going by the coverage of news, most appear to be editors in name while "the actual editors sit in the Public Information Department of the government". Often, newspapers receive articles and stories faxed from the PID followed by instructions to carry them, according to some senior journalists.

No Trainings, No Standards

Even when a journalist brings a professional degree, it doesn't come with any assurance that he has skills to hold him in good stead professionally. Since journalism schools are heavy on theory – with no practical facilities to train students – journalism graduates are often sneered at by the industry professionals because of their lack of skills. A lot of the practitioners in the media are in journalism not for money because they don't get paid or little but for the influence that comes with carrying a journalist's business card.

“If a reporter brings in a good story, it is entertained not on merit but the risk factor: whether carrying would result in advertisement cuts? The Nation, Nawa-e-Waqt, Dawn and other dailies have suffered advert cuts because they incurred the wrath of authorities at one stage or another by playing up Balochistan in the news. This symbiotic relationship between the owners and the government underlined by commercial interests is a deciding factor in the way Balochistan and its central issues are covered in both local and national media.”

Professional training, proper salaries and career growth opportunities is the way to go if journalism is to be improved in Balochistan. Training of journalists, in particular, is sorely needed. While it has a bearing on standards, it is also directly linked to the issue of protection and mobility.

Safety of journalists in the conflict torn Balochistan is a sore point but if trained, hired and paid regularly, journalists will figure out how to get by. They need fax machines, computers, Internet connections, mobile phones and logistical support. And, of course, regular salaries and support to do their jobs responsibly. "If trained and paid properly, journalists will go to Tora Bora [in neighboring Afghanistan] to report", says a local journalist. "If not, reporters won't venture out of their Quetta offices and will rely on a couple of phone calls to file reports", which is how most of reporting is done.

Senior journalists based in Quetta feel there are just not enough skilled professionals around to give meaningful coverage to issues and inspire others to do better. Leave alone fresh graduates with no practical skills to enter the profession, even veteran journalists need training in news-writing, they assert. District reporters work independently without any formal association or

recognition. They are either clerks or teachers for whom journalism is an easy way of getting access to and get favors from senior government officials and politicians. They tend to use government resources and therefore unhesitatingly speak for authorities than people.

In Balochistan, as elsewhere in Pakistan, it is print journalists that work for TV networks on the side or have abandoned their old medium for the glamorous, cushy electronic media. This has left a severe paucity of trained professionals in print media. In newspapers, 90 percent of the staff is made to work on news desk if they have the right language and professional skills. This restricts those with the right skills to the role of correcting those who don't and often reporters in field have little by way of skills. Even editors admit that media in Balochistan needs training residencies addressing all aspects of news gathering and writing.

Journalism Education: More Theory than Practice

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Balochistan in Quetta is the only formal institution offering journalism studies in the province. Established in 1987, it offers a two-year Master's program in mass communication.

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Even it offers courses in print and broadcast journalism and its faculty is either derived from or associated with the industry, the courses focus mostly on academics and theory.

The journalism school, however, does have an internship program for students with local newspapers and broadcast media. Over the years, the department has produced journalism professionals who have joined local media – print and electronic - and work as public relations and communication staff with government and non-government organizations and in the advertising sector. The department's internship program is generally perceived as good and helps students get exposure to industry practices. The internship, introduced in 1995, is mandatory for the journalism students. They are required to work in media organizations for a period of three months or 180 hours in the final year.

The department's print program is relatively more developed reflecting the industry's needs at the provincial level where the electronic media has only recently made inroads. This doesn't mean that the students of the department are not entering the electronic media. However, like any good journalism school, the thrust needs to be more on practical journalism for which the department needs to develop curricula and acquire technology and equipment.

Master's students in the final year are also required to produce and publish a magazine and a weekly newspaper which they do intermittently. In addition, MPhil and PhD scholars have to complete the requisite number of credit hours for course work in keeping with the Higher Education Commission rules. They are required to submit and defend a thesis based on original research work. Duration of these degrees depend on the performance of the students and on the nature of research work. However, the minimum time limit for MPhil is two years and three years for PhD. Recently, after the department chairperson left for a university in Karachi, the school was left without a Phd scholar on the faculty even though lecturers are pursuing a degree.

Rigorous practice and mentorship that is hallmark of all good journalism schools is generally absent at the department due to lack of facilities. These need to be instituted to make the department self-sufficient and journalism studies better.

At the end of 2009, the department had a production/computer laboratory for magazine and newspaper production but was not functional because the computers were old and mostly did not work, greatly undermining the institution's ability to train students. It also had a broadcast academy with audio enabled computers and editing software. The department was in the process of obtaining a license to establish an FM campus radio station.



Music To His Ears: On Air in Quetta

Chapter 3 – Radio: More Music than Current Affairs

Until 2002, the state-owned PBC was the only 'local' radio station doing programs for local listenership in regional languages. It was widely received in Balochistan and beyond. Even though at the start of 2010 the cities of Quetta and Gwadar had FM stations, in the private sector, doing programs in local languages, their outreach was limited to a few kilometers radius inside and outside these cities.

The PBC Quetta footprint reaches the whole of Balochistan and large swathes of Iran, Afghanistan and the Middle East. Three PBC channels simultaneously relay programs with a total duration of 30 hours on weekdays and 32 hours on Sundays. On the basis of program duration, the PBC Quetta centre is the largest radio operation in the country. PBC has also set up stations in Khuzdar, Turbat, Sibi, Loralai and Zhob districts.

PBC Quetta relays programs in five languages – Urdu, Pashtu, Balochi, Brahvi and Hazargi. Local programming is done keeping in view information needs of the urban and rural population. Programs in regional languages are made for children, women, youth and students along with regular news and information that aims to inform the government officials and public representative about the issues people face. A more substantial and

professed role of PBC Quetta is to highlight the development plans and progress on these and inform the public about these in their own languages.

The majority of Balochistan's population lives in the rural areas and a large chunk of radio programming is made keeping in view their information needs. Whereas in the beginning, radio did most of its programs in Urdu and English with very little regional programming, it has gradually gravitated towards preserving the heritage and instilling a sense of nationhood in the listeners by reducing content alien to local culture and traditions and promoting regional languages, folk music, poetry and lifestyle.

A somewhat similar agenda is in place on the FM101, the state-owned youth and entertainment channel based in Quetta: to introduce the local listeners to what is mainstream "national" entertainment. Most of the station's listeners are women, students and housewives, according to the staff at the youth music radio run by PBC who claim they are so popular they receive bags of cards on festivals such as Eid with many people hoping to hear themselves talk on radio. Looking at colorful cards pinned like butterflies to studio walls, one is inclined to believe the claim.

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In here, you can read fan-mail pasted all over the place or catch the callers. The FM101 staff will have you believe that Quetta's youth, including women, listen to "Pakipop". That's till you venture outside. To Kandahari Bazar, Liaquat Bazar, the maze of streets along the city bus station. In markets and alleyways, ordinary men are swooning to a vibrant cassette-culture and tens of audio shops doing roaring business in regional music. How, then, does a station that insists on playing Punjabi and Urdu songs only reflect the flavor of a city so fiercely steeped in Baloch and Pashtun nationalities and culture?

It appears a majority of the station's listeners are the youth whose tastes are influenced by music TV channels such as *MTV* and *Musik*. TV and cable is everywhere in Quetta and people request songs they see on the music channels. Such national Pakistani pop stars as Abrarul Haq, Jawad Ahmad, Rahim Shah, Atif Aslam, Ali Zafar, Sajjad Ali and Ahmad Jehanzeb make FM101's top ten.

But the songs serenading the people in public space or transport in Quetta are far from mainstream Pakistani pop. The character of the city being tribal and nationalist, people root for folk music or acts that sing odes to 'Watan,' the 'Fatherland.' The pulse of the street

pound to revolutionary verse sung to traditional Afghan instruments or Balochi music. Only in the fortress of Quetta cantonment will one find people tuned in to FM and PBC in their cars and shops. Taking into account the divergent music listenership in the cantonment and elsewhere, one comes away with the feeling that the state-run youth radio does not cater to the dominant Baloch or Pashto audiences who would like a promotion of their languages and culture.

The station staff thinks not and argues that Urdu and Punjabi music dominates the Pakistani music scene. "The beats are generally popular across the ethnic divide", says a DJ at the station. Balochi and Pashto music is only popular in their respective communities. The station says its mandate is to promote the national scene, pointing out that even regional Balochi and Pashto music is not produced in Balochistan but NWFP and Sindh.

No News is Bad News

At the start of 2010 there were five FM radios on air in Balochistan, including three independent stations (FM91 in Gwadar and Sachal FM105 and Chiltan FM 88 in Quetta) and two government-run and PBC-owned (FM101 Gwadar and FM101 Quetta).

"The character of the city being tribal and nationalist, people root for folk music or acts that sing odes to 'Watan,' the 'Fatherland.' The pulse of the street pound to revolutionary verse sung to traditional Afghan instruments or Balochi music. Only in the fortress of Quetta cantonment will one find people tuned in to FM and PBC in their cars and shops."

People want news and information but little is available on FM radio stations, either private or state-owned. It is currently available only on news TV networks or newspapers. Some argue that in Quetta, there are few radio listeners because several TV channels are available on cable.

The state owned *PBC*, which was the only station available in Quetta until recently and still is in remote districts of Balochistan, has little to do with the growth of radio journalism in Pakistan. For people, the real journalism and hard news is only there on foreign news channels like the *BBC* and *VoA* even though their bulletins too are national and do not focus on the problems of Balochistan in depth. The state radio is not seen as effective because *PBC*, which reaches far and wide, hardly carries impartial or pluralistic information or current affairs. Its utility lies more in education than information. It commands listenership due to regional programming that it does.

The prospect of newer FM stations in the private sector across Balochistan's districts heralds the promise of local news and information in local languages and other programming that is relevant

to the local communities. However, in the absence of a cadre of trained journalists, newsrooms, broadcast recording and editing equipment and technical expertise, most stations in the province at the best can hope to operate as jukebox radios.

Until that time, such international radio stalwarts as *BBC* and *VOA*, with their Urdu and Pashto language local programming, serve as popular platforms for news and information for Balochistan's widely dispersed population interested in staying informed. However, even these well-resourced giants cannot be too local albeit both warned beforehand of droughts and floods in recent years where the local media failed.

While *PTV* has opened up to field-based journalism in recent years because of competition from independent networks such as *Geo*, *Aaj* and *ARY* channels, it too has a national bent in terms of news and analysis rather than local. Still, radio dominates as a preferred medium for the audience in regions outside Quetta. *BBC* and *Radio Azadi* (Radio Free Afghanistan) are popular in the Pashtun belt in north Balochistan, *VOA* and *BBC* in the Balochi-speaking areas.

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Discouraging News on Radio

Sachal FM105, the independent FM radio station in Quetta, had to stop doing news and information after an attack on *Geo TV* office in 2007 when it extensively reported on disturbances triggered by the controversial sacking of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry by General Musharraf whose military regime launched a severe crackdown on the media the same year. PEMRA came down hard on Sachal when the youth and entertainment based radio offshoot of *PBC, FM101*, which relays the PBC news on the hour, complained that *FM105* had started news and information. According to PEMRA regulations, the private FM stations can air the PBC bulletins. Even though they are allowed to do local news, PEMRA discourages it whenever they become too political or hard-hitting. This is especially a hazard in the restive Balochistan divided along the nationalist, ethnic and political lines.

PEMRA directed *FM105* to lift news from a local pro-government newspaper, *Awam*, with content heavily vetted by the security agencies instead of producing and running its own news and information. Disheartened, *FM105* decided to stop producing and airing its own news bulletins and instead enter into an agreement with local daily *Mashriq* under which it ran only pro-

government development news published by the newspaper while crediting it. For some time, the channel also did a segment during the morning that read out the day's headlines from newspapers. This too stopped when Sachal decided on a no news policy due to local sensitivities and pressure from authorities. However, in January 2010, the station was airing on the hour radio bulletins from the Pakistan Press International. The PPI paid the station for airing the bulletins and according to station staff, Sachal only aired the bulletins because it brought money. The bulletins, according to station staff, mostly carry news of national significance with very little about Quetta or Balochistan.

Listeners complained when the station stopped the news and current affairs programs done by a local professor of international relations (the content mostly focused on international events). Those who complained were mostly students who benefited from the news programs because it helped them understand issues local and regional. The station has also stopped news in the local Balochi and Brahvi languages because the station can't find a competent manager to review content before broadcast.

“According to PEMRA regulations, the private FM stations can air the PBC bulletins. Even though they are allowed to do local news, PEMRA discourages it whenever they become too political or hard-hitting. This is especially a hazard in the restive Balochistan divided along the nationalist, ethnic and political lines.”

General Musharraf's coercive state of emergency and PEMRA restrictions ended up discouraging FM stations in Balochistan from continuing or expanding news bulletins and information programming even though *FM105* remained a firm proponent of information-based programming. It found ways to make programs that were more than music and entertainment because it felt that's what the station's audience demanded. The station had been doing health awareness programs on issues like polio inoculation and waterborne diseases. The radio also did health awareness programs in local languages such as Brahvi, Balochi and Persian - for the Ministry of Health. These programs were then sent as far as Turbat, Panjgur and Lasbela and aired on *PBC*.

FM105 Quetta also did education programs on elections in the run-up to the February 2008 national and provincial elections and on innovative techniques in water exploration – a grave problem in Balochistan – with NGO experts, issues related to child protection, education for girls, killing in the name of honor and domestic violence. The station invited victims, legal experts and specialists to speak on these issues. Government officials refused to be on radio and if they did come, did not want to take live calls. The city nazim (mayor), although requested several times, did not come to be on a program.

The staff of the station in Quetta has been resisting pressure from owners in Karachi who think programming should be done in Karachi. Apparently the Sachal group has lost key staff in the stations in Sindh at *FM105* Nawabshah and *FM105* Larkana as well as *FM105* Quetta who argued for locally generated content rather than centralized. Some see in this proof of the pattern that PEMRA encourages – giving outsiders licenses so that local influences are not institutionalized or played up in sensitive places as Quetta. Media analysts in Quetta say that a station and its programming should to be rooted in local community if it has to retain audience loyalty and that business and programming on people's concerns did not have to be mutually exclusive. *FM105* Quetta has generated revenue from advertisements about local business, programming sponsored by NGOs and government. The station stays on air from 6 pm to 12 pm and reaches mainly the Pashtun belt. In Quetta, the *FM105* staff is paid from Karachi. These include a regular staff along with DJs who work on their own shows at different times of the day.

FM Radio Prospects: 2010 and Beyond

Early 2010, another independent station, Chilton *FM88* was transmitting from Quetta.

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The youth and entertainment channel, originally acquired for Mastung but illegally based in Quetta, mostly cater to the Balochi speaking areas of Mastung, Quetta and the suburbs. It does programming in a host of languages including Balochi, Brahvi, Urdu, Pashtu and Persian.

The owners of formerly *Shalimar Television Network* and now *ATV* have applied for an FM station in Quetta as have Apna Karachi *FM107*, a Karachi based station that favors news, information and current affairs programming. Both are unable to get security clearance for licenses.

Plans to have a campus FM radio station at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Balochistan have been marred by delays with the university administration fearing that it will fall in the hands of ethnic/nationalist elements and students groups in a politically charged environment. Nonetheless the university administration has been pushing for approval of license. In 2008 PEMRA had also issued two licenses to Saeed Hashmi, a senator from Balochistan, for stations in the predominantly Pashtun districts of Pishin and Chaman. The stations were

never built and till 2010, the owners had no clear plans of starting work on them.

Playing It Safe on the Airwaves

Considering that FM stations by their very nature are community-oriented and catering to local audiences, it is intriguing that PEMRA has been reluctant to award licenses to locals. The security clearance process for award of radio licenses continues to be unnecessarily stringent and only 'safe parties' – with clearance from authorities - manage to secure licenses. Also, the open bidding process through which a license is awarded is expensive and only those with tons of money and influence seem to get them.

This is the reason few locally owned FM stations have come up in Quetta and interior Balochistan even though radio remains a powerful medium preferred by the people (most people are not literate and can't read newspapers and many can't afford expensive TV sets). With no FM stations to champion local aspirations or culture, the only option the people of Balochistan have is the state-owned PBC that avoids serious current affairs issues or foreign broadcasters such as BBC and VOA that do not have dedicated local bulletins.

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As elsewhere, PEMRA refuses to award licenses to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or community-based organizations (CBOs) in Balochistan, even if they have credibility, local acceptability and effective outreach. The Taraki Foundation, a non-profit organization working in Balochistan, has applied for a community radio license a number of times. It has been doing so since 2000 but without success. First the government said it did not have a body to deal with community radio. In 2002, after PEMRA was born, Taraki reapplied a few times but was denied each time.

The authorities argue that civil society organizations that draw funds from foreign donors cannot be trusted with running a radio station fearing it would be used to advocate “foreign agendas.” Taraki sought a license for a 5 kW transmitter, enough to cover the Quetta valley. The original plan envisaged building five community radio stations but in view of the government policy that an applicant can have only one radio license, the request was reduced to one.

Although Taraki has explained to PEMRA that a major chunk of their activities are covered by government funds and are supervised by it, there is little hope it will get a radio license till PEMRA comes up with a clear policy on community radio in Pakistan.

A recent radio listenership survey conducted by PACT Radio in the border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan – including Quetta and Chaman - threw up some interesting results:

- That people listened to radio for entertainment followed by news and information, health, education and information on religion.
- *BBC Pashto/Persian* was the most popular channel followed by *BBC Urdu*, *Radio Azadi Afghanistan* and *Radio Afghanistan*. *PBC* was the least popular.
- The reason for liking a particular radio station was reliable national and international news and good educational programming.
- A greater percentage of educated people listen to radio to obtain information than do uneducated people.
- The listeners find the most convenient time to listen to radio to be at night, from 8 pm to midnight. The time interval from 6 pm to 8 pm is also a very convenient. Very early morning (5 am till 8 am) and mid-morning (from 8 am till 12 pm) is considered convenient by a small percentage of the population while mid-day (12 pm to 2 pm) and afternoon (2 pm to 6 pm) proved to be the least convenient time for listening to radio.

“The authorities argue that civil society organizations that draw funds from foreign donors cannot be trusted with running a radio station fearing it would be used to advocate “foreign agendas.” ”

- The majority of people still listen to the radio on medium wave (MW) than listeners of short wave (SW).
- Education programs and soap operas are the most discussed programs among the listeners. These percentages become more significant when one considers that radio soap operas broadcast in Pakistan and Afghanistan are, while considered entertaining, at the same time considered to be educational. So it is far and away most of all educational programs that people tend to discuss with others.
- To the question *“How do you think local radio should differ from national or international broadcasters?”* respondents said that local and international broadcasters should differ in terms of the number of educational programs. They would like more education programs on their local radio.



Faces of Balochistan: The Mulberry Children of Bostan

Chapter 4 – Television: The Picture Grows

Before 2002 there was just the state-owned *PTV* and then big networks like *Geo* and *ARY* that monopolized television news. Not anymore. With the media scene becoming fertile and new TV channels competing for eyeballs, there's a "devolution" of media happening all over the country, with aggressive, smaller networks competing for their share of the pie and making their presence felt as reliable sources of information. No more can channels afford to black out information because someone else will be out with it hence reducing susceptibility to state-induced censorship to a great degree.

Today almost all major news networks maintain offices in Quetta. However, where all these new channels have increased coverage of Balochistan in general, that coverage is still focused on and limited to Quetta (there were five correspondents of *Samaa TV* in Quetta, for example). The TV networks need to report on the interior regions of Balochistan, which are deprived and backward, with minimal inflow and outflow of information. There is reasonably good coverage of Quetta but not the rest of Balochistan and if this is to change the networks will have to set up bureau offices at the divisional headquarters to properly cover the districts, an ideal far from becoming a reality soon considering these remote regions are not economically viable for media.

The encouraging aspect of coverage of Quetta is that channels like *Samaa TV* try to cover everything live, which is why they have several reporters and cameramen in Quetta doing news reports, packages and debates from the provincial capital. This has created competition and *Express*, *Geo* and *ARY* channels are following suit because they can't afford to be seen as slack or wanting when it comes to coverage. This dash for more coverage to beat competition is what is creating both competition and opportunities in media in Pakistan in general and it is no different in Balochistan where networks have to hire reporters, rent buildings, bring in expensive equipment and demand by the minute reporting of events as they happen. However, this mad rush for breaking news often keeps the reporters and the networks focused on the surface of things instead of going to the heart of the matter.

Again, there are few trained people to run the fast expanding media and this deficiency, both in the newsroom as well as reporting, keeps coverage of issues at a superficial level. Television in Balochistan still has some way to go before it emerges from the spell of popularity and be driven by a sense of duty.

"There is reasonably good coverage of Quetta but not the rest of Balochistan and if this is to change the networks will have to set up offices at divisional headquarters."

There is widespread acknowledgement from within the media community in Balochistan that news on television needs work as those tasked with reporting and editing news often do not have enough years behind them to add depth and professionalism. This often results in shoddy coverage. There is still a lot of room for improvement, say media observers. Journalists are hungry and so are the networks. Both have suddenly found opportunity and freedom that because of lack of skills and professionalism they don't know how to deal with.

TV Becomes News While There is Little Local News on TV

The opening up of media has created opportunities in Balochistan where awareness about media and journalists' role is changing the way media was perceived in a close, traditional society. For youth in Quetta, which was the focus of this study, media has become "sexy" and suddenly they are enticed, finding jobs, breaking into the national mainstream and their own local environment as bit of celebrities, carrying the press label on their sleeves.

Without the concerns and worries of the generation before them that had had to work hard, often spend a lifetime for recognition or a salary proportionate to the hard work, agitating against the rigid

owners to pay them according to what the Wage Board proposed and living with job insecurity, the youth working with the new channels are getting salaries that are five times as much as the Wage Board recommended rates. Some of the print media's best and brightest have left for TV and newspapers keep losing them regularly as bigger salaries and the chance to become famous is too big a temptation to resist.

The news channels have increased the coverage of Balochistan in mainstream national media but that coverage, say media observers, is limited to covering news reports, voice reports on telephone and news scrolls, what is known as "ticker" in TV lingo. When it comes to analysis and threadbare scrutiny of events, Balochistan is absent from the debate. Analysts say if popular Baloch leaders are brought on local TV they will be better able to articulate Balochistan's issues particularly those not seen as 'hard politics' such as education, air transport access to remote districts such as Panjgur and Turbat and even proper road access to Zhob.

"With the induction of electronic media revolution, Balochistan's issues should have been reported more regularly in the private news channels", says one of the last editorials carried in *Baloch Hal* in early 2010.

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“On the contrary, the true picture from Balochistan still fails to make ample space in the so-called national electronic media. There are very sad but valid reasons for the blackout of Balochistan’s problems in the national media: The owners of private news channels and the big guns in the powerful political quarters seem to have developed an understanding that young, qualified Baloch journalists should not be given jobs in their Quetta offices.” The views of the web-based newspaper are corroborated by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) in report published in January 2010: “A Quetta-based Baloch Bureau Chief of a leading news channel was sacked from his job

reportedly on the instructions of security forces after he interviewed the chief of Jundullah, an Iranian Sunni militant group, who was wanted by Iran and accused of hiding somewhere in Pakistan. The state apparatus got the Baloch journalist fired under the pretext that the interview undermined Pakistan-Iran Relations.” The PFUJ report also said that “the majority populated Baloch complain that state intelligence agencies influence hiring and firing policies of several private news channels and newspapers. Most Balochistan offices of key media houses of the country do not have a single Baloch reporter as they are often discriminated against because of their alleged anti-government views.”



Emerald and Gold: The Hannah Lake in Quetta

Chapter 5 – Working In Aid of Balochistan Media

The Quetta Press Club was first established in 1959. Prominent among the founders were editor weekly *Meezan*, Maulana Abdul Karim, and editor of weekly *Pasban*, Maulana Abdullah, who had the support of journalists from newspapers and magazines. The two founders also prepared the press club's charter governing its activities. The press club at the time was called Press Club Quetta and Kalat Division.

Over the years, the Quetta Press Club, which by December 2009 had close to 80 members, has helped bring political parties, social organizations, journalists' bodies and workers unions close to journalists and media and established networks that have ensured extensive coverage of events and flow of information. The press club offers its halls and services for press conferences on nominal charges to whoever wishes to use them.

Along with the press club, there are other journalists' and editors' unions that seek to safeguard their interests such as ensuring journalists get paid according to the Wage Board standards, ensuring flow of advertisement quotas to publications, residential projects for journalists, issuing of accreditation cards and organizational

support to the journalists. In addition to the Quetta Press Club, there are other organizations working for the welfare of journalist community. Among them are:

- Balochistan Daily Newspapers Editor's Council
- Council of Magazine Editors of Balochistan
- Balochistan Union of Journalists
- The Press Council
- The provincial chapter of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors
- The provincial chapter of All Pakistan Newspaper Employees Council

Although these bodies have different agendas and different spheres and scope of work, when it comes to issues facing the industry, they come together to look for solutions. They have made possible meaningful discourse on issues and drafted a media policy for Balochistan which was taken up by the provincial cabinet and approved in October 1992. In a region where journalism has not emerged as an industry, the coming together of journalist bodies and resolving issues through mutual consultation is a big way forward towards achieving a sense of community and professionalism.

"In a region where journalism has not emerged as an industry, the coming together of journalist bodies and resolving issues through mutual consultation is a big way forward towards achieving a sense of community and professionalism."

It is a different story in the interior Balochistan where the journalist communities are torn apart by professional jealousies, self interest and state patronage that seeks to divide them. In the big cities there may be factions within a press club but it still remains a powerful platform that unites the community. Not so in the districts where journalists have opened several press clubs in their offices. They draw patronage from the authorities and favor them in their reportage. Since most of them are not qualified journalists but government workers, they feel obliged to act as public relations agents for the authorities.

‘Honorary’ Journalists

District correspondents work as *Aizazi* or ‘honorary’ journalists: they don’t have any salaries but draw a small percentage of advertisements they gather for their publications as commission. These are mostly tender notices and classifieds, no big adverts. Most agree if there were salaries and contracts, there would be no yellow journalism. There is no job security and if these ‘honorary’ journalists don’t work because they do not get paid, their media organizations will have someone else working as ‘honorary’ journalists.

Even though journalists don’t get paid, they still want to work because it gives them as certain influence, a nuisance value as someone representing a publication or a network. If that means they have to spend money from their own pocket to gather news, they do it. At the same time, when there is no incentive, the standards of journalism plummet: the interest in the profession declines when not paid; they won’t or can’t stay independent of influence from authorities, don’t go the extra mile to dig up a story, to investigate.

One of the reasons why the correspondents in the remote regions of Balochistan are divided into groups is because most of them are either teachers or government employees with little commitment to the profession. Professional jealousies and groupings result in multiple press clubs in small towns, operating out of houses, offices and shops. Journalists that work for government are also reluctant to forge unity with those for whom journalism is the sole source of earning. They seem to divide the movement which is struggling for the welfare of the community because they have their own interests: if they go against the authorities, they lose jobs or are transferred somewhere where they don’t want to serve.

“Even though journalists don’t get paid, they still want to work because it gives them as certain influence, a nuisance value as someone representing a publication or a network. If that means they have to spend money from their own pocket to gather news, they do it. At the same time, when there is no incentive, the standards of journalism plummet: the interest in the profession declines when not paid; they won’t or can’t stay independent of influence from authorities, don’t go the extra mile to dig up a story, to investigate.”

Wages of Journalism

As elsewhere, the issue of low salaries and what is called “honorary” correspondents who do not draw any salary but have a business card from the publication or news network showing them as correspondents has seriously damaged the cause of journalism in the districts of Balochistan. Low wages have led to widespread corruption among the journalists, some journalists say. Even in the cities, where journalists working for the new TV networks draw four times as much as the Wage Board recommended salaries, those in the newspapers have to get by on a meager amount even after spending years in the field. They stay in the profession, bring bad name to it by exploiting it for personal gains. And it makes it easy for whoever wants to exploit them.

Print journalists that don't have appointment letters and regular salaries

but work on commission drawn from adverts gathered for the papers are susceptible to unethical practices. The TV channels pay salaries to correspondents and provide them mobile phones with cameras, offering a sense of belonging and a salary that keeps them from getting exploited.

There are about 110 newspapers that come out of Quetta daily with perhaps only 10 that are recognized as proper papers. The workers associated with the remaining 100 papers want to become members of the club when they have no stake in the profession. There are a minimum criteria for membership – at least four years of service, journalism as the sole source of earning and an appointment letter from the publication – that must be followed to become a member or else you have a lot of unprofessional people entering the field.



The Cycle of Life: In A Roadside Hotel near Gwadar

Chapter 6 – Balochistan: Dangerous to Report from and Dangerous to Report On

Journalists in Balochistan are a hostage to the slow-burning conflict in the province that greatly influences the way they work. The province has been at conflict with the centre over the question of autonomy and use of resources since the birth of Pakistan, and there have been insurgencies in the past squashed with brutal force by the state, engendering deep-rooted grievances. But the conflict triggered by the government of former president General (retired) Pervez Musharraf in 2005 has created deep mistrust of the centre.

The conditions for journalists have always been far from ideal but this time around they say they are walking a thin line. In the past if the reporting did not go in favor of someone (the tribal system, the sardars or the insurgents), journalists could rely on the state to protect them. Not anymore. If they write something that rankle the insurgents, the state can't protect them and if they write against the state's excesses, the insurgents can't protect them from the state, according to journalists.

This contention is borne out by assassination of Chishti Mujahid on February 9, 2008. He reported for daily *Jang* and weekly *Akhbar-e-Jahan*, publications considered having pro-

establishment leanings. Mujahid was also the official photographer for the Governor House in Quetta. While it is believed that his story about the mysterious killing of Baloch leader Balach Marri that was given a strong headline by a subeditor in Karachi implying that "the end of the custodian of Baloch nationalism was so disastrous that he didn't even get a piece of land for burial" may have caused his death allegedly at the hands of the Baloch Liberation Army, there may have been other stories and reasons. For example, he was believed to be "close" to the military-bureaucracy establishment.

In the end, a veteran reporter who reported on Balochistan for decades became victim of a conflict in which loyalties matter, a conflict in which one cannot afford to be or seen on the wrong side of either the military or the Baloch fighters. His murder also reflects the ignorance of news staff sitting in the safety of offices elsewhere about the complexities and nuances of the conflict on Balochistan. Maybe the headline was the cause of his murder, for Chishti who has reported for a long time from Balochistan, would certainly not have chosen to irk the national sentiment with a strongly worded headline.

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The Years of Reporting Dangerously

“If you mention the army operations, you get a call from the Military Intelligence (MI) saying don’t mention the arm and if you mention the insurgents as terrorists, they get worked up saying ‘don’t dub us terrorists, we are freedom fighters”, says a leading journalist requesting anonymity. This journalist was summoned by the MI who asked why he didn’t write negatively about the Baloch sardars and threatened that “we know all manners of things to straighten you up if you don’t fall in line.”

He had to call upon the International Crisis Group, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, his newspaper and friends in national and international media to ease the pressure from the agencies who wanted him to come to their office next time “with stories about the wonderful mega development projects the federal government was undertaking”. He told the governor of the province about the threats from the agencies who advised him, “Young man, why don’t you do positive journalism.” The journalist was advised by friends to be careful because, says he, his existence in the field was the defeat of the forces of repression. He says he’s still trailed by the agencies wherever he goes and asked about who he sees and meets.

Over the past several years, journalists have been harassed, picked up by the security agencies, arrested on trumped up charges or just disappeared. In December 2009, Rehmatullah Shaheen, a reporter for the Baloch nationalist newspaper *Daily Tawar* was picked up security agencies and after more than a week of his going missing, the authorities acknowledged that he had been arrested. This after a wave of protests. “Arresting and holding a journalist incommunicado for a week without notifying his family or lawyer is unacceptable,” said Reporters without Borders, a press freedom organization. “By acting in this way, the local officials are exceeding their authority and are violating the fundamental rights of the people they arrest.” Shaheen, according to the official version, was arrested under the Explosives Act after discovery of a grenade in his home and was suspected of “anti-state activities.”

Haji Wasi Ahmed, a journalist working with Baloch newspapers *Daily Azadi* and *Daily Balochistan Express* that have been subjected to intimidation by the state on several occasions in the past and more recently in 2009 when its office was watched by security agencies, was killed in 2009.

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“He was the highly respected correspondent of *Azadi* and *Balochistan Express* and the president of newspaper’s body,” the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists said.

“Working conditions in Balochistan were not as bad as in the North Western Frontier Province (NWFP). The only thing that went unnoticed and remained a cause of unrest and dissatisfaction was the unchanged structure of the media in Balochistan. More than any other domain of life, media is very strictly controlled by some hidden powers. They make sure, as today is the case, that Balochistan does not have a powerful indigenous media. This is the sad state of affairs in the media in a province that is almost always ruled by the military, not the so-called elected representatives of the masses”, said *Baloch Hal* in an editorial.

In 2009, the offices of nationalist daily *Asaap* were closed down and the editor-in-Chief forced to go into self exile after an assassination attempt on his life. For two weeks in August 2009, the Frontier Corps besieged the offices of daily *Azadi* and daily *Balochistan Express*.

On August 26, 2008, Hasan Abdullah, reporter for *DawnNews TV*, was detained for six hours by intelligence officials. During detention, he was kept blindfolded and interrogated. The official

also took away his cell phone and a video tape containing interview of Balach Marri, slain son of prominent Baloch leader Sardar Khair Bakhsh Marri. Balach was head of the Balochistan Liberation Army, a separatist movement that has been targeting officials, the military and state infrastructure, before he was killed on November 21, 2007, allegedly by army.

Munir Mengal, who was arrested at Karachi airport in April 2006 for planning to set up an independent Baloch-language television channel *Baloch Voice* at the peak of military operations in Balochistan, told *BBC Urdu* in 2008 that he still feared for his life. "Wherever I go, I'm afraid for my life. They prevent me from talking and writing." Munir spent two years in military and police detention before being freed in February 2008. He was held in Karachi where he was allegedly tortured and asked why he supported the separatist Baloch nationalists. Munir, who used to live in Qalat, now lives abroad.

A lawless tribal milieu where state agencies and non-state elements push their conflicting agendas, often through violent means and with impunity, journalists get in the way of things tribal, political, nationalist or national. On April 14, 2008, Khadim Hussain Sheikh, a stringer for *Sindh TV* and bureau chief for daily *Khabrain*, was shot by unidentified gunmen in the town of Hub, north of Karachi. The motive for the killing remains unknown.

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Hameed Baloch and Khalil Khosa, reporters for the Quetta based Urdu daily Azadi went missing within three days of each other, on 29 February and 3 March 2008. The newspaper, owned by Siddiq Baloch, who also edits the *Balochistan Express*, has been critical of the government and the military's role in operations. Hameed Baloch's disappearance, said the Balochistan Union of Journalists, may be due to the "intelligence agencies, tribal rivalry or political parties." A member of BUJ told Reporters without Borders: "In my view, influential tribes must be implicated, as was the case with Riaz Mengal of daily *Intikhab*, who we thought had been kidnapped by the security services but in fact had been kidnapped by tribal chiefs." Riaz reported on mafia involved in trafficking of stolen cars and had received death threats after his investigations.

Hameed Baloch went missing in the border town of Taftan whereas Khosa disappeared in the Baloch town of Naseerabad. Khosa's kidnapping may have happened, his family believes, due to articles criticizing Baloch nationalist parties that took part in the elections while other Baloch nationalist groups boycotted them. Another journalist working for *Azadi*, Javed Lehri, has been missing since November 2007, allegedly disappeared by the state's security apparatus.

In Quetta, it is not uncommon for political or religious groups to harass journalists or attack media organizations. While cases of political workers attacking the offices of *Jang* and *Mashriq* for not covering their activities are well known, the offices of cable operators have been targeted as well. On 22 April 2003, cable television operators in the city of Quetta and other parts of Balochistan province suspended their services to protest the burning down of a cable network operator's offices by unidentified persons. The watchman guarding the network office received burn injuries.

All Balochistan Cable TV Operators Association President Sohail Aziz said cable operators in Quetta had earlier received anonymous threatening letters. In July the same year, authorities in Quetta imposed restrictions on the media in light of ethnic and sectarian tensions. Says an International Freedom of Expression alert: "The municipal government issued a notice prohibiting newspapers from publishing news, articles, statements, photographs, editorials and cartoons that could 'fan ethnic and sectarian tensions.' The notice asked editors, printers and publishers to submit all such material to the public relations director for scrutiny before publication. Owners of photocopiers were also warned that they should not make copies of such material."

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In March 2004, the office of *Jang* and *Geo* were set on fire by arsonists during a riot that followed firing on a religious procession. "During the week of 23 February 2003, *Geo TV* aired a talk show that some religious organizations felt was offensive to the community", IFEX reported.

What also exposes journalists to intimidation and threats is the lack of organizational support. "In a highly charged and volatile situation as at present, journalists, photojournalists and cameramen must take extra safety measures. We appeal to media owners to provide them with bullet-proof jackets and get them fully insured," the PFUJ said in 2008 while condemning a bomb attack in Khuzdar at a press conference that injured five journalists, three of them seriously.

Conflict Reporting

Where journalists do believe that the coverage of conflict has become possible due to the prevalence of media, this coverage is often affected by the restricted mobility of journalists – national and international – to areas hit by the military operations. According to a senior local journalist, the security agencies don't allow journalists to travel there and when they do get permission, it makes them suspect in the eyes of the fighters who think they are embedded journalists.

However, say journalists, the fighters are quite media savvy and they know of the news in the national media through the internet even before the newspapers make it to Quetta. Still, journalists get calls from fighters asking why they had been portrayed unfavorably. It was quite common during Musharraf's regime for newspapers to receive fabricated stories from the agencies that portrayed the current insurgency as anti-development movement.

Journalists say they are stopped at entry points by paramilitary Rangers and the Frontier Corps who say it is unsafe to travel because of mines, rocket attacks or bad roads. Journalists were often stopped at several points when they went to Dera Bugti at the peak of military operations. Even when they did get permission from the military media managers, the local forces did not allow them to travel to cover conflict.

Till the time Baloch nationalist leader Sardar Akbar Bugti was alive, he would arrange for journalists to be brought to Dera Bugti but since his death, journalists find it risky because they are suspected of spying by the insurgents and the governments only facilitates them if they go in with the Frontier Corps or the military.

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The *BBC* correspondent Nisar Khokhar and a local journalist were denied entry on 15 June 2008 to Dera Bugti when he went there to investigate the detention of seven women in a military camp for three weeks. He and the other journalist were detained for two hours by Rangers.

When underground activities are on the rise, as is the case in Balochistan, the media's ability to investigate and ascertain news and information is seriously compromised. It is hard to separate news from rumor. It becomes difficult to confirm news because where do journalists go to when both sides of the conflict want to stay hidden? They can call on the journalists who can't call them. With all this mistrust, journalists are suspected of spying and targeted.

The IFJ/PFUJ report on the state of media in Balochistan mentioned that Ameenullah Fitrat, a local journalist, received a threatening phone call from the Taliban after he reported the abduction in February 2009 of UNHCR official John Solecki and noted possible Taliban involvement. Fitrat has also been picked up by security agencies several times when he used to cover conflict reports on both the Afghanistan and Pakistan side. When he interviewed Al

Qaeda Ayman Al-Zawahiri near Kandahar in Afghanistan a few years ago, he was taken away by security personnel and kept under detention for four days where a US official also used to ask him questions about the whereabouts of Zawahiri. Fitrat said he was tortured and kept in severe cold and cold water was poured on my head in the cold days of winter.

In cases where news slips the attention of intelligence overseers at the provincial level, they seek to omit it from the content by asking the network headquarters directly. In September 2008 when the four Baloch insurgent groups announced a ceasefire, the news was passed on to one of the news networks that has a bureau at Quetta. The news went as a "ticker" and was repeated for 10 minutes before it was removed after the bureau office received a call from the network management saying such sensitive news should not be sent directly to the ticker room. The bureau office in Quetta said it was important news and would be carried by all soon and it was. But apparently pressure from high ups made the network remove the news even when it broke it first.

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National vs Nationalist Media

While the national media, be it newspapers or TV networks, focus more on events from a “national” perspective, there are local newspapers and periodicals in Balochistan with “nationalist” leanings that give voice to local sentiments. Since there were no local TV channels or private radio stations doing independent news in the province by the time this report was written, there is considerable pressure on local print media to cover Balochistan from a local perspective. As opposed to projecting the federal or provincial governments’ take on events.

Widely read newspapers such as *Jang* that comes out of Quetta has had to spotlight local happenings rather than clinging to a rigid national outlook. It’s been a lesson hard learned: A local group called the Islamic Youth Force that stood for the Afghan Jihad attacked and burned stacks of the daily’s newspapers in May 1989 because it carried a news item on anniversary celebrations of Afghan communist revolution. [All through the eighties as Pakistan, with help from the

USA and Saudi Arabia, trained the mujahideen and sent them into Afghanistan to fight the Russians, it embarked on a witch-hunting aimed at destabilizing the pro-Russian nationalist forces in the region this side of border. It’s not unusual to come across people in Balochistan that were hounded by the state through the mullah who went on the pulpit with the Fatwa that the nationalists supporting the “Godless” Russians in Afghanistan were infidels. The region saw its own version of McCarthyism led by the mullah who said the nationalists cannot have a Muslim funeral. Party leaders and activists sought refuge in Afghanistan and Russia and when they were here, they stayed underground, hidden by families and friends.]

A strong ethnic/nationalistic sentiment among the people of the province and readers’ loyalty or its absence has made newspapers reconsider their policies with *Jang* taking out a weekly supplement on local developments on Saturdays and daily *Mashriq* adding pages for greater local coverage.

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Two powerful factors stand in the way of media freedoms in Balochistan: tribal/ethnic/nationalist politics and a coercive government apparatus keeping media from highlighting troubles of the province. While the first wants the media to side with it and project its take on the conflict and developments in the province (often in conflict with other ethnic nationalist groups and/or the state), the latter want it to project a sort of “all’s well with Balochistan” picture despite a situation to the contrary. In the words of a local journalist, “you can’t report on the highhandedness of either party because both follow their threats with guns or sticks.” Journalists have to be careful about how they report tribal conflicts. If the conflict is tribal, family or tribal feuds, they generally don’t touch them. If the feuds are over territory or land, they are reported.

For newspapers coming out of Quetta, 95% revenue comes from the government advertisements. With a Rs120 million annual [government] advertisement budget, it is easy to make newspapers acquiescent to what government wants them to carry. This is a kind of double jeopardy: with the government arm-twisting them on one side and the local elements threatening them to give fair coverage to their grievances. For example, the case of

attack on *Jang* offices carried out by the nationalist alliance PONM when the government didn’t want its activities to be prominent and asked for them to be carried in the inner pages with no picture. A Baloch political party allegedly attacked the offices of *Mashriq* a year ago when it carried a story by the military public relations office ISPR alleging that the late Akbar Bugti took money from the federal government as royalty for natural gas from Sui region. Coverage of some local papers like *Asab*, *Intikhab* and *Azadi* is termed “subversive” because they are overtly critical of government policies. But they are popular among readers – albeit light of pocket for lack of government advertising – for that reason.

Reporting From a Tough Neighborhood

Media in Balochistan works in a deeply politicized and volatile environment marked by conflicting ethnic and nationalist loyalties. While a national newspaper or TV network with no bureau office in Quetta can afford not to be influenced by the aggressive posture of nationalist elements because their audience is not limited to Balochistan, local media have to grapple with popular forces and their agendas on a regular basis which greatly affect the way they work and operate.

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Again, being “national” in their outlook, the national papers claim a large chunk of advertisement quota from the government and are known to work as mouthpiece for the state than the people.

It is not uncommon for owners and editors of papers to have political leanings and they tend to highlight the parties, individuals and groups they are loyal to rather than covering all sides in a balanced way. They also hire and keep reporters from their ethnic and political groups, which leaves others with little opportunity to learn the ropes through field-based journalism even when there is interest. Jobs and salaries are fixed on the basis of ethnic and political affiliations – daily *Intikhab* prefers Baloch staff, *Jang* Punjabis and *Bakhbar* and *Kohistan* Pashtun. Similarly, ethnic considerations affect coverage – *Intikhab* focusing on Baloch issues and population, *Bakhbar* and *Kohistan* on Pashtun population segments of Balochistan province – and enjoy readership in their respective ethnic/target population.

As a result, ethnic/nationalist sentiment influence coverage with *Intikhab* popular in remote regions of Balochistan and extra-Balochistan Baloch pockets (Sukkur, Jacobabad, Khairpur, Karachi, Noshki, Chagai, Lasbela, Sibi, Khuzdar,

Mastung, Kalat, Nasirabad and Dera Murad Jamali) and *Kohistan* and *Bakhbar* enjoying a dominant Pashtun readership (Chaman, Zhob, Qilla Saifullah, Pishin, Loralai, Musakhel, Dukai, Ziarat, etc.). Even the advertisement quota for these papers is based on their affiliation with distinct nationalities. It is therefore of little surprise that a pro-establishment national paper with “national outlook” like *Jang* getting the lion’s share followed by *Mashriq* and *Intikhab*.

There are quite a few Baloch language newspapers and monthlies (*Baloch Zind*, *Chagird*, *Baluchia*, etc.) but their readership is limited because Balochi language is not a medium of instruction in schools, Urdu is. Nevertheless, these periodicals remain popular among the Balochi speaking population in the province because they do represent the ethnic communities and their views. Many Baloch intellectuals regularly write for these periodicals.

Little Local TV

Afghanistan-based Afghan TV channels *Tolo* and *Ariana* were taken off air by PEMRA in March 2006 because they carried allegations blaming Pakistani intelligence for a suicide attack on a senior Afghan political figure in Kabul the same month.

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PEMRA said the stations were involved in broadcasting negative propaganda against Pakistan. The two channels are mainly watched by the Pashtun population in Balochistan and even though it has demanded that the channels be restored, the cable services still don't provide them to viewers. *Khyber TV* – the Peshawar-based Pakistani Pashto-language current affairs channel – does little coverage of Balochistan and even though popular in the province, is not known to represent the local Pashtun population or their issues.

While the Baloch districts in Balochistan have access to cable, the Pashtun districts do not have a cable network and where people can afford it, they depend on dish antennas to access international channels. The cable service providers in Quetta do not show the Pashto channels from Afghanistan demanded by local Pashtuns. The national network of state owned *PTV* does not have any Balochistan-specific programs but *PTV Bolan* does.

PTV Bolan does programs in local languages but no news of its own. It just takes *PTV news* - which like *PBC*, is stuck in the groove of a “national outlook on things” which hardly addresses local aspirations - and translates it into local languages before broadcast. Even though *PTV* has resources and a booster system that gives it territorial outreach in

Balochistan, it remains true to its label of “state broadcaster” with all the connotations of that phrase. The independent TV networks do cover Balochistan somewhat but channels need local reporters in the outer districts because they have to talk in local idiom to local leaders and people. Again, only big TV networks invest in training their staff in doing news programs. With small networks, reporters are left to their own devices.

Bolan TV, an offshoot of *PTV*, that does programming in local languages is state owned and not much trusted for that reason. It does local news in local languages but is not accessible in remote Balochistan where it is easy to access *PTV National* from Karachi and Islamabad stations than Quetta. Only those with a satellite dish can access it. Local analysts believe it is a calculated state policy to expose people to influences from outside their own. Again, despite popularity of independent TV networks like *Geo*, *Aaj* and *ARY*, television by and large remains an urban phenomenon accessible to audience in Quetta only.

The authorities arrested Munir Mengal, a Baloch who planned to start the independent *Baloch Voice* channel focusing on issues of the Baloch population in particular.

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Mengal was arrested in 2006 and disappeared for a year with the authorities denying that he was in their custody. He was later released but his plans for an independent station never came to fruition. With the simmering insurgency and a near monopoly on news, local analysts feel the government will be reluctant to allow an independent Baloch language TV channel to present provincial ground realities to the world. Similarly, Jamal Shah, a renowned artist from Balochistan, has been trying for years to start a Pashto language TV station in the province but the authorities have been consistently denying him a license.

Even as media space in Balochistan has grown mirroring the phenomenon elsewhere in Pakistan in the past few years, the media and journalists in the province are largely given to self-censorship when it comes to criticism of the government, about the sardars, about the Baloch or Pashtun issues, about the widespread insurgency or hundreds of missing people and their families agitating for their recovery. The media canvass, when it comes to independent, balanced reporting, is small and restrictive because the government, the intelligence agencies, the Frontier Constabulary and the army, the insurgents and underground militant movements create and nurture an environment of intimidation and coercion restricting media's freedom of speech and expression.

Coverage of local Conflict in National and Local Media

The gap between the "local" perception and the "national" perception of the multifarious Baloch conflict is huge. Likewise, there is no representation of the simmering anger and sense of deprivation among the Pashtun population of the province that in recent years have borne the brunt of the War on Terrorism in the region. What a journalist sees and reports may not be what a publication or a network views as important or newsworthy. Journalists would want to go and cover the regions of remote parts of Balochistan where the real issues and conflict are but the publications and networks are content with limiting the province to Quetta region, the government's base and hub of all political activity. Similarly, the state machinery makes it very difficult for local and foreign journalists to move around Balochistan in search of stories and newsgathering.

There's a big divide between how the local people and the rest of the Pakistan view the two pronged conflict in Balochistan – the Baloch insurgency and the war on terror. This divide is becomes discernable when one looks at how the local media in Balochistan and the national Pakistani media treats and covers the conflict.

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The nationalist resistance in Balochistan, be it Baloch or Pashtun - are viewed as rebellious, secessionist movements without any discourse on the causes of why it came to that. And even if that is what it really is. There are numerous popular grievances that stretch back decades. The national media is focused on the bombs and the target killings but few attempt any meaningful analysis of the hydra-headed problem in Balochistan.

Glaringly prominent is a general lack of nuanced debate on Balochistan issues with representative local voices such as nationalist leaders Sanaullah Baloch, Akhtar Mengal, Khair Bakhsh Marri, Ataullah Mengal, Rahim Mandokhel and Mehmood Khan Achakzai. In Balochistan, they are popular leaders of their respective ethnic populations, having a formidable influence on people's minds and imagination. But they are missing from the national media in Pakistan. More often than not, it is someone in Islamabad - an analyst or a politician - expatiating about local issues. No wonder, a popular solution of the problems is never achieved, only short term panaceas offered that only blow up in the face of authorities when grievances simmer up again.

The local media, of course, has a bigger cross to bear as they are left with the

task of voicing local grievances and bear the immense pressures that come with it: If you don't cover the local struggle you are targeted by the fighters; if you do, you are harassed by the state.

The local papers in Quetta depend largely on government advertisements which amount to bargaining their freedom of expression. They restrict their coverage of conflict or are given to self-censorship for fear that they might invoke the wrath of authorities. Papers like *Azadi* and *Balochistan Express* have suffered because they covered the Baloch conflict independent of the state's take on events. Their lifeline was cut with the government refusing them advertisements. Similarly, *Asaap* used to cover the nationalist opinion, which was often one sided but valuable for that reason alone because that is the voice the establishment seeks to gag. The newspaper has been closed down and the editor is in self-exile abroad.

Role of Media - One Issue, Different Perspectives on Local and National Media

The focus of TV networks on continuing violence in recent years as "breaking news" has contributed to a climate of fear and concern among the viewers in Balochistan.

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Analysts believe that the local society in all its colors and hues is not depicted but events like bombings and target killings are repeated on every channel. There is no proportionate debate or analysis to get a nuanced understanding of issues, a focus on problems not solutions.

Local journalists acknowledge that this focus on violence for breaking news is worrying and that there are other pressing problems at the heart of the discontent in Balochistan like education, lack of resources, water shortage, poverty and backwardness that should be a focus of both the local media in Balochistan and the overall Pakistani media. They agree that if the media shows target killings and bombings but also covers the problem of issues such as ghost schools in the province, there will be better perspectives on issues and that showing gratuitous violence without analyzing what spurs it and not offering local solutions, as preferred by the local stakeholders, is not responsible journalism.

While the Baloch say that the media willfully or because of coercion it faces from the state agencies ignores the representative voices of the Baloch

population, further pushing it into alienation, a common refrain among the Pashtun intelligentsia is that the state has ignored the Pashtuns and willfully pushed them into a secondary state in the province in relation to the Baloch when it comes to allocation of resources. The state and the media, they say, have both conspired to strengthen this perception by ignoring the aspirations of the Pashtun people in the province.

Media makes the “white black and the black white”, say the local people. It is not independent. There are people in the media who serve themselves and the establishment, not the people. It is neither free nor responsible. Media, they say, is dominated by the Punjabis and the Muhajirs who have a big influence on the media policy. They neglect the Sindhis, the Baloch and the Pashtuns.

There is a preponderance of violence on media – bombings, drone attacks, rights violations, exploitation, political crisis. People see insecurity all over, no peace. It makes them worry about their future, education of children, employment and creates a state of general hopelessness and anxiety.

“Local journalists acknowledge that focus on violence for breaking news is worrying and that there are other pressing problems at the heart of the discontent in Balochistan like education, lack of resources, water shortage, poverty and backwardness that should be a focus of both the local media in Balochistan and the overall Pakistani media. Media makes the “white black and the black white”, say the local people. It is not independent. There are people in the media who serve themselves and the establishment, not the people. It is neither free nor responsible.”

Incidents of terror covered by media have negative psychological effects for children and women and children often reenact the events while playing among themselves. Images of violence bring out the aggression in children who are inclined that way. Recently, a boy shot his friend while playing with a real pistol. "Media is training people in terrorism with its coverage of violence and crime", said a participant of a youth group discussion. Women feel media is not representative of women voices in making peace or conflict resolution.

"The TV play *Khuda Zameen Say Giya Naheen* show terrorists as religious leaders, they show bearded people as evil. It is not so. We know that terrorists are not Muslims. Muslims will never do such a thing (terrorism)", said a local youth. "When the media shows violence and gory scenes, it makes us anxious. We used to be afraid of monsters but now media has become the monster."

The locals also feel that media dominated by the west has subverted local culture. "There's both intellectual and cultural imperialism whether you look at local or international media and both affect us", said a local poet. There's feeling that the national media is not representative of the local Baloch or Pashtun people, their needs and aspirations. The national media is

dominated by groups from Punjab and Karachi and it has a "national" mindset on issues which is far removed from how the local Baloch and Pashtun populations perceive developments in the province, be they related to provincial autonomy, NFC or the War on Terror fought in the region. "The media projects a federal view of things", said a participant at a focus group discussion. "Their agenda is not to allow people's views. Those opposed to this are not allowed on media, not even on the telephone calls during the talk shows."

The political parties opinion of media flows from their ideology and their stated positions in relation to developments in the region, especially the Baloch insurgency and the conflict that has roots in war on terror. The Baloch nationalist parties look at media with suspicion and point to the near absence of Baloch voices in the newspapers and news networks except for the Karachi based Daily Dawn – that has suffered in recent years for its coverage of the Balochistan insurgency. They say events of huge significance for the local people are never taken up for debate on popular media – such as the issue of autonomy, rights, disappearances, accountability of authorities that have killed popular Baloch leaders such as Sardar Akbar Bugti and Balach Marri.

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There is more information available about the independent sources on the Baloch insurgency and state excesses on the internet than in local media, they say, pointing to the fact that media ignores local events and developments that local people upload on the net to get their voices heard.

The rightwing Jamiat Ulema Islam feels the “western media and governments have ignored the socio-political, economic and justice system of Islam and selectively latched onto the “defensive” side of Islam that deters threat and social ills such as the lashings and amputations to discourage crime.” Says a JUI Amir: “In doing so they have painted Islam as a harsh religion with a narrow outlook on life. There is more to Islam than the western media would have the world believe.”

For the nationalist Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), Pakistani media has tarnished the image of Pashtuns and weakened their case. The PKMAP stands for peace in Afghanistan and non-interference of Pakistan in the affairs of neighbor countries. “There is no projection of our struggles, our voices and activities are not covered. Addresses of Altaf Hussain are covered from London but anniversary of Khan Shaheed – a leader of the stature of Bacha Khan and Gandhi – is ignored.” Central to Pashtuns’ gripe against media is its failure to highlight the aspirations of the

local population. “People think Baloch are the only people living in Balochistan. It is not so. We demand equal recognition. We are just as deprived and ignored”, said a political party activist. “The state creates divisions and fissures. The Aghaz-e-Huqooq Balochistan Package [of relief and reform announced by the federal government in late 2009] has everything for the Baloch and the media covers their issues but there is no voice of the Pashtuns and their grievances. This has created resentment against the state, the media and the Baloch.”

Others believe media is relatively free and people now have more access to information with all the private TV stations covering news but they don’t see themselves figuring in the national scheme of things. The recent NFC award came up again and again in discussions with people saying the award just benefits the Baloch with no allocations made for the Pashtun population of the province. People say that the media should not just cover events but analyze them, offer solutions, inform, caution and educate people about issues of peace.

The children feel they used to fear the monster of their fantasies once but media now is the new monster, causing fear and anxiety with violence and gory images.

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Television, in general, has made a positive difference when it comes to coverage of Balochistan and the conflict there, but reporting has focused on violence that has created a condition of widespread anxiety without offering solution to the problems. Newspapers are also careful in their coverage of the conflict because in a close society where nationalist sentiments and a sense of deprivation are acute, conflict tends to get personalized.

However, certain local partisan papers do speak about the conflict openly. The national media that is in a position to make a difference tends to avoid contentious issues and takes the easy route of letting the security establishment use its platform to have their say. This means the voice of local stakeholders and communities on issues that govern their fate remains missing. For a long time now, the local media has been engaged in a monologue, talking to itself. The national media that has been there long could have made a difference but hasn't.

"In the 1990s, many people in Pakistan saw the Baloch as savage warriors and separatists as painted by the national media. That was the view all over Pakistan until you come here and see for yourself what the reality is. With the expansion in media, proliferation of news networks and the competition it engenders, there has been some satisfaction that issues of Balochistan are taken up but the conflict is not resolved but 'dissolved.' Sure enough, the people now get to see the [TV] channels reporting violence, but no real headway in terms of resolution is made because it still largely remains a debate within Balochistan, not Pakistan.

Also reporting on bombing and killings only shows one side of the conflict, covered as breaking story, whereas military operations and displacements stay out of the picture, which makes the coverage lopsided, eschewing the fact that the violence is a reaction to a greater malaise that needs serious attention," says a media analyst.

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Media observers say public's dissatisfaction with the role of media in Balochistan springs from its obsession with the judicial movement triggered by the controversial sacking of dozens of judges by Musharraf in 2007, the traditionally confrontational relationship between Pakistan Muslim League-N led by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan People's Party led by Asif Zardari (and by Benazir Bhutto until her assassination in 2007) while maintaining a studious silence over what they think is the fundamental question: The sense of alienation among some of the country's federating units (provinces).

Television, they say, has become all about sensationalizing where "a lot of space and time is given to killing of women in the name of honor in Balochistan but not killing of people in the security operations." Senior journalists and academics question why when TV channels can invite analysts and political leaders on such thorny issues as eligibility of presidential candidates, holding of party and public offices simultaneously, impeachment of a former army chief by parliament and in-camera parliamentary sessions, why can't they take up the issue of Balochistan and let the stakeholders in Balochistan articulate their views, how they view the problems and what they see as solutions.

Clearly there is self-censorship at work and some kind of a conscious effort

keeping the media from touching the issue. All through 2005, the TV networks widely covered the deadly Pakistan earthquake but the insurgency and military operations that began the same year and shook Balochistan remained conspicuously absent from the screens.

Even several years after Pakistan opened up its airwaves for private ownership, expanded media space considerably for independent media and media pluralisms became permanent in Pakistan, the real issues of Balochistan remain largely not highlighted by the media and instead debated "a parallel, engineered opinion of the political parties and the system that serves a certain class is presented as a popular public opinion," is how one analyst puts it. The desire to be a part of the discourse, to be informed, is not fulfilled but replaced by an anxiety that has no outlet and expressed in the form of widespread discontent, even violence, he says.

"Earlier, with PTV there was culture, music, drama which provided a kind of catharsis. Some of the news channels are creating anxiety that is articulated in events like people burning up dacoits, suicides, beating up cameramen. All this information has made us emotional and edgy. People want solutions and there are none but instead more bad news. No wonder they are taking the law in their own hands," he adds.

"All through 2005, the TV networks widely covered the deadly Pakistan earthquake but the insurgency and military operations that began the same year and shook Balochistan remained conspicuously absent from the screens."

In cases where a national publication or TV network has taken up the cause of Balochistan, they have been silenced through heavy handed tactics by the state. Daily *Dawn* is a case in point. The Karachi based newspaper faced “serious economic pressures as well as legal harassment by the government of Pakistan for its coverage of events and policies related to militancy and security in the country”. The Dawn Group said the government was browbeating it into softening its coverage of sensitive topics like “the military action against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in North and South Waziristan areas bordering Afghanistan, the insurgency in parts of the restive

south western province of Balochistan, and a possible resurgence of covert government support to Kashmiri militants”.

According to the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), “In September 2006, the government approached the Dawn Group seeking a news blackout on coverage of Balochistan and the troubled North and South Waziristan tribal areas. The Dawn Group turned down the request by the government as being unreasonable. As a consequence, since December 2006, the government imposed massive advertising cuts equivalent to two thirds of total federal government advertisements”.



Standing Tall: Child in Khanozai

Chapter 7 – Media Blues in a Region on Red Alert

The advertisement quota for the local newspapers remains a handy tool for the state to influence coverage of events. Media in Balochistan, most journalists agree, is not free because of fears of crackdown from the government, slashing of the advertisement quota and control of newsprint. Since the renewed insurgency and military operations, the advertisement quota is mostly handled by an intelligence agency that dishes it out to newspapers favoring the government - or to influence them into a favorable stance.

A local newspaper even came out with the title *Askar* [Urdu for military] and drew millions in adverts for projecting the military's spin on events. Corrupt officials bring out dummy papers to share the booty, say senior journalists in Quetta.

As elsewhere in Pakistan, government advertisements are primary source of revenue for newspapers in Balochistan. Where elsewhere, vibrant market conditions dilutes dependence on this and hence a paper's susceptibility to government pressure, in Balochistan where there is little industry and economy is driven by smuggling, state's advertisement quota becomes a potent pressure tool to keep newspapers and owners in line with the government's

news agenda. Another factor that comes into play while allocating advertisement quota is the ethnic and political leaning/policy of a paper. But it is clear that papers that tow the government's line get more than those who don't.

Vetted articles

Articles are vetted by the intelligence agencies as a matter of routine and heavily edited, journalists say. The government's tolerance for truth at times dips sharply. Reporting on operations in the Bugti area and speaking for the thousands of internally displaced persons has landed *Dawn* into trouble.

Quetta is a garrison city and Balochistan a province wracked by violence and chronic under-development. Media in places is dominated by pro-government, pro-military people. Where there is no direct intimidation, it is conveyed through intermediaries like friends and relatives. Reporters have been harassed and there is the unspoken rule among the journalists to play it safe by not offending the people in power. In a milieu where security concerns are an everyday reality, caution makes sense for journalists. Self-censorship comes naturally to media in Balochistan, it is a fact of life dictated by pressures journalists work under.

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The pressure on media is from three fronts: the military, the government ministers and the local/opposition political parties, says a local journalist. *Mashriq* gets frequent calls from the director general public relations of the government who in 2008 asked the paper to kill a story about embezzlement of flood aid in Mastung in which a ruling party leader was involved.

While direct advice and “press management” are handy tools with which the state makes local and national media malleable, authorities in Balochistan don’t desist from drastic action if it takes to silence someone. Reporters working for foreign media and fixers have disappeared in the past, threatened or harassed by security agencies. And this threat or harassment doesn’t come from authorities alone but also tribal leaders and politicians who are a law unto themselves in the lawless Balochistan.

Dangerous in the Districts

District journalists have the worst of it all because there is little protection that comes with support organizations in cities. In Khuzdar the *Balochistan Express* Even editors get by on negligible salaries. Whether a reporter gets regular salary or not depends on advertisements and the number of staff working for a paper. Local papers that have little revenue

and *Azadi* reporter was threatened and harassed not to report on insurgency, before he was killed in 2009. The Urdu language *Azadi*, has been blamed for inciting trouble for reporting events that authorities feel it shouldn’t.

The provincial government’s Public Information Department has twice as many officials than any other city that monitor media and use advertisements as pressure tool to influence content. In 2008 two operatives from an intelligence outfit came to the Quetta Press Club demanding membership because the journalists wouldn’t allow outsiders, especially agency people, into the press club. On refusal, they resorted to threats.

Few people go into journalism in Balochistan because there is little money. Only a handful of capable ones find jobs with TV networks that pay good but those who do not make it, have to work without salaries or salaries delayed for months. Even when reporters do get salaries, they are scandalously low (Rs 2,500 – Rs3,000, or \$40). A photographer gets as little as Rs1,200 (\$15). This is even less than the monthly wages of manual labor.

outside government advertisements – *Mashriq* and *Bakhbar* for example – cannot afford to pay regular salaries to staff.

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Big national papers like *Dawn* and *Jang* pay regularly but these papers do not pay for daily operations and activities essential to bringing out a paper locally in an economy hardly conducive to a venture dependent on market revenue for sustenance.

Low salaries make journalists susceptible to corruption. It also dampens their commitment to journalism because they can't get by in this profession alone and have to moonlight elsewhere to make

ends meet. Salaries also depend on the standing and work of the journalists. A veteran journalist said when he started out in 1978 his salary was Rs1,600. This was revised only several years later with announcement of the Wage Board and there were other allowances. Going by that standards, his salary should now be at least Rs200,000 (\$2,500) but it's actually just Rs10,000 (\$115). His juniors are getting Rs40,000 (\$500) with TV networks but those in print are forced to moonlight.



Tea For Your Troubles: Traditional Tea Shop in Quetta

Chapter 8 – Growing Media Pluralisms: Still Plenty to Cheer About

If plurality is taken as the benchmark for media presence in Balochistan, there's every reason to get excited about the scene in Quetta. For a city of over a million people, there were more than 130 daily newspapers, weeklies and magazines including major national publications, six on-air radio stations (three of state-owned *PBC*), offices of major TV news networks, over a dozen cable network providers, four Internet service providers and all major mobile phone service providers.

There's a steady flow of information all round. Compared to only a few years earlier, there is a greater visibility and greater media activity. This growth is visible in the form regional/local language media as well as Urdu, there are more regional papers and PEMRA has given licenses for regional language FM radio stations and TV channels.

Equally significantly, the number of journalists, correspondents and stringers has swelled in relation to the growth of media, especially private TV networks. While the "real voice" of Balochistan has yet to be heard on the national media, there is a big spike in people's consumption of information about the rest of the country and indeed the world at large with greater access to cable/satellite and terrestrial television

(*PTV*). The geography of media in Balochistan is expanding and with it the scope for journalism. But journalism in Balochistan has yet to emerge as an industry free of dependence on government advertisements, which compromises its freedom.

With the establishment of a number of universities at the provincial level, the cadre of qualified young graduates has grown. Indeed, with the level of education in the provincial capital going up and media access on the rise, the youth are becoming savvier than the earlier generations. In Internet cafes, offices and living rooms, they consume media in a hungry, if haphazard, way and often become newsmakers themselves. Like Malik Siraj Akbar, the 25-year old bureau chief of *Daily Times* and its sister publication *Aaj Kal*. "Quetta has such a shortage of journalists, I am surprised I became a bureau chief at such a young age", says Siraj.

However, where there's a shortage of qualified journalists, there's also this media boom affording opportunities to young professionals to achieve much more much earlier than their predecessors in the field. The old guard is still there; they have established a monopoly of news that discourages competition.

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The journalism in Balochistan, in general, is still about press releases and press conferences. There are few people-centric stories. The local and national media, when it comes to Balochistan issues, is mostly about reporting bombings and target killings. There is little culture of follow-ups.

But all this may be changing now that new media has thrown open a world of possibilities in a region where the state and affiliated agencies has traditionally enjoyed a near total control over news and information. With the media map becoming borderless with blogs, vlogs and podcasts, enterprising, media savvy youth in Balochistan have found freedom of expression in online journalism. The year 2009 saw the coming of Balochistan's first independent online English newspaper *Baloch Hal* (although shortage of funds and alleged harassment forced it to shut shop in early 2010) and news channel Vash/Rozn TV. While the state has moved to block several Baloch websites, many others are regularly updated with new print and video content for everyone to see.

Balochistan's First TV Channel

More and more young journalists are entering the field, especially TV, that due to competition is opting for the educated and the qualified. Even women, though far fewer in number, are entering the field. Media strength has increased since 2002. Before that there was a kind of exploitation of journalists with low salaries and a big workload. Newspapers would hire just one reporter for the

whole of Quetta who would cover several beats and at times, even required to go to remote districts for reporting. All this for small salaries. Now due to competition, big media houses are hiring more reporters and correspondents and have started to pay decent wages. There is recruitment of reporters and technical staff such as non-linear editors, outdoor broadcasters and cameramen.

After dithering on the issue for a long time, the government has been issuing radio and TV licenses to private owners in Balochistan. A Balochistan-based Balochi language TV channel in the private sector, *Sabzbaat Balochistan*, has been licensed while a Pashto language Balochistan-based channel – *Watan* – is expected soon.

Sabzbaat Balochistan (Balochi for 'Long Live Balochistan') has been a big step forward because the Baloch population has been demanding it for a long time but instead of establishing one, the authorities arrested Munir Mengal - the prime-mover behind *Baloch Voice*, an independent Baloch language channel in 2004, suspected of having sympathies for the underground Baloch nationalists. In 2009 *Sabzbaat Balochistan* was already test transmitting from Quetta. It is run by a group of young people who have no exposure to TV but rather running a television advertising agency in Hub – the commercial district of Balochistan on the border with Sindh province. The channel boasts a satellite footprint that covers Pakistan, Gulf, Central Asia and South and Southeast Asia.

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Sabzbaat is primarily focused on infotainment and has programs in Balochi, Brahvi and English languages. The channel is proving popular because people had no choice to watch state-owned *PTV Bolan*, which does programming in Balochi and Brahvi for two hours each. *Sabzbaat* produces three hours of original programming a day and repeats it throughout the day. Based in Quetta, the channel lacks adequate and advanced equipment and trained local-language reporters. The channel is toying with the idea of shifting to Karachi, which is more viable commercially than Quetta that has little commerce and industry.

The management says the station will be a true reflection of the Baloch people and would not put its own interpretation on the local news and events. "We are not limited to a single perspective", says a *Sabzbaat* official. "We want to help the province move forward. There's enough here that we can show for the next 50 years without running out of content, the people, the culture, the flora and fauna." So what does the *Sabzbaat* management think about the issues that the Baloch people feel are missing from the national TV discourse? "It is our responsibility to take up the real issues", the official said. "If we don't, there will be no difference between us and the other channels. There are all these expectations and we'll not shy away from them. Facts have to be brought forward but we don't want to court controversy. We want to bring in public opinion and also opinion of the government. We want to bring in alternative debate on issue because we

are the voice of the people and the representative political parties."

The declared vision statement of *Sabzbaat* states: "To channelize a development friendly environment from the coasts of Arabian Sea to the core of Central Asia by exploring Balochistan as an integral part of more developed and integrated Pakistan. *Sabzbaat* Television Network will interpret the soul of nation and the ideas of its heroes in order to place Pakistan on the world's developed nations' map.....will set up new norms of media – viewers' reliability, particularly in Balochistan, to let the people own this medium as a true ambassador of peaceful and prosperous future.....the daily air slot...covers all aspect of entertainment, infotainment, documentaries, studio interviews, business and economic reviews, family entertainment, features, sports, analysis, news and news programs."

Survival of the Fittest

Some wonder how the channel can survive on Balochi language content alone and point out that the canvas becomes limited with the advertisers not interested in tapping population in the remote districts that doesn't have big buying power. They fear the channel will have to keep generating its own funds.

Funding of *Sabzbaat Balochistan* is something that the journalists in Quetta are also curious about, especially when the state crushed the *Baloch Voice* initiative.

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The East Films Pvt Ltd that received the *Sabzbaat* license is a Hub-based advertising company that claims to have “lots of funds”. The TV marketing brochure says “*Sabzbaat Balochistan* comprises a bunch of talented, devoted, creative and energetic youth of Balochistan who have made this dream possible through their collective efforts.”

While the licensing of Balochistan’s first Baloch-language TV channel is a welcome move, it is currently restricted to Quetta, where big networks already have infrastructure – office, equipment and workforce.

Local Is the New National

Media observers say that national media has just been introduced to Balochistan. Earlier a lot of things in the province were hidden from the rest of the country; there was only one TV channel in 2002, people didn’t know all that much about the province or its people. Whatever impression they had of the province was based on the state-owned media’s coverage and that too was little because the province was never up high on the priority list of development and there was little going on except the political wheeling dealing in the capital Quetta.

Triggered by 9/11 when Pakistan’s state policy on Afghanistan changed, Balochistan was still terra incognita for

the average Pakistani media consumer. Now with the private channels mushrooming and the province getting some coverage politically, and of course the insurgency and the military operations being difficult to ignore, there is a growing realization that there should have been development here and that the grievances of the province are genuine. “For a long time the official activity was just notional, the local potential unexplored,” says a media analyst.

“There was no media to highlight that. It is only now that we are becoming aware of Balochistan as a province of Pakistan, thanks to the media coverage. We are going to the remote areas and see the poverty and deprivation there, no electricity and water, something long hidden from us and the world because the province is cut off from the rest of the country by great distances.”

Even though media has now found an unexplored territory in Balochistan, the resources allocated to its coverage are far from enough. The skills of the new media professionals reporting for the private TV channels are limited. There is one bureau chief for 29 districts of Balochistan for a Sindhi language TV channel based in Hyderabad in Sindh province. TV channels are more focused on national and international news and few cover the real issues of Balochistan.

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Balochistan and its people have yet to have a proper, permanent profile in the national Pakistani media. While the big channels stay focused on Quetta, the smaller ones have to be content with tickers from their reporters that are few in number.

Strategically the troubled province remains difficult to report from and report on. In Kohlu and Dera Bugti districts, the operations and activities of armed groups often go unreported because journalists have no access. They have to depend on the army or the fighters for information with no way to confirm or verify it independently. Politically there has been some coverage lately but nowhere near the size of province and its political significance warrants. The news networks will have to have a bureau office in every district and reporters for this to happen.

Balochistan has still to become a base for the national media that currently stays

rooted in Quetta. Veteran journalists who have been working with newspapers and magazines on the national scene are there and those who work with the international media are all quite experienced but they are mostly with limited-circulation, restricted-consumption print media while the younger generation needs training because the media they are associated with – TV- is so new and can have a much larger impact. They are learning on the job about reporting and the technical aspects of their job because few networks arrange trainings for their staff.

Journalism standards have not improved with the proliferation of media. There is competition for news but no training for staff with little news sense. Stories lack objectivity and balance; there is little investigation or follow-ups. The media organizations provide few facilities for professional development.



Balochistan Calling: Upward Mobility in Quetta

Chapter 9 – Improving Journalism Standards and News Flows To and From Balochistan

The Department of Mass Communication at the University of Balochistan draws students from all over the province. While there are some practical aspects to its course like magazine production and the campus newspaper, the main thrust is theoretical and academic. The course work is often disrupted by frequent strikes at the university and long spells of inactivity when the university closes down on account of riots. The students often boycott classes and even when there is willingness on behalf of certain students to take classes, the faculty can't due to threats from political groups. Still the department remains as a committed, available medium to educate students in journalism. It could benefit from:

- Ensuring regular classes and security in times of upheaval
- Practical programs in print, radio and TV journalism that operate on daily basis for intensive mentoring
- Committed staff hired to run these instead of depending on the existing staff that is already stretched teaching theory
- Practical lab facilities – computers, recorders, digital software, cameras, production studios, etc. – to launch the practical training program
- Practical journalism curricula for print, radio and TV
- New media instruction and lab facilities at the department
- Regular lectures from working journalists who can tell students about practical experience
- Journalism is not a standalone profession. The department needs regular lectures from experts from other fields as orientation for students and to cover the variety of beats that journalists are required to cover.
- Practical curricula for thematic journalism: political and legal reporting, environment, health, business, etc.
- Media law courses for which a separate curriculum should be developed
- Regular course in journalism ethics
- Regular interaction with other universities, exchange programs with national and international universities for the journalism faculty and the students
- Classes and lab facility for computer literacy and Internet use

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- Strong partnerships with the industry to ensure the students who have received practical training at the department can hone their skills during internships and perhaps even join media outlets on the basis of their professional skills
- A solid research program supervised by independent, qualified faculty members who can help with research and report
- Help more universities, particularly the women's university in Balochistan, establish a journalism department
- Universities in Balochistan should have educational FM campus stations to provide a live newsroom environment for journalism students
- The Department of Mass Communication of University of Balochistan should have a campus TV channel to provide live environment to hone their skills
- There's no substitute for regular classes. The university needs to ensure that it stays open no matter what.

In addition to its regular academic activities for students, the Department of Mass Communication department should throw open its doors to active journalists, especially those in the districts that have had no

exposure to journalism education during vacations. This is especially important considering the department is the only journalism school in the province. This can be done through short certificate and diploma courses that don't burden the faculty and the resources.

Training District Correspondents

Often, the district correspondents are not full time journalists. They are teachers or government officials, even newspaper agents. By default they are the real voice of the people in the remote districts that often remain neglected and go unreported due to media's focus on urban centers where political activity is concentrated. Unskilled and unorganized, they are open to exploitation, from all sides: the government, a tribal society, political forces and the newspaper owners. Professional jealousies keep them divided with several press clubs operating in one town, out of offices, homes and shops. Their reporting, because it is not based on good principles of journalism, often puts them in trouble. For the coverage of Balochistan to be professional, it is indispensable to include the district correspondents in the ambit of media development initiatives in the province.

“Professional jealousies keep them divided with several press clubs operating in one town, out of offices, homes and shops. Their reporting, because it is not based on good principles of journalism, often puts them in trouble. For the coverage of Balochistan to be professional, it is indispensable to include the district correspondents in the ambit of media development initiatives in the province.”

A few suggestions on improving their skills:

- Intensive training programs in ethics and principles of good journalism
- Trainings in news gathering and news writing
- Technical training in handling computers, using Internet and news technology in print, radio and TV
- All trainings should be conducted in districts instead of Quetta where they work
- Trainings in media laws, security issues and rights of journalists
- Arranging certificate and diploma courses for them at the Department of Mass Communication, University of Balochistan
- Exchange and exposure programs where they can work in a real setting of a newspaper, radio or TV station. This can be arranged with their own employers or with others who are inclined to allow this opportunity to learn
- Helping the press clubs organize and strengthen themselves
- Equipping the press clubs with the paraphernalia required for news processing and dissemination
- Arranging for correspondents and newspaper editors/news editors to sit together and talk about the issues of risk in the field, organizational support, salaries and exploitation
- Networking the press clubs in districts with those in towns and cities so that they emerge as strong representative bodies of journalists and unite them as professionals, speak of their rights and exert pressure in case of exploitation or grievances

Building Capacity of Journalists in Quetta

Television: With all the thrust on expanding electronic media, especially TV, there is a need to equip the journalists with the right skills to report and follow-up stories beyond the simple formats to which they are confined in view of time and resource constraints. TV is still new to Balochistan and reporters are learning on the job. Intensive trainings in the following areas would do them good:

- Basic journalism skills, ethics and good, responsible reporting
- Hold journalism trainings focusing on news writing
- Create a training program where a network allows time for programs on Balochistan and train its staff in the process. This will mean a focus on Balochistan in national media. This training should not be done with one channel but several
- Intensive news writing workshops

“With electronic media expanding, there is a need to equip the journalists with the right skills. TV is still new to Balochistan and reporters are learning on the job. Intensive trainings in the following areas would do them good.”

- Thematic reporting in gender, legal and political reporting, elections, health, environment, business, etc.
 - Orientation workshops in issue-based journalism
 - Moving beyond simple formats, doing features and documentaries
 - Media law clinics
 - Training district correspondents and stringers
 - Technical sessions in camera use, non-linear editing, lighting and studio operations
 - Providing newsroom equipment to stations that have limited resources and training journalists there
 - Network with university for an internship program so that papers get journalists and journalists get practical experience
- Intensive news writing workshops
 - Network with university for an internship program so that papers get journalists and journalists get practical experience
 - Thematic reporting in gender, legal and political reporting, elections, health, environment, business etc.
 - Media law clinics
 - Helping set up newsrooms and providing equipment for newsgathering and processing to local newspapers
 - Training district correspondents at the main offices and in the districts

Print media: The issues with print journalism in Balochistan are enormous and there are no quick fixes. While organizations should ensure journalists get paid to do independent news and information and keep them from becoming corrupt, efforts should focus on improving the quality of journalism through:

- Basic journalism skills, research, ethics and good, responsible reporting

Radio: Radio is still new to Balochistan and in danger of becoming stagnant and commercial because there is no incentive or push for doing news and information. By October 2008, there were seven radio stations working in Quetta and the districts run by staff that have limited or no experience in doing information programming. They can benefit from:

- Training in news and information, research and creative programming
- Basic journalism skills, ethics and good, responsible reporting
- Radio management courses
- Building newsrooms

“The issues with print journalism in Balochistan are enormous and there are no quick fixes. While organizations should ensure journalists get paid to do independent news and information and keep them from becoming corrupt, efforts should focus on improving the quality of journalism.”

- Designing new program formats for maximum information and educational content
- Network with university for an internship program so that stations get journalists and journalists get practical experience
- Provide equipment and stipends to journalists for field-based work
- Hold thematic trainings in gender, environment, education, health, farming, water preservation etc
- Network with university for an internship program so that papers get journalists and journalists get practical experience and the station has volunteer, trained workforce to help produce content
- Exchange and exposure programs with radio stations in cities
- Orientation workshops in issue-based journalism
- Intensive news writing workshops
- Media law clinics
- Helping set up newsrooms and providing equipment for newsgathering and processing to local newspapers

New Media: Technical training and equipment for press club Quetta to build capacity for using new media.

Advocacy: Roundtables for editors and owners of media organizations, representatives of the national media, bureau offices, reporters and district correspondents to address the issues of issue and theme-based coverage, professionalization, risks and exploitation of workers and other issues.

About Intermedia

Intermedia is a independent media support organization based in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The thematic areas of Intermedia expertise and experience in media development and development communications include the following:

- **Reporting politics – building media capacities to report political issues**
Educational workshops for journalists on political processes, parliament and political parties to build their capacities for issue-based coverage of politics
- **Technical assistance – building technical capacities of the broadcast sector**
Intermedia staff have experience building newsrooms of radio stations; conducting journalism boot camps and thematic trainings for radio and TV reporters; helping design thematic radio and TV programs; and journalism production trainings
- **Human rights perspectives – building capacities of media on coverage of rights issues**
Training workshops for media on coverage of rights issues as well as incorporating human rights perspectives in everyday reporting; orientation dialogues with universities to encourage student awareness of rights issues
- **Health journalism - building capacities of media on reporting on thematic health issues**
Training of journalists on health issues in general and on issues related to mothers, newborns and child healthcare [MNCH]; building communications capacities of public health officials
- **Development journalism – building reporting capacities of media on development issues**
Training media on people-centered reporting and incorporating development perspectives in everyday reporting; training development sector and public sector organizations and officials on development communications and production of radio programs on humanitarian and development issues
- **Legal reporting – building media capacities to cover legal and court reporting**
Training workshops for journalists to build their capacities to understand legal processes and the constitution and reporting court proceedings
- **Media legal advocacy – educating journalists and stakeholders on the media regulations**
Conducting media law clinics for journalists and media associations to educate them about their rights and responsibilities and awareness about media laws and regulations
- **Humanitarian information – building local media capacities on reporting disasters and displacements**

Building capacity of local media to produce relevant and reliable humanitarian information for IDPs [internally displaced persons] and host communities, caused by disasters or conflicts, through training, mentoring and equipment upgrades; for reporting on IDP rights and aid; and producing model information radio programs on IDPs issues

- **Conflict coverage – building capacity of media to cover conflict issues professionally**
Trainings for professional reporting on conflict issues in conflict regions such as FATA, NWFP and Balochistan
- **Parliamentary watch – documenting legislative performance of elected legislatures**
Monitoring and documentation of proceedings of the provincial assemblies to evaluate performance of legislators on legislative agendas
- **Media monitoring – monitoring media coverage of thematic issues**
Monitoring mainstream print media for media content analysis of the coverage of issues such as health, politics, elections, etc., through production of thematic periodic newsletters and reports
- **Media research – researching media issues**
Conducting research on media issues to analyze the dynamics of the burgeoning sector and the trends that are shaping it and producing reports on the state of the media on the national, provincial and local levels in Pakistan
- **Media advocacy – lobbying for fair media laws and freedom of expression**
Lobbying for an enabling media regulatory framework; advocating open and unhindered access to information and freedom of expression; chronicling censorship and violations against the media; and conducting orientation workshops for journalists and media groups on media rights and responsibilities
- **Media training and workshops – improving professional media capacities**
Conducting journalism trainings and thematic educational workshops to improve media professionalism and standards

Intermedia: Media Development in Pakistan Through Advocacy, Research and Training

Intermedia is a Pakistan-based not-for-profit media development NGO registered in Islamabad in 2005. Its head office is in Islamabad while it has a field office in Peshawar in North West Frontier Province.

Intermedia's vision statement aims at "supporting freedom of expression, access to information and citizens making informed opinions and decisions as a means of promoting an informed, democratic and tolerant society."

Intermedia is the biggest media development organization registered under Pakistani laws and an acknowledged leader in building technical and professional capacities and competencies of media organizations through technical assistance and journalism and technical trainings including thematic broadcast productions and programming.

Intermedia's principal activities are centered on building technical and professional capacities and competencies of media organizations, including TV channels, radio stations and newspapers, and media rights bodies through trainings; promoting free media in Pakistan through fair media laws and reforms; and carrying out research, advocacy and analysis on democracy and media-related issues.

Intermedia focuses on improving the quality of civic and thematic dialogue and development communications critical to an open, pluralistic and democratic society by working with civil society groups and development sector organizations in improving their communications capacities in a dynamically evolving media sector.

Since its inception Intermedia has completed several key projects. The major focus of its activities has been on the capacity building of journalists, conducting theme-based training workshops for media persons and organizations in all provinces of Pakistan, development communications for development organizations and production of theme-based broadcast programs as well as research and advocacy on media issues and monitoring and analysis of media coverage on thematic issues.

Intermedia has conducted theme-based trainings for dozens of media organizations, including TV channels, radio stations and newspapers and over 2,000 journalists across urban and rural regions of Balochistan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Punjab, Sindh and Pakistan-administered Kashmir (AJK) on political reporting, health, mother and child healthcare, elections, media law, conflict, legal frameworks, politics, development sector, legislatures, humanitarian issues, the perspectives of women and other marginalized groups, etc.

Intermedia has a geographic outreach across the country. It has conducted trainings, workshops, roundtables, seminars, dialogues, clinics and classes in Balochistan, FATA, NWFP, Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), AJK, Punjab and Sindh. Intermedia has conducted activities at the national, provincial, district, and city and town levels, working with dozens of TV channels, radio stations and newspapers all across Pakistan to build their capacities in journalism, technical and thematic expertise.



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