

Media and Civil Society Conflicts in Pakistan: Media as an Agent of Resolution or Escalation

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Abstract

Pakistan's media has the potential to promote peace and unity within the country. Depending on the rhetoric it employs, the media can advocate for war or peace. The Pakistani Media can impact public discourse by framing issues through methodologies such as human rights, peace journalism, and war journalism. The objective of the study is to assess the impact of media and civil society conflicts in Pakistan as potential catalysts of escalation or agents of resolution to better understand their roles in shaping the socio-political landscape of the country. This is an analytical and descriptive type of qualitative research that mainly relies on secondary data sources. War journalism can exacerbate conflicts and polarise people and groups, ultimately leading to dehumanization within society as people become desensitized to the pain and difficulties represented in the media. As a result, journalists hold a substantial societal responsibility for helping to strengthen the democratic state and media environment. The study concludes that the media in Pakistan has not properly performed its role in resolving ethnic conflicts and has made no major contributions to peacebuilding, reconciliation, or post-conflict resolution, failing to fulfill the function of a "Peacemaker." This highlights the need for a more responsible and peace-oriented media environment to address ethnic conflicts in the country and contribute to long-term peace and harmony. To play this role effectively, the media must adhere to peace reporting criteria, which include a thorough understanding of conflicts, fair and impartial reporting, a focus on humanism, comprehensive coverage of conflict causes and background, and a commitment to promoting peace initiatives. Furthermore, the Pakistani

government should enact policies safeguarding journalists' safety and security when reporting safeguard journalists' safety and security when reporting on difficult matters.

Key Words: Media Rhetoric, Civil Society Conflicts, War Journalism, Media Responsibility, Peace Reporting Criteria, Government Policies

Introduction

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite". (Nelson Mandela)

The Constitution of Pakistan 1973, as well as International Conventions both, say that providing citizens security and protection is the state's responsibility. The Constitution of Pakistan provides all the fundamental rights to every citizen of the state irrespective of religion, sect, language, caste, colour or creed. Every citizen of Pakistan has the right to enjoy the freedom of life, liberty, belief, faith and culture. Every citizen has the right to participate fearlessly in the State's peaceful political process and social mobility. There can be a difference of opinion or a conflict in different groups of society and the conflicts can be resolved peacefully.

A conflict is an extreme form of communication. It should not be assumed that conflict is wrong and avoided in a society, especially in heterogeneous societies conflict is inevitable, where live different ethnic groups. Here comes the role of media to facilitate a peace process by enabling the existing issues and conflicts to be argued and expressed through Non-violence. The policymakers and media should know how to create a sustainable framework and practice for media as a public sphere in areas of conflict. Public spheres were constituted through institutions and changed over the period. This process started as a newspaper in the 18th century, however with the passage of time at the end of the 20th century world has transformed into "mass societies" constituting "mass media" such as radio, television, internet, mobile phones and social media. The situation is very complex and needs a measured and cautious policy response.

The modern world's defining feature is conflict which can be armed, ethical, political, social or ethnic. In more than the last two decades, the world has observed countless conflicts causing millions of deaths and displacement of the people. According to some reports during this time more than two million children died, more than a million were orphaned and around 6-7 million were seriously injured or disabled (Puddephatt, 2006. p.5). Most of the conflicts were intra-state. These conflicts bring poverty, human suffering and human displacement. The Rwanda genocide and the Balkans wars have created a debate over the responsibility of the global community and the UN. In both these cases, the media played an evil role.

The ultimate human goal is peace however, the armed conflicts appear to have overshadowed the desired peaceful future of the world. Hamelink, (2008) has rightly said that "A rough count would tell us that after the Second World War and the solemn pledge by the international community that it would not allow this barbarism to happen again, the world has known fewer

than 40 days during which nowhere in the world was a war fought (p.77)." At the end of the Cold War, the interstate war ended and gave rise to many new internal ethnic conflicts within the state in the developed, developing and underdeveloped world. (Gilboa, 2009.) The Irish conflict in Britain, the Bask conflict in Spain, the Kurdish conflict in Turkey, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia Herzegovina, genocide in Rwanda and Rohingya and civil war in Sri Lanka, conflict in Palestine and Syria and innocent people killing in Kashmir are the few examples of ethnic conflicts.

Despite countless violent conflicts, there is very little understanding of the causes of internal conflicts. State wars can be described as a means to resolve territorial boundary issues or a natural resource competition, however, it is yet to examine how ethnic tension can suddenly become organized violence. One of the justifications is the media's inconsistent approach and priorities for the coverage of the conflict. One of the possibilities is that the Media is under threat or is biased especially the local media or the stable media (legal structure, rule of law) do not exist. Therefore, the Media's role in these conflicts is central. Its role is twofold and both the roles are opposite as it can participate in the conflict by taking the responsibility of increasing violence or it can refrain by staying away and remaining independent thus contributing to resolving the conflict and alleviating violence (Puddephatt, 2006. p.4).

Media and Civil Society

Media and state authorities propose and implement policies to maneuver societies. Media is not considered to develop in blankness but has a direct connection with the societal evolutionary process. It is considered significant as it reflects and preserves the political and economic or religious ideology of a certain society.

Media is the means of communication to the masses. It is simply the message and information source. It is a powerful and strong force and can shape the culture of the society. Media is considered to destroy or stabilize a society during cultural, socio-economic and political change. By simply supporting socio-political development it can contribute to the stability of the society and state. The process of social, political and economic is possible when people are aware of those policies and the government can answer to their issues and conflicts. Both the people and the government can utilize media for that purpose and media can be the facilitator for both parties. Media can create awareness of society being an impartial entity and presenting an unbiased view.

Dynamics of Civil Society in Pakistan and its Role in Ethnic Conflict

Civil society is a social, economic, religious, cultural and industrial infrastructure of a certain group of people living together in a certain place or region. Civil Society in Pakistan represents a distorted picture due to the authoritarianism and disregard towards constitutionalism and the stronghold of military and bureaucracy with no sustainable democracy and ethnicity (Malik, 1997, 4). Therefore, an imbalance was created between the state and society in Pakistan. This imbalance accentuated conflicts, ethnic backlash, dissent, and ideological manipulation because the authoritative forces neglected or exploited the ethnic minorities even Islamic ideology was used in the name of homogeneity and national integration against the ethnic minorities.

Shah (2004) has explained Pakistan's civil society weakness. According to him one of the reasons for poor civil society development is military intervention in politics. The national security policies along with the problematic borders with India and Afghanistan intensified the religious segments of Pakistan thus resulting in sectarianism. Qadeer (1997) presented two conclusions for the civil society of Pakistan: "(1) Pakistan's civil society has evolved through three phases and is divided in the traditional and modern tracks. In recent times, it has fractured along ethnic and sectarian lines and denominational interests have come to dominate. (2) The state and civil society evolve in tandem. Without an effective state, there cannot be a strong and democratic civil society."

The society of Pakistan is predominantly Muslim yet ethnically diverse. The Family union, and tribal relationships, is considered a strong association. The drastic population growth with limited resources, and socio-economic inequalities have increased social unrest. The drivers of society in Pakistan are lack of direction, weak political system, identity crisis, socio-economic injustice, no rule of law, political immaturity, intolerance, sectarian militancy and many more. These factors have influenced Pakistan's society and many conflicts have arisen in the country among them ethnic issue has weakened the foundation of the society.

The Islamization policies of Zia have strengthened the ethnic issues in the society and ethnic conflict started in Pakistan. It was the time when Pakistan was the focal point for the West and the Arabs. The Iranian revolution threatened the Arabs, therefore Arab countries funded Pakistan Sunni elements for the consolidation of their community and then the Shia-Sunni conflict started in Pakistan. Madrassa was established and jihadi fighters were trained to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Similarly, Iran funded the Shia community of Pakistan to serve Iranian interests. In the 21st century, the dynamics of the whole world changed and the Musharraf military regime opted for a secular civil society but it was the time when the ethnic and sectarian conflict was deep-rooted in the society. There have been many attacks on Shias generally and Hazaras particularly but along with the internal factor the external factors have also played a major role.

The disorder in the society of Pakistan is very clear, which is because of social stratification and division of society based on religion, province, political affiliation, ethnicity and language. Collectivism was replaced by individualism and the conflicts of beliefs and values fabricated the whole society. This fabrication in society has created socio-economic imbalances increasing poverty and declining living standards. The people have lost faith in the governance system and accountability. The society of Pakistan has faced many challenges which are a threat to society and the state. By introducing and implementing dynamic and strong policies by the state, these challenges can be transformed into opportunities. Pakistan media can effectively respond to negative drivers and can positively contribute to the development of society by presenting solutions to genuine issues.

Rights and Responsibilities of Media

Various types of Media are used internationally to contribute to spreading true knowledge and ideally free media is instrumental and significant for democracy. Media access can easily change the perception of society. The core of media communication is based on the freedom of expression, which is

vital for strong democracy as a fundamental human right. Its core values are the right to information, the difference of opinions and freedom of speech for the heterogeneous society. Therefore, democratic and effective media is an integral part of society for preserving democracy and peace. The right to free access to unbiased information is the right of every citizen of the state as it will provide the basis for political participation. It can be the main cause of conflict when people are restrained from expressing their opinions freely. Media can be used for constructivism in society, however, it can also be misused with the motive of propaganda and to inculcate hatred and artificial tension by spreading rumors (Wolfsfeld, 2004). In today's world transmission of an idea is vast and it is not confined to conventional print media, TV, or radio. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, websites, YouTube, etc. must be considered as important as conventional media.

During a conflict at any stage, a lack of information can create desperation, restlessness and tension in a certain group of society and that group can be easily manipulated. The informed decision-making ability of media can make societies strong and can raise positive futures, democratic structure and economic growth. The UN Millennium Declaration has stressed, "to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information" (UN,2000). Media or journalism can justify its existence by not only providing true information but can also be helpful to counter hate speeches during a conflict situation, thus creating an information equilibrium through the environment of balanced opinions and preventing harm (Koven, 2004). It is the responsibility of the media to publish or broadcast not only the press release but also the true, fair and balanced account of events.

During a conflict, the local media can be vital as it can reach many people in those areas with minimum language barriers. The local media can address people directly and better incorporate their lives and personal experiences in a much better way than the foreign media, however, there is the possibility of manipulation, and ethnic tension for the local media. The local media have a clear understanding of the political structure, participants of the conflict and the causes of the outbreak of violence in the conflict. The media can influence society by properly addressing the issue before the conflict and afterward. The media has the strength to deescalate tension before reaching the critical point and it can also examine critically the government, the opposition and the society through credible information supplied to the audience, thus helping in resolving conflicts and encouraging societal development.

The media is regarded as a key player in guaranteeing free expression rights, as it is the media through which individual rights become public form. Under communism in Eastern Europe, people refrained themselves in bathrooms for exchanging information and ideas and these ideas could not become public discourse. In democracies media play the role of providing world information, promoting and encouraging public discussion and debate. Therefore, during the conflict resolution media should be part of the peace agreement and the participating parties or groups must agree to recognise and respect media independence and refrain from using media for propaganda or to abuse or threaten the independence of media. This agreement of media

independence must be binding for the participating parties during the peace process and must be protected by laws and regulations.

It is the responsibility of the media to play its role in helping transform an intense conflict into a normal peaceful process. The media must report accurately the opinions, perspectives, beliefs and activities of all the stakeholders of the conflict thus avoiding misleading the masses at large. The media must have an ethical code to cover the conflict with commitment and professionalism.

International and Local Media Role in the Conflict

Media has mostly faced challenges while trying for conflict coverage. Media can be under commercial pressure to focus on dramatic, violent, or immediate incidents not highlighting the background of the issues that were the cause of conflict. To explain a conflict comprehensively can have the capacity to report considering all the aspects of that conflict. It is the responsibility of the policymakers and combatants both, to provide such circumstances where media can operate effectively, then comes the huge responsibility of editors and journalists. Undoubtedly the danger is involved for the journalists in the conflicts and international reports have highlighted that journalists have been killed or imprisoned while covering the conflict. Therefore, the safety and protection of journalists is the responsibility of not only the media organization but also the state and the conflicting parties.

As compared to the local media, international media organizations have the budget and vast resources, but due to the market pressure, international media is minimizing specialized foreign reports and hiring local reporters. One reason is that the local reporter would cover the conflict without protection and salary and the second reason is the media organization tries to play safe and stick with the trends and at the same time media focuses on one conflict.

International media covered the conflict with more resources. For example, in Afghanistan, VOA and BBC introduced FM radio and MW transmitters having strong signals in the whole country and used to broadcast for 12-24 hours daily. They recruited local journalists to run these stations and were paid more than the payment by the local media. The downside is that these journalists develop competence and skills in local media stations and then leave their jobs for international media therefore local media tend to suffer during the coverage of the conflicts. If the local media is prejudiced and biased then local people prefer to get news from unbiased international brands. However, in the long run it is damaging the development of independent local media, which is crucial to establish peace and security. International journalists are far away from violence whereas local journalists and their families are directly exposed to violence and intimidation. Local media has the option to build a partnership with international media and develop and share program ideas. Although international media is financially strong, more professional and has strong technical equipment local media may have more contacts and understanding, therefore both can work in collaboration.

Sometimes media report with frequent irresponsibility by making wild claims without even bothering to check the facts thus becoming biased towards one ethnic group and defamatory towards others. Therefore, there is a dire need for professionalism and a self-regulation system. The International Media Federation

(IFJ) and the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) have an agenda to help in establishing to protect the interests of media and a self-regulatory mechanism.

Constructive Role of Media in Conflict Resolution (Peace Journalism)

Media alone cannot start or finish a war, however, in recent years there have been some successful "information interventions". In many countries, the United Nations and some international NGOs' radio and TV peace mission programs were broadcasted impartially with authentic information and news and also developed strategies for conflict resolution (Arcan, 2013.p.340). According to the reports UN, World Bank, EU, US and international Foundations have integrated media into peacebuilding efforts, intervention policies and humanitarian aid and allocated budgets for media and peacebuilding projects (Arcan, 2013. p.338). Peacebuilding through media interventions includes funds for training journalists reporting based on human rights, conflict analysis, and production of content such as documentaries, news, dramas, etc. addressing the root causes of conflicts. There is enough evidence to justify the media's role in peace-building, peace development, reconciliation and resolution in the conflicted areas of Asia, Europe, Africa and United America that has proved that media is vital as a peace-maker. Rwanda, Congo, former Yugoslavia and Burundi where severe conflict arose and media played an effective role in these areas (Arcan, 2013. p.340).

To promote peace and stop conflict the key approach of media is to be respectful to journalism, observe ethical codes and play a constructive role in bringing peace to society. Northern Ireland's peace process in Europe is an example where the media played a constructive and peacemaker role. Gilboa, (2009) has rightly reminded us, "It is important to educate the public about the sources of conflict and the potential for violence or conflict resolution"(p.106).

Understanding and Confronting the Relationship between Media, Hate Speech and Ethnic Conflict

To value the freedom of speech is important however other rights like the right to live fearlessly, the right to dignity, and the right to be a respectable member of society are equally important and must be taken into consideration without any exclusion and discrimination. It can be concluded from European history that extreme racism led to the Holocaust. Racism is a deadly poison that causes deaths and suffering, it is a crime, not the view. Media is responsible for shaping the perception of society, a battlefield for cultural hegemony and media must not become a tool to propagate Racism. The former Yugoslavia is a clear example of ethnic hatred with deadly effects. Therefore, there is no doubt that hate speech is considered a deadly phenomenon.

The term hate speech is used to intimidate, degrade, or prejudice against a race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, political or moral views etc. This term is used in mass media and the internet is written, oral or visual communication. Parekh (2006) states, "Hate speech expresses, advocates, encourages, promotes, or incites hatred of a group of individuals distinguished by a particular feature or set of features and when hate speech is permitted to be propagated, it encourages a social climate in which particular groups are denigrated and their discriminatory treatment is accepted as normal"(p.214). "Hate speech is the rhetoric of hate

crimes and perpetuates racism, heterosexism, and sexism" (Cowan & Khatchadourian, 2003. p.300). The term racism means belief in religion or belief, race, descent, color or ethnicity as a factor to determine hatred towards a society or individuals.

The famous and most drastic media hate speech that got the attention of the world was experienced in Yugoslavia and Rwanda provoked media. Davison (2006) proposes that the capability to convey hate politics successfully relates to many factors such as mass mobilization media control "Nazi and fascist parties took advantage of press laws, urbanization and mass communication to agitate and attract followers. Likewise, Milosevich in Serbia and the Hutu extremists in Rwanda established ultranationalist networks and controlled important media outlets" (p.50). For genocide in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, rape was used as a tool that resulted in ethnic violence and the media played the deadliest role to deteriorate the ethnic conflict and served the murderers. In Rwanda "The private broadcast company Libre des Mille Collines and the national Radio Rwanda took active roles in fomenting ethnic hatred among citizens driving the Hutu people to kill at least half a million of the Tutsi population in 1994" (Laplante & Phenicie, 2009. p.256).

UN has employed the new media policy because of the negative effects of media in conflicted areas. UN Commander General Dallaire during the conflict in Rwanda said that jamming the Hutu violence broadcast and replacing it with peace and reconciliation messages would avert the genocide (Metzl,1997). Likewise, in Bosnia, the conflict resulted in genocide and the Serbs committed genocide against the Muslims and murdered around 200,000 Bosnian Muslims, 20,000 were reported as missing or feared dead and 2,000,000 became refugees, state-run media played the same role in escalating the conflict (Arcan, 2013). The "Information intervention" method would be very helpful for "jamming genocide" during the ethnic conflict. During that conflict, NATO troops seized the transmission tower when Serbs aired inflammatory broadcasts against NATO troops. Turkish media also did the same with Kurds in Turkey. With the change in the political climate, the Turkish media also changed its discourse and published "in the first 5 months of 2003 alone, Hürriyet published a total of 114 articles related to Kurds within Turkey; 47 of those referred Kurdishness as a group identity at least once by using terms such as Kurds, ethnic Kurds, or Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin." (Somer, 2005. p.591,592). Turkish media used words like "Kurdishness, Kurd or Kurdish, unfortunately, most of the time news employed hate speech related to Kurds". According to the Hrant Dink Foundation Hate Speech Media Monitoring Report, "Kurds are one of the most targeted groups by the Turkish media that employ hate speech against them" (Arcon, 2013 p.341).

The mainstream media is responsible for the ethnic conflicts as it has strengthened negative stereotypes and provoked anti-refugee hysteria. The whole ethnic group of Roma or the Chechens was stigmatized due to the negative role of the media. The ethnic discourse of media has created an ethnic social society. The mass media use sensational vocabulary and often forget the responsibility of maintaining cordial inter-ethnic relations. In today's multicultural societies media policies should reflect cultural richness and pluralism. It can be beneficial for the whole society if ethnic minorities are given the opportunity to participate in media communication with their cultural capital. Another issue

with the problem of ethnicity is the denial of these societies by the mainstream media and politicians. No ethnic issue can be resolved without a public debate. Sometimes mainstream media refuses to cover the ethnic conflicts, thus responsible for tolerating grievous social tendencies. Any type of these activities must be scrutinized through independent and critical media and then passed to the public.

In the 21st century internet and social media have played a vital role in spreading hate speeches and ethnic conflicts as well as the undue role played by the conventional media. The silence of the media and no criticism of ethnic conflicts can be due to the physical threats to the media personnel and media channels. The professional ethics of media do not allow to provide a free platform to extremists and racists. The media should not become a tool for ethnic propaganda. Responsible media is not all about re-publish press releases, but its core responsibility is to investigate the truth and background of the conflict.

Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan

The strengthening forces behind ethnic conflict in Pakistan are the absence of supremacy of law, lack of good governance, economic inequality, and inadequate social services. The external forces are militaristic approaches and double standards of global players which have contributed to radicalizing the section of society of Pakistan. The ruling elite in Pakistan could not maintain ethnic identities positively due to the limited economic resources and the unequal distribution of these resources in the society. At a very early stage after Quaid-i-Azam and Liaquat Ali Khan, all the political leaders were weak politically and failed to develop a strong democratic system where all the ethnic groups could get proper representation in Pakistan. Both Military and civilian ruling elite exploited the differences of ethnic groups to strengthen their power. Zia's Islamic Reforms created a conflict between Sunni and Shia sects. The ruling elites pushed religious groups into sectarian war for their interests (Majeed, 2010. p.57) and organized groups of Sunni and Shia started serial killing and sectarian violence. This situation created polarization and unrest during the 1980s and 1990s. Both Shias and Sunnis attacked each other's religious places. Musharraf initiated policies to overcome ethnic conflict however he could not achieve the desired result.

Ethnic Conflict in Balochistan and the Role of Electronic and Print Media

The history of Pakistan is stained with certain security and socio-political conflicts. These conflicts are the Taliban conflict, the Baloch conflict, the Sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunni, the Hazara conflict between Shia and Sunni in Balochistan, and the ethnic conflict in Karachi between Mohajir, Sindhi and Pashtun communities. At the national level, the intensity of these conflicts has been a major concern, however, the media in Pakistan has sensationalized these conflicts to gain high ratings (Hussain, 2015). This trend has been noticed in India too during the Mumbai attacks in 2008 (Iqbal, 2015).

Sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia in Pakistan is believed to be related to the rivalry between Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia. It is agreed in Pakistan that Islam as a religion has never been a conflicting issue in the state, however, the implementation policies have caused the problem (Hashmi, 2007). In this regard, Zia's policies in the 1980s were the starting point for sectarian conflict. According to Zehab (2013), Sectarianism in Pakistan is overall an economic and socio-political conflict. The

sectarian groups are registered as political parties with minor foundations. According to Iqbal & Hussain (2017), "the sectarian groups get political support from the religious seminaries" (p.95). These seminaries' Mushroom growth is because of the state's failure to provide education and economic necessities to the people of Pakistan thus causing conflicts among the sectarian groups (Hashmi, 2007). These Sunni group has been funded by Saudi Arabia and Iran has been funding Shias of Pakistan. Balochistan and particularly Quetta has witnessed several violent incidents due to the separatist movements of militant groups of ethnic minorities who demand greater autonomy and also due to the Pakistan military engagements in counter-insurgency operations near the Afghan border.

Balochistan separatist movements and sectarian rift have made the lives of people so miserable that they cannot live peacefully. This sectarian conflict in Balochistan is brutal and the ethnic Hazara group has witnessed this violence and the "War on Terror" has escalated the sectarian activities. Pakistan military is engaged in counter-insurgency operations near the Afghan border as Taliban from Afghanistan were seeking escape from the war zone and moved to Quetta. Taliban factor is associated with Hazara ethnic conflict reason being anti-Shia and anti-Hazara. Quetta and Mastung cities of Balochistan province suffered the most in this sectarian conflict.

The Shia population in Pakistan is nearly 10-15% and includes different ethnic groups throughout Pakistan. Some extremist Sunni Groups consider Shias as apostates, and Shias face hostility from extremist groups. Among the Shias Hazar population in Quetta is the most vulnerable due to their religious beliefs and ethnicity facing intersectional discrimination. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and other reports suggest that more than 3000 Hazara were killed in Suicide attacks, bombings and car bombings. In Karachi, about 50 Hazara doctors were assassinated. In 2013 about 700 Shias were killed. In January 2013, 91 people died in a suicide car bombing, in February same year 110 Hazaras were killed, in March more than 50 Hazaras were killed in bombing attacks in Mosques in Karachi. In February 2014 another bomb blast in Quetta killed 84 people.

The last incident took place in January 2021 when 11 innocent Hazara coal miners were killed in Balochistan and the Hazara community refused to bury the bodies till the visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan and guaranteed to punish the guilty. The Hazara community did the same in 2013 and protested against the merciless bloodshed and also refused to bury the bodies. Hazaras have been subjected to hate speeches, especially on Social Media which has escalated the situation. Here comes the constructive role of print, electronic and social media to ease the situation but before going into the role that media needs to play in this situation it is important to analyze the actual role media is currently.

In the early years of the 21st century, Musharraf introduced liberalization policies for media, and since then mushroom growth of media occurred. However, considering media as the fourth pillar of the society its role in Pakistan to strengthen the state and to bring positive change in the society is not so promising. Media alone is not accountable for this failure; the other three pillars have not shown attention to strengthening media. Media in Pakistan is in the early phase of infancy and with comprehensive and positive state policies media can act and

behave like a mature entity. Currently, the media of Pakistan is aggressive, more sensational, and critical. It discusses and amplifies societal problems sensationally with very little insight and background knowledge and suggests no solutions. This sensational role of media will harm national integrity and societal stability.

As discussed earlier media can be used in both ways, either to resolve the conflict with a constructive dialogue process between the parties or can intensify the conflict for escalation. Pakistani Media can attach by unintentionally engaging in taking sides thus causing the problem or detaching themselves from the issue. Attachment to the conflict can risk the job of the Pakistani journalists and they are exposed to the threats. The information is circulated through Pakistani Media and public opinion is formulated and viewers and listeners watch and listen to the stories on air. Here comes the responsibility of journalists to observe professional ethics to present the real version of the conflict with facts and proof. The journalists invite experts and analysts in the studios in Pakistan to discuss the conflict and broadcast their views and analysis on the conflict. Sometimes Pakistani journalists give their own opinions while they are covering the conflicting issues which leads them to a dangerous state as conflicting parties can consider them part of the conflict. However Pakistani media can play a vital role through the engagement of various segments of society allowing the general masses to access information and let the audience know about the different views of the society. The role of policymakers and media owners of Pakistan is very vital during the conflict and they have not taken this responsibility to resolve the issue.

The modern revolutionized media has provided access to information available in one click which demands more precaution and rapid policy response to de-escalate the conflict. However, this modern revolutionized media has had adverse effects on the Hazara sectarian conflict in Pakistan as irresponsible and hatred has been spread through social media and government machinery is also not responsive to minimize the conflict. There is a lack of research and background knowledge of the conflict in Pakistani media. During the whole Hazara conflict and other conflicts, the Media of Pakistan has not played an effective role in minimizing the conflicts yet it has escalated the conflicts. The media in Pakistan is facing challenges and difficulties while covering the conflict as journalists and media are threatened by the conflicting parties. The consequences that the media is facing are blocking newspaper distribution, blocking access to websites, threatening journalists, suspension of TV channels, and enforced disappearance of journalists both from extremist groups and military establishments. Journalists also received mysterious phone calls sometimes harassing and sometimes advising them to "do the needful". Below is the list of journalists killed since 2001 according to the "UNESCO Observatory of killed journalists in Pakistan".

Table 1: Journalist killing in Pakistan since 2001

Year	Number of Journalists (killed/imprisoned)	Year	Number of Journalists (killed/imprisoned)
2001	Killed:0	2012	Killed:10
2002	Killed:2	2013	Killed:8 imprisoned:1
2003	Killed:0	2014	Killed:4
2004	Killed:1	2015	Killed:4
2005	Killed:2	2016	Killed:4
2006	Killed:2	2017	Killed:4 imprisoned:2
2007	Killed:1	2018	Killed:5 imprisoned:1
2008	Killed:4	2019	Killed:5
2009	Killed:3	2020	Killed:5
2010	Killed:11	2021	Killed:4
2011	Killed:5	2022	Killed:6
Total number of Journalist killing: 90			

Source: Generated by the researched (Data collected from UNESCO observatory of killed journalists Pakistan) <https://en.unesco.org/themes/safetyjournalists/observatory/country/>

Another aspect is competition and race of rating and the aspect of commercialism bound media to focus on immediate violent events at the cost of bypassing the issues' background. The media of Pakistan is not so independent in covering every aspect of the issue. It is the responsibility of the state of Pakistan to provide an effective and safe environment for media so they can operate easily in a free and safe environment. The policymakers and media organizations of Pakistan need to arrange safety training programs for journalists to work in a challenging environment. The media of Pakistan should build up moral rules and moral codes while covering the conflicting issues.

Hazara community believes that international media has been more supportive than national media in Pakistan. The Hazara killing incidents cannot get proper coverage in national media due to the possibility of pressure from sectarian militant groups. The national media only report the number of killings and assassinations of Hazaras. There is no significant investigation of reporting the issues of Hazaras, the causal effect of the issue from any national media agency thus, denying the fact of national security.

Causes of Ineffective Role of Pakistani Media in Conflict of Hazara

The Media in Pakistan have been facing pressure from police, feudal lords, political parties' fanatic elements, and linguistic, religious, and sectarian groups. Another obligation of the media is its self-censorship of not allowing open discussion on human rights violations, armed forces, and military operations. The media is exposed to threats due to the geostrategic position of the province of Balochistan. The various extremists, terrorists and pressure groups have used media as a tool to mould public opinion and gain the support of the masses. As the ethnic conflict of Hazara is associated with the Taliban there are various threats in Balochistan the job of journalists here is very challenging. The political and social unrest in Balochistan has turned Balochistan into an Undeclared war Zone. It is very hard for a journalist to report or write a piece of opinion in an ongoing militant movement, which causes a threatening situation. This situation has made a challenging situation for journalists to report the

confronting issues prevailing in the region. Some of the journalists who had attempted to cover and report such issues had received threats of lives, abducted, pressurized and even killed.

Social Media in Ethnic Conflict

Social Media is mainly responsible for spreading hate speeches, fake news and disinformation and social media in Pakistan is used as a tool to aggravate ethnic conflicts, and most recently the Hazara sectarian conflict. Facebook played a longstanding role in the Myanmar conflict as Facebook is the only information and communication source for a lot of people and people are abusing their accounts. Although Facebook has revisited its policy and banned hate speeches still some radical elements are using the forum to spread fake news and disinformation. This has also happened on Pakistani Social media to aggravate the situation during the Hazara conflict along with other conflicts.

It is the key responsibility of social media account holders to act as responsible citizens of Pakistan. Social media can be used for constructive discussion and debate on the issue without hurting the emotional affiliation of any ethnic group. Social Media in Pakistan can have an effective role in easing the current situation of ethnic conflict in Balochistan. Social media influencers, celebrities, and politicians need to use this forum to make grounds for the resolution of the conflict.

Conclusion

In the context of the role of media in Pakistan, it can have an effective role in bringing out peace and harmony in different sects of society. Media have the option to adopt war-oriented or peace-oriented discourse. The National Media of Pakistan can frame the issues based on human rights, peace journalism, or war-based journalism. In both cases, the media plays a key role in reducing or escalating the ethnic conflict. It must be kept in mind that the outcomes of war journalism are escalated conflicts, and polarized people and groups, therefore, causing dehumanization in the society where people become blind and deaf like media. Therefore, it is the responsibility of journalists to be aware of their social responsibility for a better democratic state and better media. To fulfill this responsibility media should follow the peace reporting guidelines such as conflict understanding, fair and unbiased reporting, present humanism, reporting the causes and background of the conflict, and reporting with the cause towards peace efforts. The government of Pakistan needs to adopt a policy where journalists should feel safe and secure while reporting conflicting issues without any fear for their lives. This study concludes that the media in Pakistan has not played an effective role in reconciling the ethnic conflicts and it has no contribution towards peacebuilding, reconciliation and Post Conflict Resolution thus not serving the role of "Peacemaker"

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