

The Role of Media in Pakistan

Dr. Nazir Hussain*

The explosion of information revolution and the proliferation of electronic media have virtually converted the world into a globalized village. Now, information, news and events have no barriers and control to reach anywhere around the world. These happenings reach to every living room instantaneously even before the governments can react and control it. The enhanced role of media has impacted the social, economic and political life. What one thinks, believes and perceives are based on the images shown on the media. It has penetrated the routine life of all individuals; commoners, elites, decision-makers and statesmen.

States have often been inclined to use the media as a propaganda tool for political and military purposes. The decades of 1980s and 1990s have for instance witnessed the use of US media for politico-military ends. The projection of Soviet Union as an 'Evil Empire', the Saddam saga and the 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' and the Osama Bin Laden from 'Freedom Fighter to a Terrorist' are some of the examples. However, now the media has come out of the domain of the state controls, it is the financiers, the media houses and the media anchors that make heroes and villains, leaders and terrorists. Therefore, the role of media is growing from an observer to an active player in political decision making. The political leaders and government officials have become dependent to convey and defend their policies through the use of media. The media where 'more anti-government will earn more business' is considered a basic key to success. This over-emphasised role of media has been theorised as "Mediatization" by Swedish media researcher Kent Asp in 1986 and later by D.G. Lillker in 2006.¹

* The Author is Associate Professor at the Department of International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad-Pakistan. He has been a media anchor during 2000-2006. The research for this paper was done at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), Paris-France, for which the author compliment the help and cooperation of Dr. Gilles Boquerat, John Seaman and Daniel Marier.

¹ K. Asp, *Massmedier: studier i politisk opinionbildning (Powerful mass media: studies in political opinion formation)*, Stockholm: Akade-militteratur, 1986, and D.G. Lillker, *Key Concepts in Political Communication*, London: SAGE Publications, 2006. However, the pioneering work on this issue has been done by Muhammad Atif Khan, 'The Mediatization in Pakistan: A Structural Analysis' *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2009.

Pakistan, a developing state with multiple social, economic, political and security issues, is not insulated from the media effects of contemporary world. In fact, the Pakistani media is described as more open, blunt and proactive than before. It now highlights the social wrong-doings, economic mismanagement and political inaccuracies prevalent in the country. Over the years, Pakistani media has become a strong medium of scrutinizing the functioning of state institutions; instead of offering policy options to the government, it has taken over the task of policy-making. Therefore, this paper endeavors to highlight the role of media in Pakistan by analyzing its evolution, present state of affairs, major media houses, the controlling bodies and its future in the country.

Media in Pakistan

The Constitution of Pakistan Article 19 states that 'every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and there shall be freedom of press, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by the law in the interest of the glory of Islam or the integrity, security or defence of Pakistan or any part thereof, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, commission of or incitement to an offence.' Therefore, the freedom of expression and speech is enshrined in the very basis and spirit of the legal foundations of the country.

In the pre-partition Pakistan, there were few newspapers echoing the line of the Muslims; *Nawa-i-Waqat*, a right-wing Urdu newspapers was the first one to start its publication in 1940, whereas *DAWN*, an English newspaper, followed in 1941, mainly to counter the anti-Muslim propaganda during the time. There were few other newspapers, which moved into the newly created Pakistan, these included *Pakistan Times*, *Zamindar*, *Civil and Military Gazette*, *Morning News* and *Jang*. However, most of the print media remained in the private hands but the government could control it through advertisement and regulations.

In the audio media, Pakistan inherited three radio stations based in Lahore, Peshawar and Dhaka. More stations were established in Karachi, Quetta and Rawalpindi. The television services in Pakistan started with the Japanese help in 1964 from Lahore and later more TV stations were established in Karachi and

Rawalpindi in 1967, and Peshawar and Quetta in 1974. Subsequently, the coloured transmission began in 1974. Unlike the print media, there was complete government monopoly over the electronic media both in radio and television. However, the first signs of private TV channel started in 1989, when the state-owned Shalimar Recording Company began its own transmission under Shalimar Television Network (STN), which later leased out its prime time transmission to Network Television Marketing (NTM), a private sector programming and marketing agency.

The government monopoly on the electronic media was further broken, with the introduction of dish antenna in 1995-96, through which international TV transmission could be seen directly without any interruption or control. Nonetheless, due to limited awareness and cost factors, it remained confined to the elite class and the privileged segment of the society. The real change occurred when the *Geo News* began its first test transmission in August 2002, the era of private channels started in Pakistan. Between 2002 to 2008 the private electronic media proliferated unprecedently and the number of TV channels reached to 70. The private media received further boost with the introduction of Cable Television Networking in 2004; the transmission of TV services through cable to the large population in very cheap cost. Seeing the success of private media, the state control electronic media also had to change its substance and contents.

Present State of Media

In the absence of private electronic media, when people had to rely mostly on the state-owned PTV, the newspapers were the major source of independent information and analysis. Therefore, in 1997, there were 4,455 newspapers and periodicals in all languages with 3,912,301 copies. However, with the advent of private electronic media, the number of newspapers and periodicals has shrunk. Thus in 2006 there were 1,464 newspapers and periodicals in all languages but with increased circulation of 8,208,874 copies.² The data available for 2008 shows total number of publications 1199 (1000 English and 1042 Urdu) with a total circulation of 7,205,275;³ only few papers have more than 100,000 circulation, such as *Dawn, News, Nation,*

² Qazi Asif, 'Newspaper numbers decrease as readership increases' *Daily Times*, March 4, 2008.

³ *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics January 2010*, (Islamabad: Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan, 2010), pp. 235-238.

Jang, *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Express*. There were 324 dailies, 292 weeklies, 502 monthlies, 52 fortnightlies and 28 biannual publications in 2008. Out of the total 1199 publications in all languages, the province-wise publications for the same year is; Punjab 422, Sindh 276, NWFP 48, and Baluchistan 453 (surprisingly 412 being in Urdu). Out of the total circulation of over 7 million, dailies have circulation of 6,067,988, weeklies 484,282, monthlies 584,215, monthlies 61,290 and bi-annually 7500.⁴ Almost all of these newspapers and periodicals are owned by private individuals, joint-stock companies and trusts.

With the introduction of private media, the state-controlled monopoly of the electronic media almost vanished but Pakistan Television (PTV) was compelled to improve and enhance its services. It opened two new channels; the PTV-2 and PTV World in 2006. At present it has four TV channels; 1) PTV News for news and current affairs, 2) PTV Home for entertainment, 3) PTV Global for transmission to the United States and Europe, and 4) PTV National for regional language transmission in Brohi, Pashto Punjabi and Sindhi.⁵ TV coverage is expanding rapidly and reaching more than 38 million households; approximately 42 per cent of urban and 16 per cent of rural population.⁶ Presently, Radio Pakistan has 69 stations and 19 FM stations operating in different frequencies all over the country. With 12 million radio sets and 95 million listeners; the radio broadcast covers 80% of the Pakistani territory.⁷

On the other hand, the proliferation of private TV channels is unprecedented; they rose from zero to 70 by 2008. More than 28 foreign TV channels, including CNN, BBC, Sky News, Star World, HBO, Cartoon Network etc were given landing rights to transmit their services. Cable TV (CTV) network became the fastest growing means of entertainment whereby 8 million households from 2346 registered Cable System network watch TV transmission. Around 70-80 percent of the urban population has access to CTV and 40 million people watch CTV. In radio broadcast 129 licenses

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See the official PTV website www.ptv.com.pk

⁶ Annual Report 2006-2009 of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA).

⁷ See the official Radio Pakistan website www.radio.gov.pk

were awarded to the private FM radio stations and 108 are functional; these include, entertainment, educational (including some universities) and commercial.⁸

In 2008, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) awarded two licenses to transmit TV services through the internet, the Internet Protocol TV (IPTV), one to Pakistan Telecommunication Limited (PTCL), and the other to Sachal Satellite Communication; both are now operational. In 2009 two foreign mobile companies, Mobilink (Egyptian) and Telenor (Norwegian) were given TV transmission rights to show TV services through Mobile TV; the Content Provision Service. Moreover, through the MMDS (Multi-channel Media Distribution and Data Service); the digital techniques of wireless distribution of TV channels, 70-80,000 people watch TV transmission in 5 major cities, such as Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Okara and Sahiwal. Following is the present state of electronic media in Pakistan;⁹

• Satellite TV Channels	77
• Foreign TV Channels	28
• FM Radio Stations	109
• MMDS	06
• IPTV	02
• Mobile TV	02

There are various news agencies both in private and government sectors. The Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) was established in 1947; and taken over by the GOP in 1961. Subsequently more news agencies came into being namely; PPI Pakistan Press International (1968), UPA; United Press Agency (1992), NNI; News Network International (1992) and ONLINE News. Except APP, all other news agencies are in the private sector.

Media Governing Bodies

The Press Information Department (PID) is a governmental organization under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting that overall coordinates with newspapers, news agencies, TV channels, radio and Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). It issues official press releases of President, Prime Minister and other ministers. It is headed by a Principal Information Officer (POI), who is form the

⁸ Annual Report 2006-2009 of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA).

⁹ Ibid.

Information Services Group but mostly close to the government.¹⁰ It awards government advertisement to various newspapers and periodicals, thus has become a tool for the government to regulate these publications, as the denial of state advertisement seriously impacts their publications.

The Pakistan Newspapers Society was established in 1950, later it was converted into All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) in 1953, as a premier body of newspapers publishers, with its headquarters at Karachi, as at that time the majority of publications originated from there. The APNS watch over, protect, preserve and promote the rights and interests of the newspaper industry (owners) on matters directly or indirectly affecting their rights and interests, such as advertisements, clearance of dues, taxes and duties and newsprint. One of the major rules framed being the accreditation of advertising agencies by the APNS, introducing security deposits and clearance schedule to member publications within a specified period. It has successfully evolved a mechanism of streamlining advertisement and clearance system protecting the collective interests of its member publications, advertising agencies as well as advertisers.¹¹

Other media organizations include the Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), which also looks for the interests of the owners; All Pakistan Newspaper Employees Council (APNEC) that looks into the interests of the employees and All Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) that looks for the interests of the journalist community.

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was set up in March, 2002 mainly to award licenses, regulate the media and keep an eye on the private channels. However, officially, its objectives are to; 1) improve the standards of information, education and entertainment; 2) enlarge the choices available to the people of Pakistan in the media for news, current affairs, religious knowledge, art, culture, science, technology, economic development, social sector concerns, music, sports, drama and other subjects of public and national interest; 3) facilitate the devolution of responsibility and power to grass-root at community level and; 4)

¹⁰ See the official website of PID www.pid.gov.pk

¹¹ See the official website of APNS www.apns.com.pk

ensure accountability, transparency and good governance by optimizing the free flow of information. Moreover, PEMRA regulates and promotes the establishment and operation of all private broadcast media and distribution stations in Pakistan established for the purpose of international, national, provincial, district, local or special target audiences. The Authority also regulates the distribution of foreign & local TV and Radio channels in Pakistan.¹²

Major Media Houses

There are three pioneer and largest media houses in the country; the Jang Group, the Nawa-i-Waqt group and the Dawn group. These three groups have the largest publications (newspapers and periodicals) in English and Urdu and the Jang group has the largest private electronic media transmission. Other business groups have subsequently joined the media industry such as Lakhani group both in print and electronic media and Dubai based ARY group, exclusively in electronic media.

The Jang group has the largest Urdu and English publications; Urdu newspaper *Jang* is the largest and most popular being published from Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. They have the largest English newspaper; *The News* being published from Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. The largest evening newspaper in English *The Daily News* is also credited to them. Besides they have the largest, most popular and widely read weeklies; *MAG* (English) and *Akhbar-e-Jehan* (World Newspaper, Urdu). In the electronic media, the Jang group also dominates, they have four channels; Geo News, for news and current affairs, Geo Entertainment, Geo Sports and AAG, a multi-purpose channel for young generation. They also have the license for Geo English but due to limited English audience in the country, the channel could not go on air. The group follows a centrist approach and has moderate political views; however, they follow strict nationalistic approach in their Urdu publications. They tend to remain close to the government of the day, however, at present there is a serious tug of war between the government and the Jang group apparently over compensations of Geo closure during Musharraf regime, and over who decides what in a 'state vs the media' powers.

¹² Annual Report 2006-2009 of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA).

The Nawa-i-Waqt group is the second largest media house in Pakistan. It has the second largest Urdu newspaper *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Voice of the Time) published from Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi/Islamabad, and English daily *The Nation* from Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. Besides it publishes widely read Urdu monthly *Nida-e-Millat* (Voice of the Nation) and Urdu weekly for children *Phool* (Flower). They are the new entrant in the electronic media with only one channel *Waqt* (Time), which covers news/current affairs and entertainment. The group espouses the rightist political approach and is considered close to the Nawaz Sharif camp.

The third largest media house is the Dawn group, which publishes widely respected English daily *DAWN* from Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad and widely read and respected English monthly *Herald*, which covers current affairs, entertainment and fashion. Like the Nawa-i-Waqt group, they are also comparatively new in the electronic media but they have the first-ever English channel; *Dawn News*, which transmits news/current affairs and entertainment, besides they also have a radio service FM89. In May 2010, due to limited audience, the *Dawn News* was converted into Urdu from English language. They follow liberal/moderate political views and are regarded as projecting unbiased, balanced and objective views. Though the group has remained critical to the governments but presently is considered close to the government.

The other two important groups that have made tremendous strides in the Pakistani media in a very short span of time are the Lakhani group, a well established Karachi-based business family and the ARY group, a Dubai-based business group, headed by Haji Abul Razaq, which deals in gold; commonly known as ARY Gold. The Lakhani group first launched Urdu daily *Express* from 8 cities challenging the monopoly of *Jang* and *Nawa-i-Waqt* and then launched two TV channels *Express TV* in Urdu broadcast and *Express English*, covering news, current affairs and entertainment. In June 2010, it also launched the English daily *Herald Tribune* from Karachi and Islamabad, in collaboration with *the Herald Tribune* London. The group follows the moderate political approach and instead of being aligned with any political party looks after its business and commercial interest. The ARY group is the largest and popular media house after the Geo TV. It has five TV channels; ARY One World,

Urdu transmission in news and current affairs, ARY Digital for entertainment, ARY Zouq for household, QTV for religious programs and ARY Shopping, the first-ever shopping channel in the country. Through these various channels, the group covers almost every segment of the Pakistani society and therefore, makes a significant impact in the opinion-building. Although the group has rightist-religious tendency but it follows the business and commercial approach, however at present it is considered close to the government.

Besides the above major media houses, there are three other media groups, which have made important contribution in the Pakistani socio-political landscape namely the Media Times, the Business Recorder Group and the News Network. The Media Times is owned by business-cum-politician and assassinated governor of Punjab province, Salman Taseer. The group launched *the Daily Times*, an English daily from Lahore, in 2003, which became most popular/respected among the English-speaking community of Pakistan. Later, they launched two TV channels; *Business Plus* for business, trade and commerce and *Wikkid Plus* for children entertainment. However, the group could not make any important impact in the electronic media. The Business Recorder Group has the credit of first-ever exclusively trade/commerce and business daily in English, *The Business Recorder* from Karachi. They launched the AAJ (Today) News, news/current affairs and entertainment channel, which due to its balanced and objective reporting/analysis became a popular TV, however, it could not match the Geo, ARY and Express popularity. The News Network is a Lahore based group that deals in education and is owned by a former mayor of Lahore, Mian Amir, it launched *Dunya* (World) News TV, which became very attractive and popular because its management hired the existing media names from different channels. All these groups have moderate political approach and apparently they do not follow the line of any particular political party/group in the country, however their interests are more focused on commercialism.

Government-Media Relations

Media has played a very effective role against the suppression of political dissent and military/civil dictators. On the other hand all successive governments in Pakistan have tried to cage the media. The Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO) was promulgated in 1962 by Gen. Ayub Khan to control and cage the media. During the

time of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, who promulgated the Revised Press and Publication Ordinance (RPPO) in 1980, the media and journalists met with the worst kind of treatment; tortures, jails, public lashes and closer of dailies. Media led by newly established English daily from Islamabad; *The Muslim*, (Mushahid Hussain and Maleeha Lodhi, as editors)¹³ valiantly fought against the dictatorial policies of Gen. Zia. During the Nawaz Sharif rule there was a severe tug of war between the government and the Jang group over testing of the state vs media authority, as both tried to undermine the other. However, ultimately both resolved the issue through a compromise.

Later, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who is credited with the opening of media¹⁴ also promulgated the Press Council of Pakistan Ordinance (PCPO) in 2002. Again in 2007, media was suppressed and several private channels were put off the air and some anchors of current affair programs were barred from conducting their talk shows; it was due to criticism of government's internal/external policies, especially against Gen. Musharraf by the media. Surprisingly, the man who was credited to the proliferation of media in the country tried to suppress and control it when it became too much to digest for him. However, the media's role was exemplary; it not only fought against the dictator but compelled him to undo the black laws. The most significant and proactive role of media was witnessed when Gen. Musharraf imposed the emergency and deposed the sitting Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan. Again media played an important role, not only in voicing against the emergency rule but also in the restoration of Chief Justice of Pakistan.

Though the present government undid some of the previous black laws restricting/limiting the role of media in the country such as repealing the PPO and PCPO but some officials and ministers tried to cage the media. However, the resentment form within the ruling party and strong media reaction compelled the government to withdraw these restrictions. Once again in August 2010 during the visit of President Zardari to the UK, Geo News and ARY transmitted the alleged 'shoe

¹³ Mushahid Hussain was Information Minister in the Nawaz Sharif government (1997-99), presently he is Secretary General of Pakistan Muslim League-Q, close to Gen. Musharraf, and Dr. Maliha Lodhi was editor of *The News*, and has served as Pakistan's Ambassador to the USA and UK during Musharraf era.

¹⁴ Pervaiz Musharraf, *On the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

throwing' on him resulting in the closure of these channels. There was strong protest by the journalist community and the political parties, ultimately the Supreme Court had to order the opening of these channels on August 13, 2010.

Role of Media in Pakistan

Ideally, media should be impartial and free from the propaganda mechanisms. It should provide balanced account to the people. Media educates and keeps the public informed about the national and international political and other human realities taking place in everyday life. The purpose of media is to highlight the trouble spots in the society and press the government and public to devise suitable mechanisms to eliminate these troubles. At the national level, the responsibility of media is to build a bridge between people and governments. Media serves as a checkpoint by ensuring that the government is working within its mandate. However, following the globalization, the responsibilities of media have also widened. It has to play a role for preserving and pursuing the national interests of the state and highlighting its perspective along with the global issues. It has to examine the conduct of international relations and to highlight the trouble spot at global level in lieu of global security.¹⁵

When the electronic media boom occurred in Pakistan, there was a severe lack of qualified manpower; anchors, experts and technicians from the state-owned PTV provided the bulk of this manpower, as many people left PTV to join financially more lucrative private media. On the other hand, as the exiting major media houses opened their own TV channels, automatically people from the print media joined these channels. The young people who became the initial bulk of reporters and journalists, joined the media after their terminal degrees in Mass Communication/Journalism or International Relations, having little or no practical experience in the electronic media. Therefore, right from the very beginning the electronic media started its functioning with many handicaps, which was reflected in their transmissions. Moreover, the joining of non-professional business/commercial groups into the electronic media further undermined the professionalism, experience and responsibility. Therefore, currently, the role of media in Pakistan is what Noam

¹⁵ See Nazir Hussain, 'The Role of Media in Internal Security of Pakistan', *The Journal of Political Studies*, (Research Journal of Political Science, University of Punjab-Lahore), Issue XIII, Summer 2008.

Chomsky notes “it would hardly come as a surprise if the picture of the world they present were to reflect the perspectives and interests of the sellers, the buyers and product... the product being audiences willing and able to spend.”¹⁶ The approach of media in Pakistan is business oriented where sensationalism is used as a tool to attract the financier and buyers.

The rapid developments taking place in the media are due to deregulation, foreign and domestic investment and increased viewer-ship along with easy access to technology. Therefore, media receives funds from the unknown private financiers, may be from the political parties or anti-government lobbies. Ultimately, the views projected on media are not of public neither of the professionals but of those who finance it. This is the reason that media in Pakistan is mostly critical to the government and there is a controversy between the government and the media. Currently, media resort to sensationalism for profit purposes irrespective of its implications for stability and image of the country.

This over-emphasised role of media has given immense leverage to the media anchors, who through political debate and the popularity among the masses, have become to influence the policy-making and conversely have tried to become the decision-makers. Also through live broadcasts and ‘breaking news’ there is no role of the editors and government control; the news is shown as it happens, has a tremendous effect on the people. Moreover, with commercialization of media, the major clients of these new media are not governments but the corporate companies doing business in consumer’s goods.

The media is a double-edged sword; it can work positively as well as negatively. Through the use of innovative techniques and new technologies such as the ‘sound bites’ that is the out of context use of words, the media has a complete leverage over what to show and how to show it, thus undermining the authenticity of the reporting event. Investigating reporting in the print media is another tool to highlight the different angle of a particular event or story. Through these techniques certain section of the media also blackmails individuals, business groups, politicians and

¹⁶ Aroan Stark, ‘Noam Chomsky on Media, Politics, Action’ available at www.chomsky.info

government officials. However, in certain cases the investigating reporting has been very effective in highlighting the wrong doings. There are two important examples; one was the 'Farh Dogar Case' in which the daughter of the former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan was given extra marks by the Federal Board of Education, Islamabad to make her qualify for admission into the medical collage, and the other was 'Rental Power Projects' that exposed the present government's purchase of rental power plants at a very high price and its fallout on the power consumers.

However, in its positive role, media is an important source of information and news, whatever happens around the word is shown right on the TV screens. The new-found role of media has also provided it a chance to create social and political awareness among the masses, thus making people aware of their social, economic and political rights. It scrutinizes the government working both in the domestic and foreign affairs, thus is a watch-dog over the government policies. Moreover, media has become a full-fledged industry and an important source of revenue generator. There has been \$2.5 billion investment in the media industry by 2009. The print and electronic media together earn around \$2.5 billion (Rs. 20 billion) with a 40 to 60 ratio from the advertisement. The FM Radio advertisement was \$17 million in 2007-08 and was expected to be around \$50 million in 2010. The media industry provides employment to over 150,000 people.¹⁷

On the other hand, due to intense competition to break the news first, media often resort to sensationalism; without confirming the news and event, it flashes the news and starts discussion thus creating unseen fears and panic. Now the popular TV anchors such as Dr. Shahid Masud (previously Geo now ARY), Kamran Khan (Geo) Hamid Mir (Geo), Javaid Chaudhry (Express), Kashif Abassi (ARY) discuss, analyse and scrutinise the government policies, they set the agenda and they form the public opinion. These anchors discuss and debate major political issues in their prime-time broadcasts (8-10 pm), when most of the people are glued to their TV sets. Therefore, just 5-6 TV anchors dominate the public policy issues; often promote sensationalism

¹⁷ See 'Newsweek Eyes Pakistan Media Market' available at www.southasianinvestor.blogpost.com of March 12, 2010, and Annual Report 2006-2009 of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA).

because of ungrounded speculations and unfounded theories.¹⁸ However, some anchors such as Najam Sethi (Dunya News now Geo News), Talat Hussain (AJJ News now Dawn News) and Moueed Pirzada (Dunya News) are more balanced and suggestive to the government policies. Another confusing trend by the anchors is the switching over from one TV channel to another, which often smacks of unprofessionalism and creates doubts in the public mind about their credibility. Therefore, media in Pakistan play both positive and negative role. It depends on its level of maturity, experience, professionalism and training that it would play a more effective and constructive role in the nation building.

Future of Media in Pakistan

Given the potential in fast growing media industry of Pakistan, it has bright future ahead. Both state-owned and private media are employing new technologies such as Direct/Digital Terrestrial Broadcasting (DTB). The Direct TV service though radio frequencies to the household antenna rather than to dishes. This technology is in use by more than 50 countries in the world. The Cable TV Network is being converted into digital technology, to be completed by December 2011. There are plans for more Mobile TV, Internet TV and MMDS to be extended to 33 cities; major newspapers have launched their own channels and converted their dailies onto internet online availability. The future prospects can be gauged from the fact that the *Newsweek Magazine* has launched its Pakistani Edition from June 2010 with 30,000 copies. It would be *Newsweek* eighth local brand in the world.¹⁹

In a country where educational and socio-economic development is very low, the presence of female journalists is a real achievement. Previously in the print media there were very seasoned and educated journalists, now they have also joined the electronic media. More and more young females are joining the media that can bring a better soft image for the media and the country.

Various media houses and non-governmental organisations as well as the state-owned PTV have introduced in-house training of its professional and technical staff.

¹⁸ See 'Between Radicalisation and Democratisation in an Unfolding Conflict: Media in Pakistan' a report by the International Media Support, Denmark, July 2009.

¹⁹ See 'Newsweek Eyes Pakistan Media Market' available at www.southasianinvestor.blogspot.com of March 12, 2010.

PTV has an academy where professional and technical training are provided in different fields. The *Lok Virsa*, a state-owned cultural organisation, has also started media education and training. Seeing the tremendous boom in the media more and more people are eager to join the media industry.

The growing role of media has enhanced the importance of disciplines like mass communication/journalism, and some of the private educational institutions have also introduced these subjects in their syllabus. The government has also announced to establish a media university in the country to meet the growing demands of professional education and training. With these measures, it is hoped that media in Pakistan would have more maturity, responsibility and professionalism.

Conclusion

Over the years, Pakistani media has seen many ups and downs in its growth and progress but the media boom in the beginning of 21st century has unfolded tremendous opportunities and challenges to it. In its very brief life of just 8 years, the private electronic media has played an important and effective role in national politics. From opposing the black laws and media restrictions of the governments to the restoration of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, it has been bold, proactive, vibrant and penetrative both for the government and public. However, it is young, and lacks professional training, maturity and responsibility. Nonetheless, given its potential role, it would be an important source of positive and constructive socio-economic and political change in the country.