ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING PEACE AND HARMONY

Saqib Riaz[*]

Abstract

Pakistan is facing a number of social, economic, cultural and political problems. The nation is divided into groups and parties and the problems of ethnicity, sectarianism and political turmoil are on the peak. Different geographical areas have different kinds of social and cultural values. They belong to different social groups and are members of different religious and political parties. They lack unity, tolerance and understanding. Media can play vital role in spreading peace and harmony to eradicate the sentiments of hatred in Pakistani society. Responsible journalism is a key to harmony in a society. Biases in journalism towards a certain ideology, political party, individual or even towards a social issue have detrimental effects as it polarizes the society. When media present biased views to their viewers, hatred and disrespect towards others point of view grow, ultimately resulting in schism within the society. In developing countries media have a more pro-active and highly sensitive role to combat bigotry and prejudices in the nation. This article is focused on the role of media in the establishment of peace and harmony in Pakistani society.

Keywords: Sectarianism, Geographical, Journalism, Fragmentation, Harmony

Introduction

Pakistan is a highly diverse society with social, cultural, political, religious and economic differences. Many internal and external forces have been playing their role to destabilize Pakistani society on the basis of this diversity. Peace and harmony are the only solutions to encounter the forces of negativity. These are fundamental essentials of sustainable development in a society. We all are living in a highly interlinked, interconnected and interdependent world which is also known as global village. Any information from one corner of the world touches the other corner in seconds. All this has become possible because of media. Human civilization since its inception has been going through the paradox of war and peace that has increased the need for efforts to bring peace and harmony in the

[*]Dr. Saqib Riaz is Chairman and Associate Professor in the Department of Mass Communication, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad

world in general and in the society, in particular. Media can play a significant role in the dissemination and establishment of peace and harmony in society.

The era of mass media started its journey in the early 16th century with the advent of the printing press in Europe; since then this field has seen innovation and progress that has shook the foundations of the whole world. Technological advancement in the world has multiplied the role of mass media to inform, influence and educate the global audience. This un-anticipated increase in the magnitude of mass communication has also complicated the dynamics of its multi-dimensional nature that we witness in the modern era. This has substantially increased the responsibilities of global media to bring global harmony.

The 21st century media enterprise is the one that holds the power beyond measure, it can name, tame and shame individuals, governments, multi-national corporations or anything in random for that matter. This incredible power has been endorsed and recognized by many, as Malcom X[1] rightly said, "Media are the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and the guilty innocent, and that power is because they control the minds of the masses."

In the modern global society, media and its various franchises have proliferated to such an extent that they need to be monitored and regularized in order to stop them from turning into rogue anarchist outfits. Such restrictions have been in place since the recent past. Almost all of the present media organizations are under the jurisdiction of their particular state media regulatory authorities. But the major problem that arises in this situation is due to such media groups that broadcast their content internationally and are oblivious to state boundaries. Such outlets can be used by any major stakeholder or state against another state or organization to defame or malign it.

Having discussed the various intricacies of the subject, let us now focus upon the broader premise of the topic that endeavors to establish a

relationship between a human phenomenon, i.e., harmony and a purely socio-economic entity such as media. When we talk about the 'role' of media we should first be cognizant of the fact that so called role of mass media has been subject to change and alteration with the passage of time. In its early days, it was merely a source that not only relayed information to the masses but kept the principles of objectivity and bipartisanship at hand.

The aforementioned simple and naive role of media has undergone an outright change. This radical change has taken place under the ambit of the greater self-interests of the nations that are home to such media enterprises. The value of objectivity has long vanished from the modern media outlets; the prime purpose of today's media broadcast is to enhance viewership and ratings whilst ignoring the extent to which the content is controversial and

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dubious. The major media enterprises of today are running on budgets exceeding those of many third world countries, which clearly highlights the role of money being played in this business. The content that these enterprises choose to promote or broadcast is inappropriate or is not deemed appropriate by a person who places high value in morality or civility, rather such content only carries the approval of a businessman who accords top most priority to the profit of his firm only. Shoemaker and Reese argue that profit maximization is the ultimate goal of a commercial media organization[2]. They also state that the media content is necessarily manipulated when events and issues are relocated into news. Herman and Chomsky Propaganda Model advocates the phenomenon that media organizations follow and project the policies of those who finance them. Herman and Chomsky model further states that media always protect the interests of those who finance them whether they (the media organizations) work under the governmental control or as private corporations[3].

So, when we talk about the 'role of media in promoting peace and harmony' we will have to look keenly into the fact whether these days promoting peace is the priority of these media outlets or the respective states favour the concept of peace which these enterprises represent? To the former question any student of the mass media will be able to answer – absolute peace is not a 'product' of these media moguls that they pay heed to. But for them money is the ultimate goal. They are not the exponents of peace and harmony because no country or humanitarian organization is ready to pay to promote peace and harmony. All of these hypothetical presumptions make us wonder that can peace even be promoted through mass media? Yes, it can be! As media have the power to change people's perceptions, minds and aspirations, which no other tool can do without coercion.

But such a philanthropist campaign can only be launched when there is accord among all the media houses and groups, backed by a particular organization or state, only then can such a miracle happen. This brings us to the latter question that, whether the states that are the biggest cause of war and unrest in the world, are willing to give up their vested interests in war and conflict around the globe. Apparently, it seems impossible that a state will give up its own self-styled national interests for a philanthropic cause of global peace and harmony. Even though one state is willing to do so, maybe the one it has a clash of interests would not be willing to do this sacrifice, so the cessation of war for the cause of global peace will remain farfetched and utopian under the current world arena.

But this does not mean that media can be stripped of its role in promoting peace and harmony across the masses. Media have the most effective and efficient tools that are necessary and appropriate for such a beneficial cause, but at the end of the day we all live in a Machiavellian world that gives little heed to ideals and more to national interests. The role of mass media in promoting peace will be of the utmost importance as long

as the world powers will agree to this notion, because there is no media outlet that can operate without the prior permission or license of a state of the modern world.

Literature Review

The concept of Peace Journalism (PJ) is getting tremendous popularity all over the world. It provides platform to discuss the role of media in resolving the disputes and establishing peace. The phenomenon of PJ uses conflict analysis and transformation to support the concept of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting. The PJ approach provides a new road map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their reporting.[4] The authors further state that PJ is based on the proposition that the choices journalists make while covering conflicts tend either to expand or contract the space available for society at large. This leads to imagine and work towards peaceful outcomes to conflicts.[5] Many researchers and scholars conducted research studies on the concept of peace and war journalism. There are a great number of books and articles on media effects like, *Propaganda Techniques in the World War*[6], *Uncensored War: The media and Vietnam*[7], *War and Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War*[8], *War and the media: Reporting conflict*[9], *Reporting War: Journalism in War time*[10], *Media between warmongers and peacemakers,*[11]and *Manufacturing Consent: The political Economy of the Mass Media*[12] , etc. The researchers and scholars focused their studies on conflict communication that has identified a range of issues including national interests, professional constraints and socio-political and economic factors. Furthermore, Galtung gave a model of war and peace journalism[13]that was further investigated by McGoldrick and Lynch into 17 good practices of a peace journalist[14]. The practices, which resemble advice for journalists before they begin reporting, included focusing on presentation of solutions, reporting on long-term effects, aiming the news at people and the grassroots, searching for common grounds, reporting on all sides, and using precise and accurate language. Wolfsfeld who examined the role of the news media in the Middle East,

found that the media's pursuit of drama accorded the extremists from both sides more than their due share of air time, while drowning the voices calling for peace and resolution[15]. Wolfsfeld used a structural-cultural model, and explained how the different roles played by news media in various political conflicts were shaped directly by competition among the antagonists to control the media[16]. Carruthers suggested that the mass media, subjected to restrictions of state and military censorship, employed the same values, practices and priorities in reporting conflict as in covering other events[17]. Thus, mass media, in following the lead of the state, become willing accomplices in wartime propaganda, and may even play a significant role in instigating conflict.

Furthermore, Richards observed that journalists, who rely on conflict to tell the news, apply a "fighting frame" by focusing on positions without exploring what lies behind them[18]. Media have become an integral part of modern societies the world over, playing a role in each and every aspect of life. A media expert Marshall McLuhan predicted the formation of a Global Village as media connections permeated the planet. He presented this idea in his book "The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man" that the world would become just like a village.[19] Now the term is used all over the world as an accomplished fact and reality. We become aware of the events happening all over the world by media that transmit texts, images, audios and videos nearly instantaneously to all parts of the world. We can read, listen and watch whatever is happening in the world. Media organizations have played a vital role in bringing societies and nations closer. They have played their role in bridging the gaps between East and West as well as between North and South. In addition to this, media organizations have played their role in social and economic upbringing of the societies. The above mentioned literature review provides a solid justification to carry out a comprehensive research project to investigate the role of media in Pakistani society. It can ascertain how media can promote peace, resolve conflicts and disputes among different social groups and can eradicate the attitudes of hatred.

Role of State in Strengthening Peace and Harmony

Peace and harmony have always been goals of pursuit of all civilizations but contrary to that, the history of all civilizations is marred by violent conflicts which have been manifested in various forms. Violence and discontent being the antonyms of peace and harmony emanate from underlying ideologies and standpoints which individuals hold sacred to under the context of certain socially constructed paradigms that are articulated and presented through certain media. Various historical precedents have shown that

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most of conflicts are materialized more in their presentation than mere possession of them as staples of ideologies. Therefore, we can infer that if some arbitrary entity keeps fair and equitable check on the presentation and communication of contending viewpoints, probability of enduring peace and harmony in society can be increased. In the present times, the so-called arbitrary entity is state and medium of interaction and communication is generally characterized by electronic and print media. Therefore, in this article our vital arguments shall revolve around the role of state in ensuring peace and harmony through media.

However, before proceeding to the operative part of the article it is imperative to have discourse about State and its respective role. The fact is that state is run by the Government of the day whose job entitlement is, primarily, concerned with maintaining ordered rule in the country, and a government maintains it on the behalf of people who, in democratic states, give the government popular will to rule them. Keeping in view the pluralist credentials of democracy, the government has to reconcile the aspirations of all people from all communities within the territory. On the other hand, in the case of contention, the government has to reconcile all the opposing tendencies in an amicable way to curb contravention in societal peace, and thus encourage social tranquility. While doing so, the government can adopt various instruments or tools to achieve these goals and media is one

of them. However, for the purpose of clarification it is stated that when we say media being instrument, it should not be inferred that media should act as subject of state with all its independence conditioned to the whims of government. The point being emphasized here is that media should, particularly in collaborative framework, work with state for greater interest of society while keeping its exclusive existence intact as independent watchdog. The watchdog role of media is basically surveillance role of media which is one of the most important components of the democratic societies of the world.

Media's Representative Role and State's Duties

First and foremost, we should focus on the proprietary nature of media. Under the context of West's most boasted neo-liberal economy, majority of media houses are owned by private entities and such private ownership, in context of free-market economic system, is driven by profit motives and in this pursuit of profit maximization these media houses can go to any extent. They can resort to sensitization, spin-doctoring and can even get funds from certain interest groups for agenda-setting. All these factors have capability to endanger societal peace and can create undue excesses in society that can harm the delicate balance of harmony in the society. Thus, it is responsibility of government to reconcile fundamental differences between the profit-oriented ethics of private media houses and larger interests of the society. In order to achieve such reconciliation, government has to issue a structural framework, that is, a code of conduct for media houses. This would provide them a level playing-field besides barring them from crossing the threshold. In order to regulate media's compliance with code of conduct, the government should establish a monitoring mechanism that would evaluate the compliance and render penalties in case of violations. However, while doing this all, the government should take into account and uphold the fundamental rights like freedom of expression and should avoid being all leviathan like authoritarian regimes that discourage differing views in the pretext of control and order in the society.

Apart from being the mirror of society and representing everything as it is, media should be pluralist in nature. They should present the cross-section of society by taking into account all ethnicities, sects, classes and cultures in society. It is an obligation of state to ensure that minority groups are not subjected to under-representation in media projection. While being under-represented, minority groups can develop sense of deprivation which may result in ethnic hostility or ethnic strife. Thus, the Government should adopt equitable policy to direct media houses to give considerable representation to minority groups to reflect their aspirations in the mainstream social thought and enable them to be more active in communicating their viewpoints through media available to them. This aspect of equitable media representations can contribute to federal credentials of democracies and would strengthen the social cohesion of societies by enhancing the participation of minority groups in social and political discourse of the nation.

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Moreover, media being the agent of communication and representation can help strengthening normative values in society and therefore can play a role of virtual mentor thus assisting in discouraging deviant tendencies that are detrimental to social equilibrium. Many empirical studies have shown the efficacy of prescribed proposition by justifying scientifically the relationship between individual's behavior and respective media exposure. In addition, we can also say that this tutorial aspect of media can also help governments in capacity building of certain communities and conflict management. Moreover, this aspect can also be useful for the purposes of statecraft, wherein government can propagate or proliferate certain ideological notions for nation-building. However, the extreme of indoctrination should not be implied out of this proposition but governments should try to emphasis on their version of things in relation to other alternative narratives. For instance, in the western dominated paradigm, Government of Pakistan should give profound emphasis to the

teachings of the poetry of Iqbal in media projections and that has to be logical, rational and befitting rather than being an act of formality.

Peace and Harmony: Vital for Prosperity

Nexus to peace and harmony is the fulfillment of people's needs across the Globe. Peace alludes to an absence of antagonistic vibe. It also alludes to a situation which is described by solid interpersonal and global relationships, acknowledgment of equality, reasonableness and so forth. Peace is particularly imperative in current times. We see various countries that are at war with each other. There are various elements that are contributing to distress on the planet. The developed countries are not assuming their actual role in dealing with the world, in reality

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they are forcing their laws on whatever remains of the world. Peace is imperative since we require a superior world for our next eras. Peace is vital owing to the fact that we can only reap the advantages of the most recent innovations and scientific advancements just in times of peace. Peace is essential prerequisite for our presence.

Peace and harmony are fundamentally essential for prosperity in a society. Peace and amicability are prerequisites to a stable society, and they are a vital condition for the survival and improvement of humankind. A world devoid of peace and concordance surely will break apart and will once again bring those rough times in which the powerful used to prey on the feeble. Peace and agreement are welcome signs of a prosperous and mutually co-existing humanity, which is a base for the true realization and acknowledgment of the people's potential, the practical improvement of the global economy, and a security for the durable existence of human race. Peace and harmony are extremely significant for the smooth functioning of a society. It would bring a broad level of the vision, the profundity of investigation, and the degree of advancement among the members of a society. None of the present significant religions and major social customs of the world deny the significance of peace and harmony. History

demonstrates that every one of the concepts that are against peace and concordance have been against the will of the general population.

Use of Social Media in Promotion of Peace and Harmony

Social media has taken a very important place in our society. Pakistan is in the top list of social media users around the globe. Social media can be used as a platform for discussion of social issues and social problems. It is a platform where millions of people can listen and watch you and can give their opinion without any political pressure.

Almost everyone around the world has access to social media. The usage of social media is so much that a single video of a Korean singer was watched by more than two billion people which is more than the total population of China. CHAIWALA, a Pakistani guy got so much popularity around the world by social media in only a few days. It is so much big platform that it can change the trends of societies; it can play a very vital role in bringing revolutionary changes in societies. On a big platform like this where everyone has freedom of speech can be used to bring peace and harmony in society.

It has been indicated by the father of "Peace" Johan Galtung, a Norwegian humanist, who thinks about other expressions for the expansive meaning of peace news – there are two sorts of news-casting, which are peace news-casting and war news coverage. Peace media/news-casting can be characterized as the utilization of media for the advancement of peace, and to modify our perspectives. This could change general perspectives and opinion toward our resolve to deal with life issues; such news-casting can widen peace activities, they can likewise bolster those people and gatherings which are included in that peace activities.

Before advancement of peace through Media, the evaluation of genuine news-casting must be the important element for an individual media worker and he should not be involved in any biased reporting, rather he should go

for proposing answers for the contentions, keeping national issues in perspective. It is observed that free media assumes a focal part in majority run governments by elaborating statistics, which gives awareness to general public. It additionally serves as a forum for open discussions, debates and arriving at conclusions. The media is seen as a source of force that impacts, controls, and advances new models in the general public and strengthens the current ones. Media is in this manner one of the important catalyst for social advancement, elected government, administration, and a critical component in diverse issues.

It can be concluded that Media can be an instrument for peace and harmony, which advances messages and techniques that can prompt mutual understandings and tolerant conduct in a given society. The part of media in struggle has expanded its place out in all spheres. Media producers, columnists, and social researchers all can play their role in highlighting important issues like the Israel-Palestinian clash, War in Iraq and its effects, NATO and US-driven 'War against Terror in Afghanistan', drone attacks in Waziristan and adjoining regions and its impact on Pakistan, and so forth.

Dictatorship is the rule of lawlessness in which certain components are propped up in media, who try to advance the undemocratic conventions and bend the popular sentiment. Therefore, sometimes, undesirable patterns deform the true substance of news coverage as well. So in a genuine majority rule framework, 'Peace Media' can be characterized as the utilization of "radio, TV, and printed reporting, to advance peace, to propagate positive statistics or exchange ideas that could turn open debates into diversity of opinions". Peace media specialists should be flexible and fair-minded while portraying the divergent views, yet not be partial with regards to spreading commonly agreed views, with prime focus to quell any quarrels.

Wolfsfeld holds that media from various perspectives can help in reshaping the course of actions[20]. Case in point, media can spread the

benefits of peace building and propagate to gather people required for peace activities. Media can also pass on the inverse sort of messages to the general population. Yet all peace forms need survival, though news media require maneuverability to balance out all sides. This is definitely the impact of balancing power of media, which needs deeper understanding on the part of general populace. Wolfsfeld calls this sort of relationship between peace process and news media as a 'static model'.[21] Numerous writers, editors and others have viewed these undesirable news and counterproductive impacts of the media from a peace building point of view. We in this way see media, regardless of its solid impacts on the general public, for various reasons, hampering in the spread of general peace, in the way that the media has a tendency to pick only outlines. This does not contribute positively towards peace process. With the commercialization of Media, in Pakistan, particularly electronic Media, the opposition has risen. Such rivalry between factions made the eventual fate of yellow news coverage, so dreary. The movement for reinstatement of the former Chief Justice of Supreme Court Mr. Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary in 2009 was a joint endeavor of civil society and Media.

The most powerful tool today is the information itself. Information can change, manipulate and create perceptions and ideologies. Media is all based on the information. The role of media in promoting peace and harmony requires pillars of Truth, Reality and Responsibility. Media is used globally to inform citizens and distribute knowledge in many forms e.g Print Media, Social Media/ Internet, Electronic Media, Interactive Media. The use of media and distribution of information by media clearly indicates how powerful this tool is, how lethal it could be if used for negative propaganda and how destructive it could be if it is used for destruction purposes. Media can use information to maintain harmony in society but on the other hand media can be destructive by being biased, by promoting propaganda and can be misleading the whole society.

Journalism or infotainment, both are very powerful and lethal tools to communicate with media. Pakistan is a country that has seen many social, political and economic changes since 1947. Now media in Pakistan has a great freedom to disseminate information and knowledge to the audience. We can see a huge change in the broadcasting patterns and in content since the year 2000. Pakistani audience is now used to watch such sort of content that is based on sensationalism – full of murder, robbery, rape and terrorism. Present day media is somehow promoting violence in the society by promoting explicit and abusive contents. Let us look at the most well known scientific experiment. Albert Bandura did a Bobo Doll experiment to show how a child could be affected by media. He showed an explicit content to the child in which a man was beating up another man brutally. After some time the boy was moved into other room where he was alone with a doll, the boy started hitting the doll in the same way as he was shown on the television. This clearly indicates how media can create impact on society. Although many theories advocate that the audience has become much active but still we can see the passive audience in the present day. For example it becomes horrible when a child watches violence on TV screen and implies it afterwards in his life. These incidents are an evidence of the fact that media creates violence.

Media an Influential Entity of Globalization

Media has become an influential entity in our lives. Audience today has become much more active than passive. Media has become globalized with the globalization of the world. With globalization of media the whole world encountered new cultures, new ideas, new lifestyles, new exposures and new way of creating perceptions.

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Now people do not just stick to one newspaper or a TV channel. They read, watch and listen to different platforms to investigate themselves about the news. Media coverage and its broadcasting now depend on the public demand and their taste. Due to the globalization, and with the exchange of products and services, the exchange of ideology, cultures and norms is also

taking place. With exchange of social ideas and norms new crimes are introduced as well, which are somehow being promoted by some media organizations.

Conclusion

Media can play a significant role in establishing peace and harmony in the modern societies by participating in tenable reporting, addressing to issues in its news, publication content, articles, audio and video news items that throw light on various perspectives. It can likewise distinguish between different perspectives, without favouring any single agency. Media has all the essential infrastructure and capability of spreading the common good. Media can play a noteworthy part, and can cast influence over conflict resolution in a decisive manner, by exercising its impact towards elimination of the conflicts, or if nothing else, by strengthening the peace environment. In any case, to discuss these issues, media must be able to work in a fair and free environment. Thus it can perform its moral duties in reporting violence, where it must work towards upgrading peace. It is fundamental to profit through globalization, where this worldwide town is growing new ideas and standards for media. It is critical to yield to differing qualities of societies, various conventions and treaties, while reporting outdoors. Dissemination of the media content about peace and harmony will eventually result in the establishment of a peaceful society, a dream of generations.

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