

One Day Conference

ROLE OF MEDIA AND PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY DISCOURSE



March 31, 2014

Compiled by: Beenish Altaf

STRATEGIC VISION INSTITUTE (SVI), ISLAMABAD

Strategic Vision Institute, Islamabad

ROLE OF MEDIA AND PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY DISCOURSE

Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) organized a one day conference on Role of Media and Pakistan's National Security Discourse in collaboration with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) National Security held on Monday, March 31, 2014 at Serena Hotel, Islamabad. The discussion at the conference suggested that the media, as fourth pillar of the state, plays a crucial role in the development and dissemination of its National Security discourse. It acts as a prism through which the thought process of a nation is reflected. Pakistani media, like the political discourse in the country, is divided, directionless, and lacks a public consensus on vital National Security interests, especially on highly important issue of negotiation process with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Tribal Areas and to an extent with India as well. An important segment of national media supports lines of division that are less issues based but more sectarian, ethnic, and parochial in nature, e.g. projecting viewpoint of ultra Right and Islamist political parties in favor of negotiation with TTP.



Similarly, there are profound differences on the process of negotiation with India and important echelons of the polity, both from the politico-military establishment, are sharply divided on the vitally important issues of peace, disputed region of Kashmir, Water Crisis

and National Security. The National Security conference suggests that the media is not just independent and enjoying complete freedom of expression, but takes advantages of uncensored freedom of expression, and it lacks a nationally agreed upon code of ethics, with minor exceptions.

A dominant part of the media lacks professional expertise on vitally important issues of economy, industrial technology, strategic stability, and National Security. There is hardly a satisfactory understanding of strategic disciplines like relationship between peace and conflict management until resolution and role of diplomacy in intricate conflictual issues.

WELCOME REMARKS BY DR. ZAFAR IQBAL CHEEMA

Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema welcomed the Excellencies, Dignitaries and Distinguished Guests. He said that the conference is aligned with SVI's objective that is to provide a forum, where we can discuss widely important issues of significance to National and International Security. He introduced all the speakers of the conference and profoundly thanked them for sparing time out of their busy schedules. He opined that our national political discourse is divided; the attitude of our media on its representation is fragmented. He emphasized that media should represent the state itself i.e., states policy and its objectives in term of National Security. He questioned, if media is doing that, how effectively it is doing that and what still is needed to be done to build a National Security discourse.

Dr. Cheema added that there is lack of sound narrative on National Security discourse in Pakistan. Media today is no more a media but an industry. He recommended that media should show more maturity on coverage of issues related to National Security. He stressed that it is the responsibility of the media to help in formulating the National Security discourse.

WELCOME REMARKS BY KAS RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Mr. Ronny Heine welcomed Excellencies, Distinguished Guests and participants on behalf of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) to the conference on “*Role of Media and Pakistan’s National Security Discourse*”. He acknowledged that the collaboration with the SVI is based on mutual trust and cooperation. He opined that National Security is the most sensitive and contentious issue, Pakistan faces today. For more than one decade, the country has been facing the wrath of the terrorist attacks on its citizens, critical national infrastructure, and most importantly the loss of lives of its armed forces in the conflict areas of FATA. In this regards, Pakistan needs a comprehensive National Security Policy which could fulfill the National Security goals. He added that the efforts of Pakistan government are highly appreciable not only in formulating a comprehensive security policy, but also in meeting the other various security challenges in the international strategic environment. Keeping this in view, Media correspondents must adopt responsible behavior and should endeavor to better understanding of the National Security issues. It has been observed at several levels that there are gaps between media and the law enforcement agencies on the subject of National Security, and therefore, this conference provides an opportunity to develop understanding between the two major segments of Pakistani society, which are pivotal for the National Security of Pakistan. At the end, Ronny Heine welcomed the speakers with a hope of fruitful and enlightened discussion on the matter.



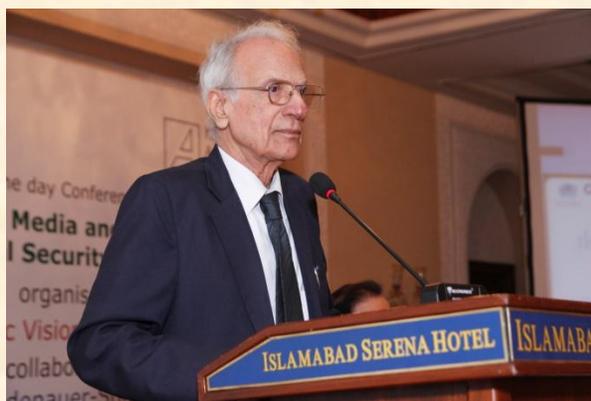
Session I

Pakistan's National Security Discourse



CHAIR SESSION: DR. MEHDI HASSAN

Mr. Mehdi Hassan, *Dean of Media and Mass Communication, Beacon House National University, Lahore*, chaired the first session of the conference.



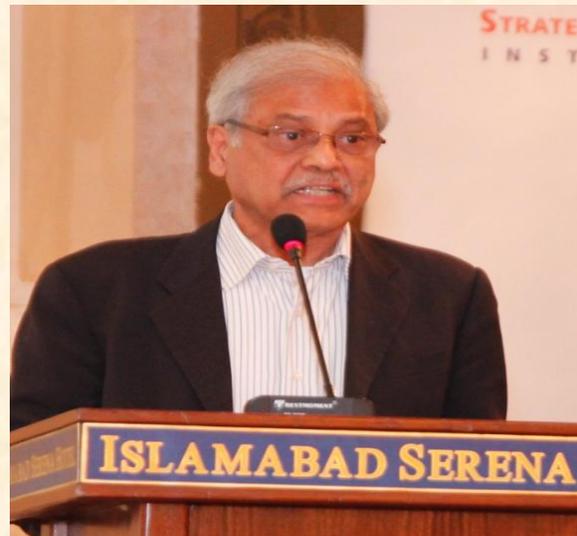
Discussing the role of Media in the country, he said that media has two basic roles it performs during the process of developing public policy; the agenda setting and agenda following. Dr. Hassan opined that media should follow the code of conduct for its own safety as well. He recalled the

operation of Lal Mosque in which a TV anchor did reporting from the roof of a house during heavy exchange of fire from both sides. He said the media should follow the government when it barred from going anywhere for the sake of safety. In addition, Dr. Hassan was concerned on the excessive coverage to some events which later on create War hysteria in the country.

MR. ZAHID HUSSAIN

Mr. Zahid Hussain, *Senior Journalist and Analyst*, presented his views on the topic titled “*Contours of the National Security Discourse in Pakistan.*” He noted that Pakistan had been fighting proxy wars since long, and the sectarian violence has been escalating from the last few years. He said that the country is paying heavy cost of home grown terrorism. He criticized those people who called ‘Taliban’ as brothers arguing that they should know that they(Taliban) have killed around 60,000 people. If they were not terrorists than who killed these innocent Pakistanis, he questioned. Hussain articulated that though media did not formulate policies, but it could not live in isolation. He blamed media for all that went wrong in the society would be unjustified. He raised the question that does the new National Security policy have the ultimate strategic vision to formulate an overarching and viable strategy to secure Pakistan against a dangerous mix of internal and external threats? He was of the view that the policy, based on a narrow prism of traditional external threat perceptions alone, is no more relevant to the fast-

changing domestic security landscape. Moreover, he added that the country is now confronting multiple challenges of terrorism, violent extremism and low-intensity conflicts, which have become



much more urgent to evolve a holistic, overarching National Security Strategy.

Hussain said that objective journalism in Pakistan is affected by the fear of being attacked as it happens all across Pakistan (attacks on Journalists), which forced some media houses to tone down their criticism on militancy/terrorists activities. He also highlighted that the growing religious extremism, radicalization and prevailing intolerance in society also act as a driver of insecurities for journalists. He insisted that the current state of fear must be

broken, if we need to retain our democratic freedom and win back the

DR. MINHAS MAJEED

Second presentation was on the topic “*Transformation of National Security Discourse since 9/11*,” delivered by Dr. Minhas Majeed, *Professor, Department of International Relations, Peshawar University*. She said that National Security has a wide meaning and all embracing dimensions. She analyzed that when we discuss National Security, we usually agree that it is an overriding priority of all states, which not only consists of military aspects but also political, economic, social, humanitarian and human rights aspects. Enhanced security creates conditions for the successful pursuit of development. Recently non-traditional security threats have moved to the forefront of global security concern. Societal underdevelopment as well as mismanagement, and the waste of resources germinate enormous challenges to the security of the state. In existing literature on National Security, Human Security challenges are equally and sometimes more important than the traditional security challenges.

heart and minds of this nation.

Dr. Majeed believed that the events of 9/11 had brought dramatic changes not only in the foreign policy of Pakistan but



also drastically disturbed overall security scenario of the region. Given the nature of the existing international, regional, and domestic environment, Pakistan is facing many security challenges.

She wrapped up by recounting that the emphasis on National Security, since 9/11 has brought a paradigm shift in the National Security discourse all around the world and especially in Pakistan. It now revolves around the internal threats and

challenges rather than external. Internal security occupies a pivotal position in any country's National Security policy. Not only Pakistan is confronted with many internal threats and challenges to its physical security, but its citizens do also.

DR. SHAHID MASOOD

Dr. Shahid Masood, *Senior Journalist and Current Affairs Analyst* spoke on "Intensification of Internal Security Discourse." He said that existing journalistic terms has been widely used in the public discourse in Pakistan but, he being one of the pioneers of this *Awara Media*, simply do not know the exact definition of Journalism, and also the difference between journalism and mass communication.

He articulated that the world is continuously changing and the government must abolish the Ministry of Information and bring new model like a spokesperson for the government. In his view, this would help the government to engage media by directly sharing information with media.

Dr. Masood said it is too complicated to explain/understand the media owing

The internal security challenges had almost destroyed the socio-political-economic fabric of Pakistani society, which evoked violent extremism and radicalization.

to the facts that it has no set definition, and is divided and divergent in several forms. Keeping in mind the fact that all the existing public

discourse is not static and keep on changing time to time, one need to build a consensus upon it but

who will do it this is a debatable question.

He summed-up by identifying the foremost requirement of defining the role media, in the National Security discourse.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Former Ambassador to the United States, Sherry Rehman during her keynote address, said there were expectations of people that media would remain neutral in highlighting National Security issues. She orchestrated that media enjoys freedom of expression and it does play its role in formulating National Security architect, where it can. She added media always supports National Security discourse at the time of distress but, at present media is under huge stress.

Ms. Rehman stated that after 9/11, the National Security perspective had changed and media's role in that context has also faced a paradigm shift. It would be a wishful thinking of any government that the media, which had got independence after a long struggle, would subscribes its prescribed course of action. She said that there was a limit of media outreach and state's power. In fact, media is playing its role with full responsibility or needs to be responsible, is an issue of concern under this deteriorating security environment of the country. At present, there are ambiguities in National Security policy. Moreover, it often appeared that the media was much confused about the overall National Security discourse. She added that media was also under threat in unsecured environment where no one felt safe.



Session II

Media to Feature at Internal/External Security Situation of Pakistan



CHAIR SESSION: MR. ROSS

MASOOD HUSAIN, CHAIRPERSON

SVI

Mr. Ross Masood Husain, *Chairperson SVI*, chaired the Session II of the conference in a very well-organized manner. He introduced the speakers, regimented the follow-up discussion, and concluded the session.



BARRISTER MEHREEN KHAN



Barrister Mehreen Khan, *Public Policy Analyst and TV Broadcaster*, spoke on the subject, “*Role of Media in Reporting Militancy and Extremism/Sectarianism in Pakistan.*” She commenced her presentation by notifying the importance of biased-ness in media reporting. She said that rating is half-key determinant in boosting channels by in large. She stressed that print journalism in Pakistan is so fractional; people do not read newspapers rather they are more inclined towards surfing TV channels. She enlightened the audience that it raised

simply by picking up the nearest people available that were from journalism, predominately from the Urdu press, eventually averted to TV News Channels.

She was of the view that in this race between media houses of giving more airtime to anti-government sentiments is appalling. Thus, the mainstream Pakistani media actually portray conspiracy theories as the alternate explanations.

She believed the root cause of existing scenario cropped up after Lal Masjid Operation—the turning point for media coverage of extremism and militancy. It gave them the voice, contacts (within media), and drastically changed public opinion.

Ms. Khan recounted that now under the democratic elected government where media cooperated with the government; focusing on to eliminate militancy and extremism from the society. She concluded, the job of media is hard, and it is difficult because the state is weak and its adversaries are strong.

LT. GEN. SYED MUHAMMAD OWAIS

Lt. Gen. Syed Muhammad Owais spoke on the topic “*Media and Pakistan-India Peace Process.*” His presentation started with the articulation that neither a journalistic nor a military man’s point of view would be realistic enough to be called nationalistic. He notified the importance of bilateral relations of Pakistan with its archrival neighbor India, while illuminating the subject.

He said that nature of peace process with India is a very sensitive subject national Media of both the countries. Since media is the fourth pillar of the state, so it has to be taken as an instrument to bolster the National Security objective of the state. At present, media has to have certain framework, guidelines, and should provide guidelines. Media as an instrument in the policy making process have to orchestrate means to conduct debate on guidelines given by policy makers, parliament, law making agencies, foreign office to formulate a comprehensive National Security Policy.

Media creates some sort of psychological impact and in Indo-Pak context, this psychological domain is



strong enough. For weighing his argument, he referred to the time of 1965 war, when there was a unanimity observed in Pakistan’s media regarding fighting a war against India.

He stressed that the role of media between India and Pakistan has to be very objective and all issues should be addressed with profound media strategy. Previously, no any major effort has been done in pursuance of peace from media side, except South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) and *AMAN KI ASHA*. However, such initiatives were unable to construct the much needed discourse, because focus was not to expedite the peace process but, the line which was following by these initiatives was the

socio-cultural exchange, which also has many negative impacts.

He criticized the media of both the countries, that it is unable to fully address the environmental issues, which is affecting *Siachen* and overall peace process. While focusing on Pakistan, he

MR. AHMER BILAL SOOFI

Mr. Ahmer Bilal Soofi, *Advocate Supreme Court of Pakistan and President Research Society of International Law*, spoke on the topic, “*Media and Foreign Influence (International Obligations) on Pakistan’s National Security.*” His presentation revolved around the argument that the state institutions had legal obligations to take action against those, who glorify and incite terrorism in media. He said state has obligation under UNSCR-1373, not the government but also all its provinces to curb terrorist activities. He concerned that if not accepting then we are acting defiance of the international law.

Mr. Soofi articulated that first, the state is abided to counter terrorism and secondly, not to violate human rights. He said that in order to create balance between both is foremost necessary, not only at part of state but also towards its

stressed that priority should be given to guard the national interest of Pakistan. Nevertheless, it is responsibility of the State, the Parliament and policy making institutions to lay down the framework about the interest and the red lines which would be then, followed by the media.



subsets. He maintained his point by quoting Human Rights Convention and 27 GPS Plus Convention as obligations to uphold Human Rights.

Mr. Soofi emphasized on the Article 5 and Article 256 of the Constitution of Pakistan, which necessitates “Loyalty to the state as the basic duty of every

citizen” and “no private organizations capable of functioning as a military organization shall be formed, and such organization shall be illegal,” respectively. He enlightened Article 19 of international covenant on civil and political rights. Moreover, he explained that promoting enmity between different groups and statement conducing to pubic mischief from Pakistan Penal Code 1860.

He elucidated the audience by telling nature of law enforcement operations in all provinces of Pakistan. He said in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) counter-

insurgency operation by Army called in aid of civil power under article 245. In Karachi, counter-terrorism by Rangers called in aid of civil power under ATA and in Balochistan it's Frontier Corps and in rest of the country, police do counter-terrorism under ATA. In the end he gave, four options of winning back/countering the traumatized scenario. i) Political Dialogue, ii) Police Action, iii) Military Action, iv) De-radicalization.

Chief Guest Address

Secretary Defence Lt. while addressing said using superlatives while creates a bad image of is a projector of national actually a driver of defend national values The overall role of there is a need of some passage of time, media persons would learn from their mistakes, he hoped. He expressed the need to bolster trust between the government and the media as lack of trust created distance among both.



Gen. (r) Asif Yaseen Malik, that media should avoid reporting events, which the nation. He said, media policy abroad. Media is public opinion and can and ideology of the state. media was good, but still fine-tuning. With the

The Secretary Defence opined that often the statements of government dignitaries were suspected and interpreted differently. As in many countries, like the US, media had to follow the advisory on National Security issues, he said, giving the example of Iraq war, which remained a top story for a few days, but then went down the ladder. He concluded on the words, “the glass is half full and not half empty.”

CONCLUDING REMARKS: MR. ROSS MASOOD HUSAIN

Chairperson SVI, Mr. Ross Masood Husain joyfully summarized the proceedings of the two sessions of the conference. He extended his felicitations to Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema and Mr. Ronny Heine, and appreciated joint efforts by SVI and KAS for putting-up one day national conference.

He recounted that information is the table task of media; weather its print media or electronic media. It is the fourth pillar of the state. Access to information is the right of people in order to make right decision. It is their inherent right; it is the only free media that can enable policy makers to take independent decision. This freedom of the media, however, has some certain implications. It is only the free media, which can provide such service. The first implication is to collect authentic sources. Having all this, a narrative should be build for National Security.

He further told that most of the information is denied to the media, much of the information is unbreakable because it is related to the ruling class in the Pakistan. At the end he said that the media in Pakistan has had a glorious history nearly half a century and this is the struggle to break the unprecedented shackles on media in Pakistan.

VOTE OF THANKS: DR. ZAFAR IQBAL CHEEMA

After all the interesting presentations by the learned speakers, Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema concluded by profoundly thanking the entire august audience present in the house and said that their presence at the conference has made it a successful endeavor. He paid special thanks to Mr. Ross Masood Husain and Mr. Ronny Heine for their guidance and collaboration, respectively. He stressed his appreciation to the chief guest and all the

featured speakers who presented their papers and enlightened the audience with their views and recommendations on the subject. He also extended his gratitude towards SVI and KAS, research and secretarial staff for the hard work put into conducting and making the conference a success.