



8th South Asia Dialogue

on

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTING REGIONAL UNDERSTANDING IN SOUTH ASIA

(October 28-29, 2014)

Organised by



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES

रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

**Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
New Delhi**

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ABOUT IDSA

The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) is a non-partisan, autonomous body dedicated to objective research and policy relevant studies on all aspects of defence and security. Since its inception, IDSA has served as a forum to debate important aspects of national and international security. Its mission is to promote national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and security-related issues.

IDSA was established as a registered society in New Delhi on November 11, 1965. The initiative for setting up the Institute came from then Defence Minister Shri Yeshwantrao Chavan, who was one of the Institute's founding members. Over the last forty-plus years, IDSA has played a crucial role in shaping India's foreign and security policies, including with respect to nuclear weapons, military expenditure, and conventional and non-conventional threats to India.

IDSA has a well-qualified multi-disciplinary research faculty drawn from academia, defence forces and the civil services, and which represent a diversity of views. Research at the Institute is driven by a comprehensive agenda and by the need to provide impartial analyses and policy recommendations. IDSA's journals, monographs, briefs, and books are the principal mediums through which these analyses and policy recommendations are disseminated.

Research Centres

- East Asia
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- Africa, Latin America, Caribbean & UN

ABOUT SOUTH ASIA DIALOUGE

The South Asia Dialogue is organized by the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi. The annual South Asia Dialogue is an endeavour of the institute to bring together experts from all the neighbouring countries and discuss with them issues of contemporary relevance in an increasingly interdependent South Asia.

Since the countries in the South Asian region not only share many features of governance and structures but face similar challenges, the IDSA conferences have attempted to engage policy makers, academics, civil society actors and young professionals in a Dialogue on key concerns with the objective to achieve sustainable peace and security. This is the 8th South Asia Dialogue.

Previous South Asia Dialogues have dealt with the following issues.

- Economic Cooperation for Security & Development in South Asia
- Changing Political Context in India's Neighbourhood and Prospects of Security and Regional Cooperation
- South Asia 2020: Towards Cooperation or Conflict?
- The Common Challenge of Terrorism in South Asia and Prospect of Regional Cooperation
- Cooperative Security Framework for South Asia
- India & South Asia: Exploring Regional Perceptions

CONCEPT NOTE

Media plays a very important role in generating public awareness and shaping public opinion. It is regarded as the fourth estate and an important pillar of democracy. With the mushrooming of media around the world- print, audio-visual and social- its role has become even more significant. The manner in which reports are filed and news is disseminated have their impact on public opinion. In an interconnected world, the role of media in influencing foreign policy of states can hardly be ignored.

In South Asia, a region where inter-state relations are held hostage to zero-sum politics, media has a big responsibility in creating an environment of trust and understanding. Since the states of the region are socially, historically, culturally and economically interconnected, the role of media assumes even more significance. However, unfortunately, the media in different states of South Asia are yet to show necessary maturity and wisdom in enabling an environment of mutual trust and confidence. The discourses in media are often mired in narrowly conceived nationalist templates which far from bridging differences escalate them causing irreparable harm to regional understanding. While tension and conflict among states and communities find more news space, shared history and culture are conveniently ignored. All this results in media adding to interstate conflicts and increasing the political temperature rather than acting as an agent of change and reconciliation. With the proliferation of audio-visual media in the region and the competition among channels for better TRP ratings, there is often a temptation to sensationalise issues through select reporting.

This is not to say that there is a complete absence of responsible media in the region. Joint media initiatives like the one between the Jang group of Pakistan and the Times group in India to launch Aamki Asha (Hope for Peace)

did try to create an environment of trust to contribute to India-Pakistan peace process. Similarly, the Statesman from India and PrathamAlo from Bangladesh also tried to replicate this exercise to promote India-Bangladesh relationship. Groups like South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA) have also tried to bring together scholars, retired bureaucrats, politicians and media person together in South Asia to promote people to people contact.

Media cannot be looked at as a monolithic entity. There are several layers to it. Moreover, the media is facing several restrictions. There is the issue of media censorship and media freedom. There is also the issue of media ownership- by political parties, interest groups and business houses. With their vested interests the owners sometimes dictate the line a media group would take at the expense of neutrality. The influence of certain institutions on media begs close scrutiny in view of their impact on foreign and security policies of some states. The differences in approach between vernacular and English media and their influence on society and politics is also another area which has not received much critical attention. The social media is assuming importance in most of these countries with the penetration of internet and wider use of mobile phones especially among the youth who constitute a critical mass in South Asia.

Whether it was the case of showing doctored images about fictitious attack on Rohingyas as attack on Muslims in North East; the picture of Shivaji and Ambedkar, which led to violence in Pune in India; or the derogatory message against the Prophet, maliciously circulated in the social media attributing the act to a Buddhist, which led to violence in Ramu in Bangladesh - the social media is playing a disproportionate role in spawning insecurity and violence in the multicultural setting in South Asia.

Given the increasingly significant role played by the media, the 8th South Asian Dialogue being organized by the IDSA

seeks to explore the following.

- What role media is playing in shaping public opinion in different countries?
- How does media influence foreign and security policies of states? Is there any difference between the vernacular and English language media in this regard?
- What are the forces influencing media and its approach to regional issues?
- How does media ownership impact reporting by different media houses?
- Does media play a role in promoting jingoistic nationalism in the region? How does it interfere with the process of regional unity and integration?
- Can media play a role in promoting regional understanding and contribute to regional peace and amity?

PROGRAMME

Day One: Tuesday, October 28, 2014

0930-1000	Registration
1000-1030	Inaugural Session Welcome Address by Brigadier Rumel Dahiya (Retd.), DDG, IDSA Keynote Address by Hon'ble Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting (Independent Charge), Shri Prakash Javadekar Vote of Thanks
1030-1100	Tea /Coffee
<u>1100- 1300</u>	<u>Session I</u> <i>The Role of Media in Shaping Public Discourse in South Asia</i>
Moderator	Professor S. D. Muni
Speakers	
Ashok K. Behuria & Smruti Pattanaik	<i>Media in South Asia: A Panoramic View</i>
Rasul Bakhsh Rais	<i>The Media and Foreign Policy Discourses in Pakistan</i>
Syed Badrul Ahsan	<i>Impact of Media Ownership on Reporting</i>
Amrullah Saleh	<i>Media in Post 9/11 Afghanistan</i>
Siddharth Varadarajan	<i>Can Media Play a Role in Promoting Regional Understanding?</i>
Kunda Dixit	<i>Media in the Age of Intolerance and Terrorism</i>
1300-1400	Lunch

1400-1530**Session II*****State of Media in South Asia: Country Perspectives*****Moderator****Mr. Prem Shankar Jha****Speakers**

Saleem K. Safi

State of Pakistani Media: Does it Play its Due Role?

Dilrukshi Handunetti

Promotion of Jingoism in the Region by the Media: The Case of Sri Lanka

Ibrahim Waheed

Maldivian Media: Ownership and Orientation

Kaberi Gayen

Does Media Ownership Really Matter?

Tenzing Lamsang

The Role of the Bhutanese Media in Bhutan's Democratic Evolution and Governance.

1530-1545

Tea/Coffee

1545-1730**Session III*****State of Media in South Asia: Country Perspectives (contd.)*****Moderator****Mr. Vinod Sharma****Speakers**

Myo Lwin

The State of Media in Myanmar

Danish Kharokhel

Role of Afghan Media in Promoting Regional Understanding

Ahmed Zahir Mohamed

Media and Its Approach towards Neighbourhood

Shruti Pandalai

Truth vs Hype: Media, Hyper-nationalism and Impact on Perceptions in India-South Asia Relations

Day Two: Wednesday, October 29, 2014

1000-1130

Session IV

Influence of Media on Foreign and Security Policies of States

Moderator **Commodore C. UdayBhaskar (Retd.)**

Speakers

Lakshman F. B. Gunasekara	<i>News Media Re-Presentation and Agenda-Setting in Public Discourse on Foreign Relations: The Case of Sri Lanka Popular Attitudes Towards India</i>
Khin Maung Soe	<i>The Role of Media in Shaping Foreign Policy Discourse in Myanmar</i>
Dawa Penjor	<i>The Role of Bhutanese Media in Amalgamating South Asia: Media's Quest For a Happy South Asia Society</i>
Deepak Adhikari	<i>The Role of Media in Shaping Foreign Policy Discourse in Nepal</i>

1145-1330

Session V

Can Media Play a Role in Promoting Regional Understanding? (Panel Discussion)

Moderator: Dr. Chandan Mitra, Hon'ble Member of Parliament

Panelists:

S. D. Muni
Siddhartha Varadarajan
Nitin Gohkale
Saleem K. Safi
Dilrukshi Handunetti

Amrullah Saleh
Syed Badrul Ahsan
Ibrahim Waheed
Kunda Dixit
Myo Lwin
Dawa Penjor

1330-1335

Vote of Thanks

1335-1430

Lunch

Profiles of Participants & Abstracts

PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

Minister of State for Information and
Broadcasting (Independent Charge)
MOS (IC) for Environment, Forest
and Climate Change and MOS for
Parliamentary Affairs
Government of India



Shri Prakash Javadekar is Minister of State (IC) for Information & Broadcasting, MOS (IC) for Environment, Forest & Climate Change and MOS for Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India. Shri Javadekar is Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He is President, GLOBE India (Global Legislators Organisation for Balanced Environment) and In-Charge of the BJP Economic Forum and cells related to economy. Shri Javadekar is President, NOINO (National Organisation of Insurance Officers) and of KCKU (Khadi Commission Karmachari Union). Concurrently, he is Member, Press Council of India, Public Accounts Committee, Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation, Standing Committee on Defence and Consultative Committee on Power.

BRIG. RUMEL DAHIYA (RETD.)

Deputy Director General
IDSA, New Delhi



Brig. Rumel Dahiya, SM retired from Net Assessment Directorate at Integrated Defence Staff of the Indian Armed Forces in 2009 after 32 years of service in the India Army. He is presently Deputy Director General at Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

He has had extensive command and staff experience during his military career, including that in counter-insurgency situations and has also served as Defence Attaché to Turkey, Syria and Lebanon, and with the Indian Military Training Team in Bhutan. He also served with Military Operations Directorate of the Indian Army.

He is a graduate of the National Defence College and Defence Services Staff College. He was awarded the Sword of Honour and Gold Medal from Indian Military Academy at his commissioning.

Session I

The Role of Media in Shaping Public Discourse in South Asia

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

1100- 1300

Moderator

S. D. MUNI

Distinguished Fellow
Institute for Defense Studies and
Analyses, New Delhi



Prof. S. D. Muni is currently Distinguished Fellow at the IDSA and Emeritus Professor of International Relations at the Jawahar Lal Nehru University. He was India's Special Envoy to Southeast Asian countries on UN Security Council Reforms (2005-06) and served as India's Ambassador to Lao PDR (1997-1999). In 2005, the Sri Lankan President bestowed on him 'Sri Lanka Ratna', the highest civilian honour for a non-national. He superannuated from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in 2006 and had held the Appadorai Chair of International Relations and Area Studies. He was the founder Editor of Indian Foreign Affairs Journal, (Cambridge University Press, India) and South Asia Journal, (Sage India). He served Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, as Director of Research (2006-2007). A founder Executive Member of the Regional Centre of Strategic Studies, Colombo, Prof. Muni was nominated to India's first National Security Advisory Board in 1990-91. He addressed the UN Ad hoc Committee on Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace at Socci (then USSR) in 1985. Professor Muni's recent publications include: The Emerging Dimension of SAARC (2010); India's Foreign Policy: The Democracy Factor, (2009); India and China: The Next Decade (2009) and China's Strategic Engagement with the New ASEAN (2002).

ASHOK K. BEHURIA

Research Fellow & Coordinator
South Asia Centre
Institute for Defense Studies and
Analyses, New Delhi



Dr. Ashok K Behuria is a Research Fellow and Coordinator of South Asia Centre at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). He is a Ph. D. in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. He has published many research articles on strategic issues related to South Asian security situation in Indian and foreign journals. He has edited books on South Asia and continues with his research on the need for regional and inter-state cooperation to unleash the collective potential for growth and prosperity for states in the region.

SMRUTI PATTANAİK

Research Fellow
Institute for Defense Studies and
Analyses, New Delhi



Dr. Smruti S. Pattanaik at present is a Research Fellow at the IDSA. She joined IDSA in 1998. Her area of specialisation is South Asia. Her current research project focuses on “Federalising India’s Neighbourhood Policy: Role of States”. Dr. Pattanaik has been a recipient of many international fellowships. She was a visiting Asia fellow (Asian Scholarship Foundation, Bangkok) at the Department of International Relations, Dhaka University in 2004. In 2007, she was also selected for a follow up study grant by the Asian Scholarship Foundation to research on politics of identity in Bangladesh. She was also awarded the Kodikara fellowship in 1999 (RCSS, Colombo). As a Postdoctoral Fellow at MSH (Fondation Maison des Science de l’Homme), and the Centre for International Relations and Research (CERI, Science Po), Paris she conducted research on “Broadening Consensus in Fighting Religious Militancy/terrorism: Can Democracy in Pakistan Ensure regional stability”. In addition, she was a Visiting Fellow (September-October 2011) at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) and worked on “Afghanistan: Need for a Regional Approach”. She was a Visiting Professor on ICCR’s India Chair at the University of Colombo for a semester in 2013.

Dr. Pattanaik has published more than 40 articles in various journals, has contributed more than 20 chapters in edited books, and delivered lectures on security issues both in India and abroad. She is a member of IDSA’s task force on neighbouring countries. She is the author of “Elite Perceptions in Foreign Policy: Role of Print Media in Influencing India-Pakistan Relations, 1989-99”.

MEDIA IN SOUTH ASIA: A PANORAMIC VIEW

Ashok K. Behuria & Smruti Pattanaik

The role of media in shaping and eliciting public opinion on variety of issues in South Asia has been relatively understudied. While the print media has traditionally played an important role, the impact of audio-visual media has been far effective in penetrating the drawing rooms of people and shaping public opinion and public discourse on important issues, especially pertaining to foreign and security policies of states. The role of media assumes special significance because of the fact that it is no longer under exclusive control of the states in South Asia. In fact, state controlled television channels have lost out in terms of popularity to private channels, who are not only providing entertainment but also bringing information and analyses to the people on variety of issues. Private sector has emerged as an important player and corporatized the media. Moreover, in today's world, success of the media is not measured by the quality of the news it serves but by the sensationalism it is able to generate with an eye on TRPs (Television Rating Point). In the meanwhile, thanks to revolution in information technology and spread of internet in the region, social media has also made its presence felt with its unique ability to peddle private viewpoints on public issues with a speed and intensity unimaginable in the past. The social media has brought in a virtual domain which is beyond the control of the states, and in fact managed by international entities like the Facebook and the Twitter. Though this remains limited to the urban social space, its impact has been phenomenal in terms of the space it provides to the people to interact and exchange views across barriers imposed by the states in the region with their controlled visa regimes. Given the fact that media has diversified itself and is playing an increasingly important role in circulating information among the people at large, the questions that become relevant here are: what determines the media narrative? To what extent ownership and the

corporate interests play a role in shaping public debate? Is there a value in neutral news reporting? What role media is playing to shape foreign and security policies of states? In case of interstate conflicts, is media moderating or aggravating the discourse? At a time, when it is being realized that regional cooperation is the key to economic prosperity and human security in the South Asian region, what role media is playing to enable dialogue and reconciliation among states? The paper will dwell on the role of media in South Asia in general and examine its ability to promote regional understanding in particular.

RASUL BAKHSH RAIS

Professor & Director General
Institute of Strategic Studies
Islamabad, Pakistan



Prof. Rasul Bakhsh Rais has a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He teaches Political Science at the Lahore University of Management Sciences. Before joining LUMS, he served as Professor/Director, Area Study Centre and prior to that as Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad for nearly 22 years. He was a Professor of Pakistan Studies at Columbia University, New York for 3 years, 1991-94. He was awarded the Fulbright fellowship at Wake Forest University, 1997-98, Social Science Research Fellowship at Harvard, 1989-90, Rockefeller Foundation fellowship in International Relations at the University of California, Berkeley, 1985-85. He is author of *Recovering the Frontier State: War, Ethnicity and State in Afghanistan* (Lanham: Lexington Book, and Oxford University Press, 2008), *War without Winners: Afghanistan's Uncertain Transition after the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 1996), *Indian Ocean and the Superpowers: Economic, Political and Strategic Perspectives* (Croom Helm, London, 1986) and editor of *State, Society and Democratic Change in Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 1997).

Dr. Rais has published widely in professional journals on political and security issues pertaining to South Asia, Indian Ocean and Afghanistan. His current research interests are: "Pakistan's Western Borderlands: Tribe, State and the International System". At LUMS, Dr. Rais teaches courses on the theories of democratic transition, American government and politics and comparative politics. His most recent addition to his teaching portfolio is a course on the theory and practice of non-violence: Gandhi, King Jr, Ghaffar Khan and Nelson Mandela.

THE MEDIA AND FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSES IN PAKISTAN

Rasul Bakhsh Rais

Freedom of expression is one of the most refreshing and robust aspects of Pakistani society; it stands out spectacularly in the otherwise depressing elitist political scenario. How and why has the media progressed so fast during the past seven years? The media found a bigger space for the first time when the late Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo asserted his autonomy against General Zia-ul-Haq. He encouraged debates and controversies in the press that quite often reflected on the role of the military in politics and society. Women speaking on gender issues and fledgling civil society organizations added a great deal to the tradition of dissent in the media? Another important factor in the growth of the media and its increasing power in Pakistan today is the globalization of information and ability of the foreign media to reach our homes and work places.

Pakistan can rightly claim merit in recognizing the limits of state and sovereignty in exercising raw power over the print and electronic media. They are now too many, have greater resources and can reach wider audiences than they could do ten years back. All private networks have flourished and achieved remarkable sophistication and incredible capacity in acting as a popular form of debate on current national and international issues. One is amazed by the stridency of the questions of the anchorpersons and the frankness of the participants' views and comments in various programs on television channels and in opinion paper articles.

Today, in Pakistan, the media is an extremely powerful tool and resource for influencing public opinion, generating narratives and engaging in public discourses. The paper will focus on dominant public discourses in Pakistani media three sets of foreign policy issues-relations with India, United States and the Muslim countries.

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

Associate Editor
The Daily Observer
Dhaka, Bangladesh



Syed Badrul Ahsan is currently Associate Editor, The Daily Observer. Ahsan's career began with teaching English language and literature at various schools, notably Greenherald and Scholastica, in Dhaka between the late 1970s and early 1980s. He then joined Notre Dame College as lecturer in English and while engaged there began to write articles on international affairs for newspapers in Bangladesh.

Ahsan's entry into journalism came through the New Nation newspaper, which he joined as assistant editor in 1983. In subsequent years, he moved on to such newspapers as the Morning Sun, the Bangladesh Observer, The Independent, News Today and New Age. He was also associated with the weekly Dhaka Courier. At all these organisations, Ahsan contributed editorials, post-editorials on national, regional and global issues, articles on the arts and book reviews.

He joined the Daily Star as editor, current affairs, in January 2007. He was appointed executive editor of the newspaper in October 2011. His responsibilities at the Daily Star include writing editorials and a weekly column. Ahsan has had a stint in diplomacy as minister press at the Bangladesh High Commission, London, from 1997 to 2000. He has been associated with the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA). He has been adjunct faculty at Dhaka University and currently teaches media studies (part time) at Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) and University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB). Ahsan has delivered talks at the Commonwealth Countries' League (CCL), London; the Royal Over-Seas League (ROSL), London; Dhaka University, Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) and Academic Staff College, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

IMPACT OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP ON REPORTING

Syed Badrul Ahsan

Ownership of the media in South Asia happens to be a factor seriously impacting news reporting and editorial presentation in these times. If in the past - and we speak of particular societies in South Asia such as Bangladesh - an underlying worry was the pressure exerted by the government of the day on the operations of the media, today there is the very broad issue of how media house owners, indeed owner-editors, have been instrumental in shaping policy guidelines for their newspapers. Obviously, there are the prejudices which often come into the perspectives of media owners as they seek to exercise their fiat through the organizations they lead.

There is, in addition to the above, the propensity on the part of media owners to take upon themselves the role of public representatives, especially in circumstances where democratic politics may not be producing the desired results. That is a condition which defines nations where politics is yet to ascend to a stage where parliamentary cooperation as well as healthy political debate remains a non-starter. Against such a background, it sometimes becomes the responsibility of owner-editors or owners of media houses to presume to speak for the country, with results that may not always satisfy the reading public.

The impact of media ownership at different media houses will naturally not be of a uniform degree. In a number of instances, indeed, such impact gives rise to newer difficulties in that questions are raised about the objectives behind reporting that must have the imprimatur of the owners of the media organization. Of course, it is understandable that media owners will pursue a course in line with the policies they set for their newspapers. The danger, though, is that at some point the line between policy and bias tends to get blurred.

AMRULLAH SALEH

Founder Baseej-i-Milli
(National mobilization) and Green Trend
Kabul, Afghanistan



Amrullah Saleh was born in the Panjshir Province of Afghanistan in 1972. He is an ethnic Tajik. In the late 1990s, in his early 20s, Amrullah Saleh resisted the Taliban regime along with the United Front under the command of Ahmad Shah Massoud. In 1997, Saleh was appointed by Ahmad Shah Massoud to lead the United Front's international liaison office at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, where he served as a coordinator for non-governmental (humanitarian) organizations and as a liaison partner for foreign intelligence agencies.

After the September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States, Amrullah Saleh participated in leading intelligence operations of the United Front on the ground during the War in Afghanistan (2001–present) toppling the Taliban regime. After the creation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Saleh was appointed to head Department One of Afghanistan's main intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS). The duties of Department One included liaison with foreign military, diplomatic, and intelligence organizations. In 2004, Amrullah Saleh was appointed as the head of the NDS by President Hamid Karzai. According to the historian William Dalrymple, the ISI and the Taliban "regarded Saleh as their fiercest opponent." In June 2010, Saleh resigned from his position. He subsequently founded the Baseej-i-Milli (National mobilization) and Green Trend as a pro-democracy and anti-Taliban movement and is running it until now.

MEDIA IN POST 9/11 AFGHANISTAN

Amrullah Saleh

In the 1990s, Afghans would largely listen to Western or regional outlets for news, information and entertainment. The most prominent and common channels were the BBC, VOA, DW, Radio France, Radio Mashhad and Radio Liberty broadcasting in local Afghan languages. But at the dawn of the twenty first century, Afghanistan's only state TV channel was shut down by the Taliban and the state radio was turned into a war mongering clerical outlet which spread hate propaganda. The only other TV and radio station with limited reach was situated in Badakhshan province and run by the anti-Taliban Islamic State of Afghanistan.

In 2004, private TV channels started operation. Access to the internet became easier and cheaper, a trend that continues to this date. For Afghans, the idea of private media has had been a dream which seemed impossible to fulfil. The media has always been associated with power. It has always been a tool at the hands of power not a power by itself. While the Constitution of Afghanistan guarantees the freedom of expression within the limits of Islam the article where this is stipulated is very vague and leaves room for interpretation and misinterpretation. This article of our constitution has been misused by powerful people to hurt journalists, create obstacle and some have opted for self-exile fearing retribution.

This is not to say the media has not have had a large impact on our lives. Free media has been instrumental in helping us gain access to some fundamental rights and freedoms. Today in Afghanistan, the free media plays multiple functions in society: as a voice for justice, as tool for influence, as medium for activism, as a tool for strategic change, as a body for monitoring human rights, as a medium for division within society and ironically also as a tool at the hands of the enemy.

Although dozens of newspapers are printed in Kabul and other big cities of the country but they are mostly subsidized. The subsidies for these newspapers come from EU and USAID and other unknown sources. The distribution of the newspapers in most cases is free as the main purpose is to get a particular message out. This situation may change but as it stands now the print media is not something viable.

In conclusion, Afghans see media in their country not only as the biggest achievement of the post 9/11 quasi democracy but also as the fourth pillar of the state. The media has helped in creating awareness amongst Afghans about their country, the region, issues of human rights, gender, and justice and government policies. It has helped them gain confidence and stand up against injustice at different levels. The media has also been a big factor in the political defeat of the Taliban. Each massacre and attack against civilians gets magnified at the national level, generating hatred and resistance against terror and extremism. It has helped Afghans become more united at macro level while retaining more disunity at the micro level.

SIDDHARTH VARADARAJAN

Senior Fellow
Centre for Public Affairs
and Critical Theory, New Delhi



Siddharth Varadarajan is a journalist and senior fellow at the Centre for Public Affairs and Critical Theory, New Delhi. He was until October 2013 the Editor of The Hindu. An economist by training, he studied at the London School of Economics and Columbia University and taught at New York University before returning to India to work as a journalist. He has been a visiting lecturer at the journalism school at the University of California, Berkeley and a Poynter Fellow at Yale University. He was awarded the Ramnath Goenka Print Journalist of the Year for 2008-9, India's premier journalism prize, the Orden Bernardo O'Higgins 'Gran Oficial', awarded by the President of the Republic of Chile, for excellence in journalism and for promoting India's relations with Latin America and Chile, 2006; and the Elizabeth Neuffer Memorial Prize, silver medal, awarded by the United Nations Correspondents Association for excellence in print journalism, for a series of articles on Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency, 2005.

KUNDA DIXIT

Editor/Publisher, Nepali Times
Kathmandu, Nepal



Kunda Dixit is Editor/Publisher of the Nepali Times. He has a Masters degree from Columbia Journalism School, New York, 1985, in Journalism. He is also a Visiting Faculty at the Department of Media and Communications in Kathmandu University 2006-present. He is the co-publisher of Himalmedia from 1995-present where he is overseeing management, marketing, and planning for the group's four publications including Himal Khabarpatrika, Nepal's most widely-read Nepali language magazine and Nepali Times, the country's foremost English publication. Earlier, he was Director, Panos Institute South Asia Kathmandu from 1996-1999, Regional Director, Inter Press Service, Asia-Pacific 1990-95, Regional Editor for Inter Press Service 1986-89 and BBC News Reporter at the United Nations, New York 1984-86. His publications include: Bikas-Binas (Development-Destruction), co-edited with LudmillaTuting Geo-BuchVerlag, Munich 1985, Funny Side Up, Frying Pan Publications Kathmandu 1985 (Collection of satire columns) and A People War (Pictorial retrospective of the ten years of conflict in Nepal) Nepa-laya, Kathmandu 2006.

MEDIA IN THE AGE OF INTOLERANCE AND TERRORISM

Kunda Dixit

There are two extremes of journalism that make it difficult to steer a moderate foreign policy: too little control and too much of it. In dictatorships or controlled democracies, the impact is from the lack of information, disinformation and censorship. In free market economies with western notions of free press, we see a worrying trend towards superficiality and sensationalism bred by over-commercialised media. In an age of political extremism, the moderate middle ground is squeezed by both the left and right. Social media has added a new dimension to this, and on balance, it has a negative impact. While the Internet has levelled the playing field to some extent and connected vast populations, it also ghettotises and fragments the audience, polarising opinion, widening the gap between beliefs, sowing intolerance and anonymous hate speech. The state's response, even in countries with long traditions of free press, is more surveillance and control in the name of countering terrorism. Openness and greater transparency is the answer, not curbing the free flow of information.

Session I I

State of Media in South Asia: Country Perspectives

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

1400 - 1530

Moderator

PREM SHANKAR JHA

Journalist & Author
New Delhi



Prem Shankar Jha took an MA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford University, UK in 1961. After working for five years for the United Nations Development Programme, in New York and Damascus, Syria, he returned to India to pursue a career in journalism. He has been Editor of the Economic Times, The Financial Express, Economic Editor of the Times of India and Editor of the Hindustan Times.

Jha has been a visiting scholar at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (1973); Visiting Nuffield College Oxford (1976-77); Weather head Centre for International Studies, Harvard (1995) and the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard (2006-7). He has also been a Visiting Professor at the University of Virginia (1997-2000) and holder of the chair on the Indian Economy at Sciences-Po in Paris (2007-8).

In 1985-87, he was a member of the Energy Panel of the World Commission on Environment and Development. In 1987, he received the Energy Journalist of the Year award, from the International Association of Energy Economics, for his writing on renewable energy.

He is the author of several books. These include India- A Political Economy of Stagnation -1980; Twilight of the Nation State- Globalisation Chaos and War, 2006; Crouching Dragon, Hidden Tiger: Can China and India Dominate the West?, 2009.

SALEEM KHAN SAFI

Anchor, Columnist and Analyst
Jang Group and Geo TV
Islamabad, Pakistan



Saleem Safi was born in District Mardan of khyber pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan). He did his Bachelors from the University of Peshawar. After his studies he started his career as a reporter for NNI (News Network International) in Mardan. Based on his exceptional skills and keen eye for news, he quickly rose to the post of Beauru Chief of NNI in the key city of Peshawar. As Beauru Chief he was covering all of khyber pakhtunkhwa, FATA and Afghanistan. He was one of the youngest people ever to hold that position. After a very successful and impactful time as a journalist he started writing columns for national newspapers. From 2000 to 2008 Saleem's columns in Daily Mashriq, Daily Aaj and Daily Pakistan were not only widely read but widely hailed as bringing facts and in depth coverage of an emerging situation in the pre and post 9/11 scenario. Pakistani politics, foreign policy, Afghanistan and socio religious issues have all been discussed by him through his writings in more than one thousand columns. His in depth understanding of the issues in the region made him a valuable reservoir of knowledge especially in the post 9/11 context.

In 2004, Saleem's first book, *Afghanistan: The Role of US, Taliban and Pakistani Religious Parties* received wide spread acclaim and he became a successful author. He is in the process of writing his second book. Saleem hosted his own prime time Pushto talk show, *Jirga* from PTV Peshawar from 2002 to 2004. At the end of 2008, he joined Pakistan's largest media group Jang and Geo TV as an anchor, columnist and analyst. He is currently hosting a show with the name of *Jirga*, and writes in the *News* and *Jang* with the same name.

He has conducted hard hitting interviews of many national and international leaders and stakeholders in the region such as Nawaz Sharif, Pervez Musharraf, Asif Ali Zardari, Hamid Karzai, Fazal-ur-Rehman, Gulbadin Hikmatyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Abdullah Abdullah and other political, religious and jihadi leaders.

DILRUKSHI HANDUNNETTI

Lawyer and Journalist
Colombo, Sri Lanka



Dilrukshi Handunnetti is a multiple award-winning journalist who counts over two decades of mainstream journalism. A lawyer by training, she has specialized in investigative reporting, in addition to international affairs, parliamentary/political reporting and column writing. In the recent years, she has tabled in reporting and analyzing South Asian affairs with strong focus falling on Indo-Lanka relations. In addition to holding a senior position with the Ceylon Today newspaper, she contributes to a number of international outlets including Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), Reuters Alertnet, SciDevNet, HimalSouthasian and Down to Earth. She won the Mervyn de Silva Journalist of the Year - 2012 Award for excellence in journalism. Besides writing, Handunnetti continues to find time to lecture and train journalists, here and abroad.

PROMOTION OF JINGOISM IN THE REGION BY THE MEDIA: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

Dilrukshi Handunnetti

The defeating of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), one of the most ruthless terrorist organizations banned in several countries, resulted in serious alterations to the country's political power play, with clear ramifications on the country's relations with the rest of the world, in particular, nations within South Asia.

With the western world and Sri Lanka's closest neighbour, India, repeatedly questioning Sri Lanka's human rights record in the aftermath of the war, fuelled by strong concerns linked to the absence of a genuine reconciliation process, seemed to have contributed to making the Sri Lankan Government protectionist in approach, offering no explanations but defiantly insisting on the correctness of its own approach.

The Sri Lankan Government has skillfully leveraged on the victory over Tamil Tigers to project an image of strong leadership that could withstand any form of adversity, making it an administration that is politically invincible. It is in this backdrop that Sri Lanka's application of chauvinism to external affairs should be viewed and the contribution by the Sri Lankan media to the same, in turn, strongly influencing social attitudes within and beyond the shores. The result had been not just a passive endorsement of the government's belligerent nationalism but one that systematically produced unabashedly biased media that sought to converge opinion to the benefit of the current regime, with scant respect for good neighbourly relations that Sri Lanka for decades had strived to maintain.

This paper seeks to take a deeper look at how the Sri Lankan media influenced foreign policy in the promotion of aggressive nationalism, contributing to the growing tension with certain countries in the region whose friendship Sri Lanka has traditionally relied upon.

IBRAHIM WAHEED

Former Election Commissioner

Male, Maldives



Ibrahim Waheed has worked with the Maldivian Government and as a statesman for 32 years in jobs and assignments including functioning as: Teacher, Majeediyya School, Maldives, Educational Director at Non-Formal Head (and Founder) of Dept. of Public Examinations and Director/ Director General, Ministry of Information. He has a degree in English Language/Linguistics, from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and has a Certificate in Educational Assessment and Certificate in Information Technology, Cambridge, UK.

Amongst his political and state assignments, Mr Waheed has been Member, Advisory Council to the President of the Republic, Official Government Spokesperson (first ever), Deputy Minister of Finance and Treasury and Commissioner of Elections. He has been a presenter at Television Maldives on part-time basis and also Member of National Center for Linguistics and Historical Research. He has been Government/Country Representative at various international conferences, meetings and workshops.

Mr Waheed is the co-Founder and Executive of 'Ecocare Maldives', one of the largest environmental NGO's in the Maldives. He has been regularly contributing to many dailies/periodicals in the Maldives and won various national and international awards including India's Sahitya Akademi Munshi Premchand Fellowship Award in 2008 and the SAARC Literary Award in 2011 (in the area of Creative Writing).

MALDIVIAN MEDIA: OWNERSHIP AND ORIENTATION

Ibrahim Waheed

The paper takes a brief look at the history, geographical location, and geo-political significance of the Maldives in the region and surveys the existing modes of usage of media in the Maldives. It focusses on the use of the vernacular vs. use of the English language and other foreign languages in media channels in the Maldives.

Looking at the current status of traditional and non-traditional media in the Maldives, the paper talks about forces influencing the media / ownership of media in the Maldives, including political issues, reporting trends etc. It makes observations on current legislation and regulations regarding media in the Maldives, the role of the Maldives Broadcasting Commission, the national vs. private media issue and assesses the regional and international impact of Maldivian media.

The paper also dwells on regional harmony, peace and accord vis-à-vis the media, taking into account Maldivian culture, language and faith issues from a regional point of view- the 'nation' vs. 'our world' conundrum. It touches upon fragile regional realities, still mentioned in euphemisms, and often en passant, from the point of view of the Maldives being at the crossroads of the Indian Ocean. It seeks to answer whether the media can play a more active, positive and constructive role in addressing these issues. The paper makes suggestion on what the media can do and how it could play a more pro-active role to preserve regional harmony, peace and accord.

Disclaimer: *The points of view presented, questions asked, and suggestions made in this paper are solely those of the presenter who does not formally represent any state, government, political party or any other organization.*

KABERI GAYEN

Professor of Mass Communication and
Journalism

University of Dhaka, Bangladesh



Dr. Kaberi Gayen is a Professor of Mass Communication and Journalism in the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Professor Gayen graduated from the University of Dhaka, and obtained her Ph.D from Edinburgh Napier University, UK in 2004. Her areas of interest include Critical Theory of Media; Analysis of Social Network and Social Capital; Gender; and Film Theory. She has written extensively in scholarly academic journals, and has delivered lectures in numerous academic seminars and conferences worldwide. She has visited many countries as visiting research fellow and visiting professor. Dr. Gayen is the author of two books: *Modelling Influences of Communication* (2009), and *Construction of Women in the War Films of Bangladesh* (2013).

DOES MEDIA OWNERSHIP REALLY MATTER?

Kaberi Gayen

The media possesses the capability to inform, educate and persuade people about any or certain things. It is quite evident that media can and does set the agenda to manufacture people's consent about almost anything. No doubt that this invincible capacity is often used to shape a nation's collective impression about other countries. However, media are powerful tools through which we get accustomed to 'the ideas of the ruling class' and become familiarised with 'the ruling ideas'. The media is often used as the 'ideological state apparatus'. The symbiotic relationship of political power, ideology of invested capital in media and the state policy run the mechanism to hoard the consent of people about a targeted agenda. Broadly, main-stream media normally complies with the country's written foreign policy regarding other countries; however, there always remains a section of media that does not conform with the grander policy of the state, or a political force may come into power and bypass the state policies in place via the exertion of media. Therefore, media ownership is vital and works as the interface between the power and the people. Considering this vital role, the aim of this paper is two-fold: first, to explore the media ownership pattern in Bangladesh, and if it has any influence in the treatment of regional issues; second, to put forward a framework to improve regional understanding through media. The paper suggests reducing the knowledge gap of 'social culture' and 'political culture' amongst the nations of the South-Asian region may improve regional understanding. A social network approach among media of different countries of this region may strengthen the embedded social capital of trust, commitment and development, and thus outsmart that media which works against this spirit.

Key Words: *media ownership, regional understanding, social culture, political culture, social network approach, social capital*

TENZING LAMSANG

Editor-in-Chief

The Bhutanese

Thimphu, Bhutan



Tenzing Lamsang is the Editor-in-Chief of the The Bhutanese. The Bhutanese newspaper is known primarily as a paper which focuses on serious journalism that aims to influence not only readers but also government policy. After graduating from St. Stephen's College (Delhi University) with History Honours in 2006, he worked as a reporter in the Indian Express newspaper in Delhi from 2006-2008. Between 2008 and 2010, Tenzing joined Bhutan's national newspaper Kuensel as the Chief Reporter. From 2010 to mid-2011, he was the News Editor of Bhutan's first Business Paper Business Bhutan after which he left to launch 'The Bhutanese'. It was here that he won Bhutan's best investigative journalist award in 2010. The Bhutanese has been at the forefront of the Bhutanese media breaking not only some of the biggest stories but also delving into several sensitive issues. TenzingLamsang is interested in issues of corruption, good governance, economy and business, and strategic issues. As a journalist, he has done several in depth stories on the above topics strengthening the democratic and intellectual discourse in Bhutan. Mr Lamsang is also a member of the SAARC think tank on Right to Information.

THE ROLE OF THE BHUTANESE MEDIA IN BHUTAN'S DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION AND GOVERNANCE

Tenzing Lamsang

The paper focusses on the increasingly important role that the Bhutanese media is playing in Bhutan's democratic process, democratic governance, policy making, fighting corruption and other issues. The Bhutanese media which originally consisted of a timid a government owned National Broadcaster Bhutan Broadcasting Service and National Paper Kuensel until 2006 has now mushroomed into several private papers, radio stations etc. along with Bhutan's path to democracy. The media in Bhutan has now become one of the main players or the movers and shakers in informing and forming public opinion and by doing so it is playing a major role in several aspects of our democratic governance. The media far from being a timid entity has also been able to bring several powerful institutions and individuals to account. The paper seeks to explore this transition and its impact on Bhutan and along the way also gauge media's impact in Bhutan in terms of foreign and defense policy and also nationalism.

The paper will also briefly discuss the nature, issues and challenges of the Bhutanese media and how that can affect coverage and opinions. It will attempt to understand the role of media in the context of larger geo-strategic realities and conditions. The paper will also briefly focus on the coverage of Bhutan and its issues by other SAARC or regional media commenting on the jingoistic role played by some elements of the media in SAARC and its impact. It will also see how the media can play a role in bringing about greater regional harmony, understanding and cooperation.

Session I I I
State of Media in South
Asia: Country Perspectives
(contd.)

Tuesday, October 28, 2014

1545- 1730

Moderator

VINOD SHARMA

Political Editor
Hindustan Times
New Delhi



Vinod Sharma is a journalist of over thirty years standing. He is currently the Political Editor of Hindustan Times, a leading multi-edition English language newspaper headquartered in New Delhi. Sharma began his journalistic career with the United News of India in 1978 and had a stint with “The Week”, an English magazine of the Kerala-based Malayala Manorama Group, before joining Hindustan Times in 1988-89. He has since served the newspaper in various capacities: as its Chief of Political Bureau, Diplomatic Correspondent and resident representative in Islamabad (Pakistan) from 91-94. Essentially a print journalist, Sharma, a frequent traveller within South Asia, is on the panel of expert commentators on domestic politics and South Asian affairs of various television news channels, notably the CNN-IBN, NDTV, Times Now and Lok Sabha TV. He is also a regular commentator on current affairs on the BBC, All India Radio and Doordarshan. A founder member of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA), an “associate body” of media persons from eight SAARC countries, Sharma is currently the regional President of SAFMA. He has been associated with various think tanks and professional bodies and has been on executive councils of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC). He was a member as well of the Indian National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO (INCCU). He is also associated with the World Editor’s Forum.

Myo LWIN

Editor Special Publications
The Myanmar Times
Yangon, Myanmar



Myo Lwin has about 13 years' experience as a journalist at the Myanmar Times weekly business journal. The duties include making yearly plan and production of special publications such as sector surveys/special report, country features of embassy anniversaries. It is multi-tasking involving making story writing, translating, editing, page layouts etc. He has additional 11 years' experience as a reporter cum assistant editor with the state newspaper 'The Working People's Daily' (now the New Light of Myanmar). The duties include features writing, translation and page layouts for international news.

THE STATE OF MEDIA IN MYANMAR

Myo Lwin

Media landscape in Myanmar has been changing quite dramatically in the past few years. That happened along with the democratic transition the country has been going through. The print media, which had been under tight centralized control for nearly 50 years, became much freer after the newly elected government lifted the pre-publication censorship in August 2012.

The licenses to print and publish still need to be approved by the Ministry of Information but there seem to be more publications than ever. Myanmar has now over 400 periodicals, monthlies and weeklies, and about a dozen daily newspapers in the private sector. The government still has three dailies and many other publications but the role of the private sector in the print media is exponentially growing in the last couple years.

Most of the publications are still based in Yangon, the commercial capital, and a few in Mandalay, the second biggest city and the seat of the last Myanmar king. Recent years have seen a few publications appearing in the ethnic areas. Shan, Kachin, Mon and Chin states now have a few weekly publications in their provinces in both Myanmar and their own ethnic languages.

Since the abolition of pre-press censorship in 2012, media has been quite free. Because of the freedom, media is running stories many of which are sensational and emotional. It can be interpreted as good but it also has negative impacts. At the moment, only the print media has been looking free. But the broadcast and electronic media are highlight more on the entertainment than the information.

DANISH KAROKHEL

CEO and Editor-in-Chief
Pajhwok Afghan News
Kabul, Afghanistan



Danish Karokhel is the founding Director of Pajhwok Afghan News, was born in Kabul in 1976. For almost eight years, he has been responsible for the agency's vision and direction; daily production of high quality news stories, photos, and multimedia in three languages for customers in Afghan and international media, wire services, diplomats, researchers and government ministries; the creation of a sustainable revenue stream; and the professional development of Pajhwok journalists.

Danish's career as a journalist began in 1997 when he reported for a series of newspapers published in Pakistan. With a deep understanding of the importance of independent media to Afghanistan's recovery, he returned to his country after the fall of the Taliban to report on the war for local and international media organizations. Danish's nuanced understanding of Afghan politics and culture, dedication to producing news in accordance with the highest journalistic standards and ability to lead, train and communicate with journalists in ways that were immediately relevant to their work led him to establish Pajhwok, a national news agency committed to promoting human rights, holding government officials and elites accountable to the Afghan people, and fostering greater participation in national life.

ROLE OF AFGHAN MEDIA IN PROMOTING REGIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Danish Karokhel

The paper captures development of media in Afghanistan outlining the brief history of the State media, Private media, Foreign media and Jihadi media. It discusses the main characteristics of the media scene there - its evolution not being natural, foreign funded, highly politicized and inhibited by lack of professionalism. The paper also discusses how it influences foreign and security policies and its positive role in elections.

Regarding the role of the Afghan media in promoting regional understanding, the paper dwells upon Afghanistan's membership in regional blocks - Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), SAARC etc. It highlights areas for cooperation: terrorism, drug smuggling, proliferation of small arms, child trafficking, regional trade, environment etc. where media could play a key role in disseminating relevant information. Due to several hindrances- internal political and security problems, Afghan media in general did not take interest in other countries issues. Afghan media is mainly pre-occupied with domestic issues and it also lacks resources and capacity to play a larger role.

Towards the end, the paper suggests initiatives for bringing regional media together, the ongoing initiatives being project-based or limited. It suggests networking/cooperation among leading media houses /news agencies: offices in either countries, regular meeting of the heads of leading media houses /news agencies of member countries for closer cooperation and professional training. The paper advocates collaborative projects among regional media groups for highlighting common issues and taking common positions for promoting understanding and bringing the people in SA closer. This could go a long way in discouraging negative trends that cause hatred and enmity among people in the region.

AHMED ZAHIR MOHAMED

Chief Editor, SunOnline
Male, Maldives



Ahmed Zahir Mohamed is Chief Editor, SunOnline in Male, Maldives since September 2010. Earlier, he has been Executive Editor, Managing Editor with the Haveeru Daily. Before this, he was Administrative Secretary at the Ministry of Education. Ahmed Zahir has completed a Basic Course in Journalism - Department of Information, Male' Maldives and also done a Basic Photography Course with Japanese Volunteers Cooperation. He received training in Investigative Journalism at the State Department, United States of America in July 2006.

Zahir has participated as a Journalist in 1990 SAARC summit at Male and he was among the delegates as a Journalist in the President's visit to Kuwait . He also participated as a Journalist in SAARC seminars on Environment in India. He has been a columnist since 2006 - written a number of articles under the column 'Fasmanzaru' in both Haveeru Daily and Sun Online bringing to light a number of political and economic issues of the country.

Ahmed Zahir is the Founder member and the President of the Maldives Journalist Association. Under his leadership, the association became a member of International Federation of Journalists. Zahir was instrumental in taking training sessions for journalist in the field and represented the country as a journalist in various international forums. He was awarded the Presidential Award - Silver Pen for Journalism in 1993.

SHRUTI PANDALAI

OSD Outreach & Research Analyst
Institute for Defence Studies and
Analyses, New Delhi



Shruti Pandalai is a media professional understanding India's policy challenges at IDSA. She has been a Television Journalist - a News Anchor and Senior Correspondent - with TIMES NOW, a 24 hour English News network by the Times of India group, since its inception till 2009. Part of the core editorial team, she tracked both national politics and international affairs. An academic sabbatical led to her pursuing an MA in International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS, University of London. Here International Security, Diplomacy, South Asian area studies were key research interests. Her research paper at SOAS investigated "the role of the media as an "agenda setter" in the process of policy formulation and has evolved into a larger project at IDSA. This project looks at the Role of Media and Perceptions in India's Strategic Thought and Practice. "Who Sets the Agenda? Does Prime Time Really Pace Policy? The Indian Experience", IDSA Monograph Series (2013) was the first culmination of this project. The Rise of New Media and its Impact on National Security is also theme she works on currently and is working on project for the Ministry of Home Affairs. Great power politics, India's neighbourhood relations and scenario forecasting are her other key research interests. Most of her authored papers can be found at <http://www.idsa.in/profile/spandalai.html>

TRUTH VS HYPE: MEDIA, HYPER-NATIONALISM AND IMPACT ON PERCEPTIONS IN INDIA-SOUTH ASIA RELATIONS

Shruti Pandalai

To say India's relationship with its neighbourhood is complex would be as un-nuanced as it would be simplistic. Majority of the media, like other social and political institutions, carries a historic baggage which has framed perceptions and national narratives into presumptive prisms over many decades. Hence the nationalist grid is the most commonly used lens to view the region's complex, layered history. This constructs the perspectives that mobilize opinions on the present realpolitik - the struggle for resources, territory or identity that are at the heart of conflicts in South Asia. Given this context can media in south Asia (practically) ever act independent of national discourse and its framing of national interest? When do the lines blur between jingoism and national interest and how has the Indian state responded to the rise of hyper-nationalism? While there is no dispute on the role of the media in mobilizing opinion on matters of national interest, why is it suddenly being perceived as an agenda setter on matters of foreign policy? Is this influence being overestimated given the often episodic nature of coverage and lack of public interest beyond events? Is this impact or influence independent or contingent upon conditions? Many within the media have questioned the assessment that they bear the responsibility of carrying bilateral or neighbourhood relations forward. How do we deal with this dilemma? Why has public diplomacy not managed to bridge perceptions in the region? Regional media initiatives have rung hollow despite the good intentions they were conceived with, what are the limitations these platforms face? Finally can we really expect the media in South Asia to provide alternative narratives when attempts to go beyond established frameworks run the risk of being seen as anti-national or

sedition? The intolerance of dissent is a new reality of media in South Asia which is increasingly corporatized and burdened with vested interests.

This paper attempts to navigate through many of these issues and argues that mass media impact on foreign policy is short term and episodic and dependent upon specific conditions, but runs the risk of polarizing public opinion in an attempt to homogenize the framing of national interest. It offers no instant solutions but makes a case for more in-depth reporting and increased government transparency to facilitate narratives that go beyond the stereotypes of security dilemmas and historical baggage and reflect the commonalities in aspiration of the new generation of south Asians. The new government in New Delhi has managed to usher in, at least symbolically, a renewed sense of hope for better relations in south Asia. Can the media while cheering from the sidelines also offer critique and follow up on the deliverables constructively in each of these relationships, remains to be seen.

Session I V
Influence of Media on
Foreign and Security Policies
of States

Wednesday, October 29, 2014

1000- 1130

Moderator

COMMODORE C. UDAY BHASKAR (RETD.)

Director, Society for Policy Studies
New Delhi



Commodore C. Uday Bhaskar, Director, Society for Policy Studies, New Delhi retired from the Indian Navy in early 2007 after 37 years service. He is a recipient of the Vishist Seva Medal (VSM) and the Prime Minister's Letter of Commendation. He was till recently Director, National Maritime Foundation (2009-2011) and earlier with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi from 1989 where he served as a Senior Fellow, Deputy Director (1996-2004) and later as Director of the Institute till late 2005. Subsequently, he was appointed Member-Secretary of the Government of India Task Force on 'Global Strategic Developments' - a report submitted to the Prime Minister of India.

Bhaskar was Editor, Maritime Affairs and Strategic Analysis; and is on the Editorial Board of Contemporary Security Policy (USA). He has edited books on nuclear, naval/ maritime and international security related issues; and has contributed over 60 research articles to journals in India and abroad. Bhaskar is President, Association for Middle Eastern Studies, New Delhi and a Council member of the Takshashila Foundation. He is a regular contributor to the print and audio-visual media and is a columnist for Reuters, Daily News and Analysis (DNA) and Dainik Jagran - India's largest circulating Hindi daily. Bhaskar also hosts a current affairs program on Doordarshan - India's largest TV network.

LAKSHMAN F. B. GUNASEKARA

Journalist and Political Analyst
Colombo, Sri Lanka



Lakshman Gunasekara is a professional journalist, political analyst, social activist and, communications consultant in a range of social action areas including gender issues advocacy, environment and disaster management, and, ethnic conflict resolution. Formerly Chief Editor of the 'Sunday Observer' newspaper (1999-2004), he now freelances while serving as the Sri Lanka Correspondent for The Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper of Japan (since 1992). Beginning his journalism career in 1978 in the Sun/Weekend newspapers, Sri Lanka, he later served as News Editor in The Island and Sunday Island newspapers before joining the founding team of The Sunday Leader newspaper as its first news editor. In the early stages of the ethnic war, he studied ethnic bias in the Sri Lankan news media in research project with the Marga Institute (1981-84). More recently, he was coordinator/editor of Vimarsanam-Vimansaa, a website monitoring the post-war reconciliation process in Sri Lanka run by Young Asia Television, Sri Lanka.

A founder-member of the Free Media Movement and one-time FFM secretary and trustee, he is a founder-member and past President of the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA, affiliated to SAARC) and remains President of the SAFMA Sri Lanka Chapter. He has taught journalism at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka College of Journalism and other institutions and, lectured at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai.

NEWS MEDIA RE-PRESENTATION AND AGENDA-SETTING IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS: THE CASE OF SRI LANKAN POPULAR ATTITUDES TOWARDS INDIA

Lakshman Gunasekara

The mass communication media, including the news media, has long been recognised as playing a critically influential role in setting popular social and political agendas at local, national and global levels. What are the dynamics of this social communicational function? How do we see these dynamics at play in the Sri Lankan context? What are its effects on Sri Lanka's international relations in South Asia, especially in relations with the regional hegemonic power, India?

The news media industry functions by 're-presenting' popular attitudes - perceptions, desires, fears, and interests - to its audiences in terms of mass scale social communication dynamics that go to form popular consensus at different levels of public discourse. Politicians and the political class function electorally by mobilising their support on the basis of their 'popularity' as articulators of the 'public interest' either in terms of a national consensus or sub-national group interests. Foreign policy is rationalised on the basis of this articulation of public interests by the popularly elected government.

The case of the Sri Lankan news media's 're-presentation' of public attitudes towards Tamil Nadu political leader J. Jayalalitha is an example of this function of production and re-production of public discourse on Sri Lankan relations with India. In this context, a specific section of the national press is examined as an important actor in the principal internal political dynamic of the country that powerfully influences its foreign policy, namely, the ethnic conflict.

KHIN MAUNG SOE

Senior Lecturer
Chindwin College
Mandalay, Myanmar



Khin Maung Soe is senior lecturer responsible for teaching Rhetoric (Presentation, Public Speaking and Project Report Writing) for both the IFC and HND courses at Chindwin College Mandalay and Yangon, which has affiliation with University of Sunderland and University of Volverhampton in the UK through the Tyndale Group in Singapore. He has done a Certificate course in Book-keeping and Accounting (LCCI) and Journalism and has done training in AEC (ASEAN Economic Community), School of Administrative Studies, Thailand. Under the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFATA) Business Development Exchange Project, ODI, he has been carrying out research on the potential for business engagement in skill development. Khin Maung Soe has also contributed news stories and articles to the weekly News and Business Periodical (The Myanmar Times).

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE IN MYANMAR

Khin Maung Soe

The ties between Myanmar and India date back to the time immemorial. The State of media during the past was quite different from what it is today. In a changing geo-political context, both India and Myanmar need to play complementary roles to achieve strategic goals by realigning their foreign policies to contribute to the national, regional and international peace, security and prosperity. To this end, the role of media in shaping foreign policy discourse in Myanmar has become an issue of paramount importance.

DAWA PENJOR

Executive Director
Bhutan Media Foundation
Thimphu, Bhutan



Dawa Penjor is based in Thimphu and is the Executive Director of Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF). BMF is a non-profit, independent organization established under a Royal Charter in February 2010 with the aim to sustain democracy by developing the Bhutanese media, through initiatives to build Journalistic Excellence, promote Media Innovation, support promotion of Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Information, and Freedom of Press. Prior to joining BMF, he worked for over ten year with the Department of Information and Media, Royal Government of Bhutan as a research officer, Sr. Information and Media Officer and Head of the Media Relations Division. Dawa has been one of the keypeople in the development of information and media sector in Bhutan. He not only assisted in setting up the Department in 2003 but has been instrumental in developing numerous policies and program for the information and media sector in Bhutan. He worked as a core member on the drafting committee for the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Act (2006), Policy Guideline on Information Sharing (2006), the Bhutan Government Web Portal (www.bhutan.gov.bt), the Position Classification System of the RGoB (2007), Right to Information Bill (2012) and Bhutan eGov Master plan (2013). Dawa has a Masters in Public Administration (Honors and Outstanding Student Award) from the University of Texas at El Paso, USA and also a Diploma in Development Journalism from Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), New Delhi (Recipient of United News of India Award, 2007).

THE ROLE OF BHUTANESE MEDIA IN AMALGAMATING SOUTH ASIA: MEDIA'S QUEST FOR A HAPPY SOUTH ASIA SOCIETY

Dawa Penjor

Home to more than 1.67 billion people (World Bank, 2013), the South Asia region is extremely rich in natural resources with huge economic potential. Yet we have millions of people living in extreme poverty. It is a land interconnected not just by geography but also socially, historically, culturally and economically. Yet we do not trust one another or cannot seem to find a common ground for mutual progress despite creating bodies such as SAARC for solidarity and progress. Media has been in the forefront in transforming South Asia and showcasing to the world of our triumph and challenges. The media landscape of South Asia presents a diversity of private, political and governmental, and of religions and faiths ownerships. Number of media outlets in SA continue to grow and at the same time SA is rated as one of the most dangerous work region for journalist. In 2012, 22 journalist in SA lost their lives in the line of duty. In light of the significant socio-economic and polity changes, it has undergone in the past few decades, what do we foresee for South Asia by 2020? What is the role of media in this transformation? How do we build ONE SA media that would minimize on our difference and instead create harmony and peace and promote humane progress within our nations? This paper explores the above questions by looking at the development of media in Bhutan and how it is changing its role from that of development journalism or being the ally of the state to that of a watch dog or the fourth estate. It also looks at the implications of the changing media environment in Bhutan and its relation and role in contributing to South Asia's common interest of promoting peace, stability, amity and progress. At the end of the paper, in order to build a healthy SA media environment to be able to achieve the common SA interest, Bhutan's pursuit of the Gross National Happiness is offered as a strategy.

DEEPAK ADHIKARI

Journalist
Kathmandu, Nepal



Deepak Adhikari is a Kathmandu-based journalist. In a career spanning over a decade and half, he has covered socio-political issues of Nepal including the peace process following the end of decade-long Maoist insurgency, human rights, environment, mountaineering and geopolitics. His work has appeared in Time magazine, The Caravan magazine, Himal Southasian magazine, Al Jazeera English, Nikkei Asian Review magazine, among others.

From November 2010 to February 2014, he served as Nepal correspondent for Agence France-Presse (AFP), the global news agency. Prior to joining AFP, he worked for Kantipur, Nepal's largest-selling newspaper as a reporter and editor. Between 2004 and 2008, he worked as reporter at Nepal Weekly magazine, producing investigative reportages on human trafficking, organ trade and sex trafficking, that highlighted socio-economic issues of Nepal. Adhikari was an Alfred Friendly Press Fellow in 2008. He has translated a biography of Nepal's pioneering conservationist from English to Nepali.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE IN NEPAL

Deepak Adhikari

This paper attempts to explore the role of media in shaping foreign policy discourse in Nepal. While an attempt to trace out the history of Nepal's foreign policy and the influences of the media in formulating it is well within the paper's scope, it primarily focuses on more recent phenomena. Nepal today stands at a very critical juncture of its history. It is in a prolonged process of charting a political future. Since the end of the Maoist insurgency in 2006, Nepal has been struggling to draft a constitution through a Constituent Assembly and complete the peace process. Surrounded by two giant neighbors, India and China, Nepal is also on the cusp of redefining its foreign policy aimed at strengthening its ties in the immediate neighbourhood and expanding its reach in the larger world.

Over the years, Nepal's media, whose professional journey began only in the early 1990s following the restoration of democracy, have been at the vanguard of the country's quest for democracy and stability. In this context, the main point of this paper is that Nepal's media have played significant role in shaping and influencing foreign policy discourse and debate in the country, but the fact remains it is still a young industry and its members who are learning on the job have a long way to go in delivering its full impact. The Nepali media have failed to engage readers through reportages on foreign policy issues. It has also shied away from publishing more rigorous, well-researched opinion pieces that help policymakers see things from new, fresh perspectives.

Though the two neighbours, India and Nepal, get lion's share of coverage in Nepal's media, it has hardly gone beyond covering bilateral visits, parliamentary hearings of the ambassadors- designate and activities of the foreign missions. But as was apparent during the recent visit of

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Nepali media can play a positive role in dispelling the distrusts and building cordial relations. The paper examines how the Nepali media shaped opinions and helped allay fears about the deals between India and Nepal after Modi's maiden trip. The paper purports to incorporate a case study based on the coverage of Modi's visit by three mainstream daily newspapers. This sheds light on how the historic visit was played out in the Nepali media and what role it played in shaping the foreign policy discourse. Nepali media impact on Nepal's foreign policy mandarins and the public is huge, but it is yet to exploit the full potential when it comes to influencing foreign policy in the country.

Session V

Panel Discussion:

**Can Media Play a Role in Promoting
Regional Understanding?**

Wednesday, October 29, 2014

1145- 1330

Moderator

CHANDAN MITRA

Member of Parliament
Editor and Managing Director
The Pioneer
New Delhi



Dr. Chandan Mitra, second term Member of Parliament, is Editor and Managing Director of The Pioneer. As Member of Parliament, Dr. Mitra is the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2008. Dr. Mitra has served in senior editorial positions of leading national publications such as The Statesman, The Sunday Observer, The Times of India and the Hindustan Times. He appears frequently on major national news channels as a political commentator. The Pioneer Group, of which he is the Chairman, publishes Rail Bandhu, on-board magazine of Indian Railways, the world's largest railway network and Exotica, a lifestyle magazine for top hotel chains. An alumnus of La Martinere Kolkata, St. Stephen's College, Delhi and Oxford University, he has authored several books including "Corrupt Society". He was first nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the President of India in 2003 and for his second term, was elected to the same House from Madhya Pradesh as a BJP nominee in June 2010.

NITIN GOHKALE

Security & Strategic Affairs Editor
NDTV, New Delhi



When not reporting for India's leading broadcaster NDTV, Nitin Anant Gokhale is busy with writing, lecturing and making documentaries. An authoritative defence analyst, media trainer and a multi-media reporter who started his career in 1983, Gokhale has worked across web, print and broadcast mediums over the last three decades. He has a rare distinction of living and reporting from India's North-eastern region for 23 years.

In his reporting career, Gokhale has reported the Kargil War, the Eelam War IV in Sri Lanka for three years and different insurgencies from Kashmir, North-east and Maoist-hit areas.

Author of four books on insurgency, war, military and demography, he regularly teaches and lectures at India's National Defence College, the Army, Navy and Air Force War Colleges, Defence Services Staff College, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, the Intelligence Bureau's Training School and the College of Defence Management.

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Dr. Priyanka Singh is Associate Fellow at Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi. She holds an Honours degree in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi and a Ph.D from University of Lucknow. Her Ph.D thesis was titled “Indo-US Relations in the Last Decade - 1990-2000: Shifting Paradigms”. Her broader research interests include Indo-US relations and US engagement in Pakistan. She joined IDSA in 2007 and is associated with the South Asia Centre.

GULBIN SULTANA

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Gulbin Sultana is a Research Assistant with the South Asia Centre in IDSA. She completed her B.A (Hons) and Masters in Political Science from Indraprastha College, Delhi University. She has done her M.Phil on “India’s Naval Support to Sri Lanka and the Maldives” from South Asian Studies Division of School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Currently, she is working on her doctoral thesis on “Sri Lanka’s Maritime Security”. She has also done PG Diploma in Human Rights. Before joining IDSA, she worked with the National Maritime Foundation and the United Service Institution of India. She closely observes politico-economic developments in Sri Lanka and has travelled widely in Sri Lanka as part of her research at IDSA. Her latest paper (co-authored), “Mahinda Rajapaksa’s India Policy: Engage & Countervail” was published in *Strategic Analysis*, Routledge, 37(1), January 2013.

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Dr. Yaqoob-ul Hassan is a Research Assistant. He has done his Ph D from Jamia Millia Islamia and his thesis is titled: "Pakistan-US Relations after 9/11: An Analytical Study". Before that, he studied for his Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Kashmir.

He was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Istanbul University, Turkey, where he worked on a paper titled: "Clash of Islamic and Secular Identities: A Comparative Study between Pakistan and Turkey". His areas of interest include International Relations, South Asia, and Political Islam.

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