

A national regulatory authority media essay

[Media](#)



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Introduction

The media in Pakistan dates back to pre-partition years of British India, where a number of newspapers were established to promote a communalistic or partition agenda. The newspaper Dawn, founded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and first published in 1941, was dedicated to countering "Anti-Muslim propaganda" which was rampant in The Hindu newspaper and promoting for an independent Pakistan. The conservative newspaper, Nawa-i-Waqt, established in 1940 was the mouthpiece of the Muslim elites who were among the strongest supporters for an independent Pakistan. In a sense, Pakistani print media came into existence with a mission to promulgate the idea of Pakistan, which was seen as the best national option for the Muslim minority in British India and as a form of self-defense against suppression from the Hindu majority[1]. The journey of electronic media development in the country begins from 14 August 1947, when Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation was formed. At independence Pakistan possessed three radio stations; at Dhaka, Lahore & Peshawar. A major programme of expansion witnessed new stations opened at Karachi and Rawalpindi in 1948 and a new broadcasting house at Karachi in 1950. This was followed by further stations at Hyderabad (1951), Quetta (1956), a second station at Rawalpindi (1960) and a receiving centre at Peshawar (1960). In October 1998, radio Pakistan started its first FM transmission. Since the liberalization of the broadcast sector in Pakistan in 2002, the media landscape in the country has entirely changed[2]. From one state-run television channel to more than 71 satellite television channels and from one Radio Pakistan to more than 100 FM radio stations, the broadcast sector has

increased exponentially over the past few years. The regulations were introduced with the aim of providing an enabling environment for the promotion of an independent and free media. The regulatory framework has managed to improve the choice available to people with regards to news and current affairs. Nevertheless, the very objective of promoting independent and free media to foster a democratic society is not very visible. A variety of issues have been hampering the capacity of the regulatory body, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), to promote an enabling environment for the development of such media. This paper is an attempt to highlight and explain the issues and problems faced by PEMRA. The paper also aims at exploring various options to address the issues and problems in a just manner.

Aim

To analyze the prevalent media environment and relevance of PEMRA as a regulatory authority with a view to recommend effective regulation measures applicable to Pakistan for enhancing of its efficiency.

Scope

The paper will focus on following essential aspects:-

Part – I (Media Landscape of Pakistan)

Salient Features of Media Environment. Ownership and Control of Media.
Broadcast Media Regulations with a Focus on PEMRA.

Part – II (PEMRA as National Regulatory Body)

Organizational Structure and Functions. Major issues and challenges.

Part – III (Analysis - Role of PEMRA)

Conclusions from Prevalent Media Environment. Exploration of Practical Answers and Resolutions. Need for Enabling Regulatory Environment.

Part – IV (Recommendations)

PART – I

MEDIA LANDSCAPE OF PAKISTAN

Salient Features of Media Environment. Pakistan has a vibrant media landscape, which in spite of political pressure and direct bans that they are sometimes subject to from the state; the media enjoys independence to a large extent. After having been liberalized in 2002, the television sector experienced a media boom. Types of Media existing in Pakistan are:-Print News Media.[3]In print media, there are over 952 newspapers and periodicals, of which 761 are in Urdu, 84 in English, 2 in Punjabi, 17 in Pashto, 26 in Sindhi and 13 in Balochi. Major newspaper groups are Jang, Dawn, Nawa-e-Waqt, Express, Daily times, Khabrein. TV News Channels. [4]First television channel Pakistan Television (PTV) was launched in 1964 from Lahore. PTV was the only channel available to view till 1990 till introduction of Network Television Marketing (NTM). However, after liberalization of media in 2002 a lot of influx of private channels was witnessed. Radio. Radio in Pakistan, like television, was under state monopoly until the PEMRA Act of 2002. The state-owned radio Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) and FM-101 has 31 stations and cover 80% of country area with 95. 5 million listeners[5]. PEMRA has issued 138 FM licenses out of which 115 radio channels are functional[6]. Non-commercial campus radios are also present in most major universities across Pakistan.

Internet.[7]Pakistani internet users have been on the rise with accelerated pace; crossing 20 million benchmark with a greater percentage accessing the internet via mobile phones said the Freedom on the Net 2011 report[8].

Over-view of Media Environment

The Pakistani media landscape reflects a multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and class-divided society. There is a clear divide between Urdu and English media. Urdu media, particularly the newspapers, are widely read by the masses mostly in rural areas. The English media is urban and elite-centric, more liberal and professional compared to the Urdu media. More than 40 television channels beam soaps, satire, music programs, films, religious speech, political talk shows, and news of the hour. Although sometimes criticized for being unprofessional and politically biased, the television channels have made a great contribution to the media landscape and to Pakistani society. Radio channels are numerous and considered a very important source of information especially in rural areas. Besides the Urdu/English and Rural/Urban divide, Pakistan media is also divided linguistically with a series of media in vernacular languages, such as Punjabi, Pashto and Sindhi. Ownership and Control of Media. The recent surge in use of modern means of communication and consumption of media content in developing nations such as Pakistan has turned the communication industry into an attractive investment area not only for the domestic entrepreneurs but also for multinational firms, which have invested heavily in telecommunication and broadcasting sectors in Pakistan. Four major groups exist in country along with many smaller investors: The Independent Media Corporation. The Independent Media Corporation is the oldest and largest

media group in Pakistan. It owns 6 newspapers, 2 magazines, a publishing house, and 5 television channels in English and Urdu languages. The Independent Media Group enjoys an overall monopoly in newspaper, magazine, and television sectors in the country and its revenues are larger than the cumulative revenues of other media groups in Pakistan. Waqt Media Group. The group, being the second largest media company in Pakistan, was already into the media industry since 1942 when its founder launched Urdu language newspaper, Nawa-i-waqt, from Lahore. The group managed to seize 11 % of the total advertising revenue in the country for its newspapers, 14 % for its magazine, and 3 % for its television channel during fiscal year 2009-2010[9]. Pakistan Herald Publications. The Herald Group of Publications (PHP) owns Dawn, which is the largest English Newspaper of Pakistan enjoying widespread influence among policy-making circles. The group also owns 2 more newspapers, 3 magazines, Pakistan first English language TV channel, and a popular FM radio station. Century Publications (Lakson Group). The Century Publications is a subsidiary company of Lakson Group, which is operative in different countries and shares joint business ventures with large transnational companies. The group's Urdu language newspaper commenced its publication in 1998 and is the 3rd largest newspaper in Pakistan. The Express claims to hold 24 % share of total newspaper circulation in the country[10]. The group also owns 3 television channels, a specialized magazine and an English language newspaper, The Express Tribune, which is published in partnership.

Broadcast Regulation in Pakistan

Liberalizing airwaves and relinquishing existing state-owned monopolies in the media have repeatedly been identified as major steps towards building an enabling environment for free media. Introducing regulatory regimes and issuance of licenses to the private sector is essential for a competitive market and therefore a prerequisite for independent and free media.

Although there is a strong realization that the press/ media should be free from state control, the regulation of the broadcast sector can be justified for many reasons for example:-Airwaves are a ' public good' and governments have a role in safeguarding the public good[11]. ' Wireless communication' necessitates governments' authority over allocation and licensing of broadcasting frequencies[12]. Beside the technological reasons and issue of public goods, media ownership is another core rationale for regulations, as society has a legitimate interest in placing limits on private broadcasting by preventing concentration in the media sector[13]. Democracy and democratic institutions have been struggling in Pakistan due to the derailing of the democratic process by dictators throughout the short history of the country. Out of sixty two years of independence, more than half remained under dictators' rule. Limited sources of independent information and people's lack of access to mass media at the local and community level have played a major role in facilitating dictatorial regimes. Democracy and the democratic process have not been allowed to flourish in the country. The state of affairs can largely be attributed to the state-control of the airwaves and the absence of independent and free media to educate and inform the citizens. Since the inception of Pakistan, the use of airwaves was the sole prerogative of the state; and the private sector was not allowed to operate

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radio stations or television channels. However, the government of Pakistan, under the Pervez Musharraf regime in 2002, decided to liberalize the airwaves of the country and introduced broadcast regulations in this regard. As a result, PEMRA was established in 2002 through an Ordinance. The establishment of the regulatory regime for electronic media can be treated as a huge milestone. Since its establishment, PEMRA has been busy issuing licenses for FM radio and satellite television channels to the private sector. The following part provides an overview of PEMRA and its jurisdiction, powers, and limitations.

PART – II

PEMRA AS NATIONAL REGULATORY BODY

PEMRA

The media has multiple roles in creating an informed citizenry, building public opinion and fostering democratic processes. It is thus essential for the development of a democratic society. An environment that can ensure independent and free media is pivotal. Such environment provides the opportunity for the media to inform and educate citizens, increase social interaction, and shape values suitable to democracy[14]. Considering the significance and role of independent and free media in the promotion of a democratic society, the Government of Pakistan in 2002 decided to liberalize the airwaves of the country – and relinquish the state monopoly – and introduced a regulatory framework to issue licenses for electronic media to the private sector. The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) was established for this purpose under the PEMRA Ordinance, 2002[15]. Organizational Structure[16]Objectives[17]of PEMRA. PEMRA has <https://assignbuster.com/a-national-regulatory-authority-media-essay/>

broad range of objectives to include following:-Improving standards of information, education, and entertainment. Enlarging people's choice of news and current affairs. Improving access to mass media at the local and community level. Ensuring accountability, transparency and good governance. Provide an enabling environment for the promotion of an independent and free media essential for the development of a democratic society. PEMRA Mandate. Comprising of thirteen members including the chairman, PEMRA is mandated to issue licenses to the private sector for broadcast media and distribution stations at international, national, provincial, and local level. PEMRA is authorized to:-Licenses for broadcast media – radio and television. Issue licenses for distribution systems – Cable TV, MMDS/LMDS, and Direct to Home (DTH). Regulate the establishment and operation of the licensees. Until 2002, the Radio Pakistan and Pakistan Television (PTV) were the only major electronic media organizations operating in Pakistan. However, during the 1990s, Shalimar Television Network and FM 100 were allowed to operate as private entities in electronic media in the country. The advent of the regulatory regime in 2002 for private media in Pakistan, started a new era for the broadcast sector in the country. The regulations have opened new avenues of information, education and entertainment for the people of the country. In order to materialize its objectives, since its establishment in 2002 PEMRA has managed to issue licenses for more than 100 FM radio stations and 71 satellite television channels, as well as landing rights to 28 international satellite channels to reach audiences in Pakistan[18], and two licenses for each internet protocol TV (IPTV) and mobile TV. It is important to mention here that, prior to 2002, there were only the state-owned Pakistan Television

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(PTV) and the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) to 'inform, educate, and entertain' the people through the airwaves of the country. During the past few years, PEMRA has managed to improve the choices of people with regards to news and current affairs. Nevertheless, the very objective of promoting independent and free media to foster a democratic society is not very visible. A variety of issues have been hampering the capacity of the authority to promote an enabling environment for the development of such media.

Regulatory Challenges/Issues in the Broadcast Sector in Pakistan

Questionable Autonomy of PEMRA. A thorough observation of the regulatory regime reveals that the issues have intensively and extensively hampered the capacity of the regulator to efficiently work out and effectively implement its plans. Critics have alleged that the space for media has grown; however, media freedom has shrunk for its practitioners[19]. PEMRA itself has acknowledged the gravity of the situation in various documents including its second annual report[20]. Griffin and Price[21] argue that an independent and autonomous regulator without any control by the executive branch of government is desirable. However, in the case of Pakistan, independence and autonomy of the regulator is questionable as the PEMRA law authorizes the Federal Government to issue policy directives to PEMRA. Unlike other utility regulatory authorities, which are mostly linked with the Cabinet division, the Government has linked PEMRA with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOI) in 2007[22]. The MOI exercises the power of the Federal government to issue directives. It is important to mention here that

the Federal Secretary of Information is also a PEMRA board member. This situation puts PEMRA under the complete control of MOI and its independence and autonomy remain subject to the directions of the government. Structure of Legal and Regulatory Framework. The regulatory and legal framework governing broadcast media is based on traditional and old practices of 'policing' rather than 'persuading' the media to abide by the regulations. An example of such policing was the disappearance of private media due to the imposition of a state of emergency by General Musharraf on November 03, 2007. As a result of this action of the then army chief, almost all private television and radio channels went off the air leaving the 160 million Pakistanis only with state-run PTV and Radio Pakistan for information and entertainment. Similar practices of policing the media are still being used to curb media freedom. The situation has led to a trust deficit between the licensees and PEMRA, and media operators have occasionally disregarded the orders of PEMRA. Technological Convergence and Inadequate Media Regulations. Technological advancement has made it possible to use telecommunication networks for broadcasting and broadcasting networks to provide telecommunication services. 'The world is in your hands' as one can access internet, television, and telephone calls through the same handset. Moreover, the same gadget can be used for broadcasting and up-streaming audio and video at the same time. However, PEMRA does not seem to be ready to deal with emerging technological issues and challenges. The issue emerged as a serious one recently, when one cellular phone operator announced the launching of mobile TV[23]. Ultimately, that company had to apply to PEMRA separately for such a license, despite the fact that the PEMRA Ordinance did not have specific

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provisions to grant such a license. In the future, the convergence of technology can pose similar regulatory problems which the current PEMRA law cannot adequately deal with[24]. Media Ownership and Regulatory Deficit. The government has lifted the ban on cross media ownership through the PEMRA (Amendment) Act, 2007. This has allowed print media tycoons to own electronic media outlets. As a result, the market is becoming an oligopoly. Due to mounting media ownership consolidation and concentration, diversity is in decline and new entrants are finding it difficult to compete with big market players. Though the combination of resources of print and electronic media may increase quality in news and current affairs programmes, here is a fear that the permission can ‘ result in a few large firms controlling the majority of information Pakistanis receive’. This can also make it easy for the government to control the media through banning or adding advertising quotas to a ‘ few operators’ in a small media market[25]. Waning diversity of media ownership, consequently, will lead to fading pluralism and result in the control of a few players over the sources of people’s information. The situation is alarming for the semi-literate and illiterate public which mostly depends on electronic media for diversity of information. It is pertinent to mention here that PEMRA has yet to formulate new rules/regulations to monitor and regulate cross media ownership.

Enforcement of Regulations Against Illegal Operations. The lack of enforcing the PEMRA law against illegal radio stations is another serious issue for the broadcast sector. In tribal areas, these illegal FM radio stations are in abundance and they have been used to incite hatred and violence[26]. Such illegal radio stations have much to do with the ongoing instability in the Swat region of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KPK). Due to a variety of factors, including <https://assignbuster.com/a-national-regulatory-authority-media-essay/>

the absence of governmental writ in the areas, PEMRA is not able to enforce its powers to stop such operation. An effort is made by the provincial government of KPK to bring illegal operations within the ambit of the law through entering into a peace deal with miscreants who illegally operate such radio stations.

PART – III

ANALYSIS – ROLE OF PEMRA

Media Concentration and Ownership Control. Establishment of PEMRA profited already existing media groups in Pakistan as McChesney[27] rightly contends that big media are the chief recipient of dividends offered by capitalistic mechanisms of regulation and governments have repeatedly failed to adequately address the problems of media concentration and ownership control. Beyond doubt, regulation serves and protects interests of the elite through media regulation, which leads to a perpetuation of the hegemony and dominance of a few sources of communication over other weak and feeble voices.

Media Groups and PEMRA

PEMRA establishment has benefited Independent Media Group the most and increase in its profits could be attributed to the liberal policies of PEMRA. PEMRA has temporarily banned sports and music channels of one of the group for violating its rules, but the group is resilient in its approach as it has braved victimization during different regimes in the tempest torn history of the country. The media groups would continue to thrive despite frictions with the government as institutions of regulation tend to support larger

companies in capitalist economies. Waqt Media Group was once a staunch opponent of a regulatory regime in late 90's as the management of the group was skeptical of the government's motives behind regulation. But now it is of the opinion that regulation could be used in a variety of ways to facilitate the growth of independent media. The Lakson Group has been successful in effectively channeling its financial position and political clout to directly influence the regulatory policies in the country. At moment they are major stake holders in regulation making of PEMRA.

Exploration of Practical Answers and Resolutions

Autonomy and Independence of the Regulator. The powers of the Federal Government to issue policy directives and the control of MOI put the independence and autonomy of PEMRA at risk. Having control of PTV, PBC and PEMRA, the MOI has, in fact, control over the entire media in Pakistan. The Federal Secretary of MOI is the chairman of PTV and PBC as well as a member of the PEMRA board. This makes him the most powerful person in the media in the country. The government should not interfere in the operation of PEMRA through any policy directions/guidelines and should rather facilitate the establishment of an independent and autonomous regulator. Structure of legal and regulatory framework. For an independent and autonomous regulatory regime to flourish, regulatory boards must be representative, with membership extended to all stakeholders, and must have open and transparent procedures. Interestingly, the current PEMRA board provides representation for some stakeholders such as civil society and the government; however, it does not have representatives from other stakeholders including media and journalists. Furthermore, the existing

board is heavily dominated by ex-officio members and state-representatives. The selection process and criteria is critical, as currently it is the sole prerogative of the President to appoint the chairman, and of the Federal Government to appoint the members of the board. The procedure and criteria lack participatory decision making and arbitrarily authorize the Federal Government to appoint persons of its choice as private members of the board. Besides, the board's role should be restricted only to the licensing and monitoring of the media and should not have control over the content of the licensees. Any kind of content restrictions may develop a trust deficit between the regulator and the operators. The PEMRA law provides 'vague and overbroad' content related restrictions, which seem to 'control' media through such regulations[28]. The amendments in the PEMRA Ordinance in 2007 have further empowered it to put more restrictions on the broadcast media. Such restrictions hamper the capacity of the media to effectively and meaningfully contribute towards the promotion of a democratic process in the country. Technological Convergence and Inadequate Media Regulations. As the convergence of technology has blurred the difference between the telecommunication and broadcast sectors, and as the involvement of more than one regulatory agency in the process increases the cost of licensing and operation and may lead to inefficiency and corruption, many developed countries such as the UK, Australia and South Africa have already taken steps to reduce the number of regulatory agencies[29]. Cross Media Ownership and Regulatory Deficit. The removal of the cross media ban has opened a new debate in the country. Some argue that the combination of resources of print and electronic media may produce quality in news and current affairs programmes. Others fear that the permission can result in a

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few large firms controlling the majority of information Pakistanis receive. McChesney, Bagdikian and Baker argue that cross-media ownership results in concentration of media ownership and promotes 'oligopolistic dominance[30].' Cooper[31] adds that concentration of media ownership undermines the promotion of diverse media and diversity of information. Moreover, the growing concentration of media ownership is resulting in privatization of information[32]. However, Compaine and Elstein believe that cross media ownership does not necessarily result in media ownership concentration as there have been several unsuccessful extensions of media groups in the recent past[33]. Moreover, Mc Quail (1993) and Mc Quail & Siune (1998) refute the argument that there exists an impact of ownership control on content quality and market competition[34]. Rather, as some say, the permission of cross media ownership leads to "improved news and information services" and concentration of ownership is more likely to accomplish the target of pluralistic content as compared to fragmented ownership. As the government has now allowed cross media ownership, it would be quite difficult to turn the wheel backward. Media Education and Research. With the expansion of the media sector in the country, the need for skilled human resources has emerged as a serious concern. Undoubtedly, a skilled and well-qualified workforce plays a pivotal role in building a free and independent media. Unfortunately, the many universities and colleges providing education in mass communication are only teaching print media courses. The universities/ colleges are neither equipped with international syllabi nor with the basic training facilities to handle the burgeoning demand of the sector. However, a few mass communication departments at public

sector universities in the country have taken steps to develop education about radio and television through launching their own stations.

Need for an Enabling Regulatory Regime[35]

The framework for an enabling environment as devised by Monroe Price and Peter Krug attempts to answer the questions relating to such issues which are being faced by media and its governing regulatory regime in Pakistan. The framework mainly focuses on the structure of media and the media market, the rule of law, the legal environment for news media activity, the role of civil society, and education about rights. The regulatory and legal environment relating to news and current affairs media is the main focus of the framework. Forms of Regulatory Framework. With regards to the structure of the media, the framework provides three principal media forms. State Monopoly and Media Control. State authorities directly supervise the media system, and no voice can be heard without the permission or consent of the state. Public Service Monopoly. In this setting, the media (usually the electronic broadcasting system) is in public, not private hands, but the governors of the system enjoy substantial autonomy and are not under the direct rule of the executive or legislative branches of government. Private Ownership. Finally, there is private ownership, usually accompanied by some degree of state regulation, the amount of such regulation varying from state to state and from cycle to cycle. However, the framework requires a balanced approach between private and public service/sector media. A competitive market is seen as a requisite for an enabling environment. The framework acknowledges that restrictions on foreign ownership of media are necessary; however, it considers foreign voices as extremely important for

transition countries and countries where there is a government monopoly or a narrow range of domestic points of view in the media. The framework perceives dominance of a single broadcaster/owner as a threat to minority voices and to opposition views within society. Moreover, it supports equal opportunities to all the voices in the media. Furthermore, the framework necessitates a favorable legal environment for news media operation. In light of the principles of the framework for an enabling environment, as devised by Price and Krug, the broadcast media environment in Pakistan cannot be termed as enabling. The situation is becoming less friendly and less enabling for the media in general. In this situation, there is a need to take immediate steps to develop an enabling environment for the broadcast media.

PART – IV

RECOMMENDATIONS

Autonomy of PEMRA. In order to ensure independence and autonomy of PEMRA, it is necessary to reduce the role of the Federal Government in regulatory affairs and its power to issue policy directives. If necessary, the government through MOI can inform the regulator about the governmental policies; however, these policies must not be binding for PEMRA. The Authority should have the freedom to formulate its own independent policy for the regulation and monitoring of the sector. Representation of All Stake Holders. Absence of participatory decision making, representation of ex-officio stake holders and issues like content restrictions develop a trust deficit between the regulator and the operators. Therefore, the content restriction issues should be eliminated and the law should be brought into conformity with international standard. Moreover, broadcasters should be

allowed to adopt and enforce a self-governing code of conduct instead of government enacted and enforced content restrictions. Organizational Dynamism. By merging the telecom and media regulators, developed countries have formed their communication commissions/ regulators to deal with both sectors in one place. A communication commission that is fully equipped and holds all the required powers, capacities, and authorities can help reduce bureaucratic hurdles in the way of building an independent media. This will also enable the Authority to deal with the issues relating to advancement and convergence of technology in the communication sector.

Cross Media Ownership. As cross media ownership rights have been granted in this situation, it is important for PEMRA to immediately review all its subordinate regulations to see whether they are still effective under the new legislation. Furthermore, PEMRA should initiate the process of re-designing the relevant provisions of PEMRA Rules and Regulations in accordance with the amendments in the PEMRA ordinance. PEMRA should also assess the existing state of media ownership in the print media market and devise categories of print media owners on the basis of their existing market share. Furthermore, PEMRA should revise the rules and regulations to meet the challenges posed by cross media ownership, particularly regarding the responsibilities of the Significant Market Players (SMPs). To provide a level playing field to all players, PEMRA should increase obligations for SMPs. The Office of Communications in the UK and the Federal Communications Commission have already devised various structures in this respect[36]. PEMRA can benefit from these models.

Media Illiteracy. No worthwhile efforts in the domain of mass communication education are existent in the colleges and universities. There is an imperative requirement to equip the

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educational institutions with up-to-date technology and revise their curriculum in accordance with the requirements of the local and international media market. Furthermore, the regulator and international media assistance organizations must initiate training programmes for the capacity building of media workers. Legal awareness and understanding of the regulatory structure as well as of the rights and responsibilities of the media are equally important. Dissemination of Information. There should be selective projection of information at national, international and domestic level, to safe guard country's image at international level. PEMRA ordinance should be revised for content analysis to filter out any content that may negatively project, malign or refute national institutions like the legislative and armed forcesEffective Media Policy. An effective media policy should be drawn for designing a code of conduct for media. PEMRA should play pivotal role in expeditious formulation and implementation of media policy.

Streamlined Regulatory Mechanism. In terms of regulatory mechanism, three processes: self-regulation, state and social regulation need to run simultaneously for effective control of media in areas where it is required. It should pay regard to security, ethics and other sensitivities. Formation of Media Law and Regulatory Department. It is suggested that Media Law Regulatory Department should be formed to help develop a media law and regulatory environment in Pakistan that meets the international standards of fairness, transparency and efficiency. The department should work with Pakistan's burgeoning private media sector, to promote an open, pluralistic media environment. The department should provide technical and legal assistance to the stakeholders, including the broadcast sector regulator, in developing media policy and improving broadcast media environment.

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Interaction with stakeholders. The authority must regularly interact throughout the year with all stakeholders including Government authorities such as the Ministry of Information, Information Services Academy, National Reconstruction Bureau, etc. to pave way for a dialogue on media laws. Law clinic. The authority should hold series of law clinics with licensed and operational broadcasting houses as well as journalism and mass communication departments of universities in Punjab, Sindh and KPK Province, providing in-depth exposure on media laws and the allied regulatory framework. Journalist-Broadcaster-Regulator Interface. The authority should organize interface seminars to build the relationship between journalists, broadcasters and regulators, identifying potential issues between sides. This will help in understanding the challenges of freedom of expression and in assessing the needs for strengthening media regulations by building linkages. Media Law Consultancy. The department should provide regular consultancies to the stakeholders, particularly the private broadcasters and those interested in applying for licenses. The nature of consultancies must respond to queries of broadcasters about their rights and responsibilities, the powers of the broadcast regulator to investigate and inspect stations, the nature of various fees due by stations, etc.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that there is a need for an enabling regulatory regime for media that can ensure the promotion of an independent and free media in Pakistan. Such independent, responsible and free media is highly needed for strengthening democracy in the country, as well as for the sustainability of democratic institutions. However, the current

regulatory structure does not fulfill the requirements of an enabling environment. Governmental intervention in the regulatory business is a serious cause of concern. There is a regulatory deficit in a variety of issues including cross media ownership and media ownership concentration. A trust deficit exists between the operators and the regulator that has led to questions of legitimacy of the regulator. All this requires a thorough revision of the entire regulatory framework and a redressing of the shortcomings and inadequacies therein in the light of best international practices and keeping in view the ground realities.