

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

Role of All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS): Call for a Change

Sajjad Ahmad Paracha

&

Seemi Naghmana Tahir

Federal Urdu University, Karachi

This study explores the institutional role of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) employing the methodology of document study and survey to collect the relevant data from media professionals. The paper finds that APNS as the main organization of newspaper publishers in Pakistan, only apparently seems to be committed to the cause of press freedom and maintenance of high professional standards in the country. The APNS' best efforts were seen only to safeguard the financial interests of the newspapers in case a government tries to introduce a new tax or whenever the APNS wants government to raise the rates of govt. advertisements for newspapers. Not only this, the APNS has also kept mum over the violation of labour laws by its member organizations i.e. large media houses in the newspaper industry.

Key Words: APNS, Newspapers, Media, Pakistan, Media monopoly

Since 1969 it seems that throughout the world there has been a rethinking of many issues concerning the present and the future development of the communication media and of the role, which communication plays in society¹.

In 1969 UNESCO's communication decade well started when a meeting of experts on communication in society was convened in Montreal. At that time, few people were talking about (Media) Policies². In 1975 the subject was being much more widely discussed and it was decided to convene in 1976 the first inter-governmental conference on media policies. That conference brought together the ministers responsible for media in the various countries, exchanged experience on media in relation to economic and social development and considered the formulation, implementation and evaluation of media policies³.

A very pertinent question regarding media policy is that who is involved in its formulation. Media policy, because of its wide scope, requires responsible participation at many different levels: (a) Government executive: Since there is close relationship between the system of Government and system of media, so the co-ordination for endorsement by the highest authority is required (b) legislative bodies: These play an important role in formulating the media policy. (c) Authorities in charge of social and economic planning for allocation of important resources to develop media infrastructures. (d) Individual ministers and their planning boards refer not only to that ministry directly in charge of media resources and their use but also to all other ministries which are involved in some form and are potential user in education, agriculture, and health etc.

(e) Media enterprises: Which produce information and programmes to the media system. (f) Professional organisations: Whose members are involved directly in the media-professional associations, & labour unions etc. (g) the citizens have a direct stake in the media policies. There are different ways in which the citizens may influence media policies through representations, through voluntary organisations etc., the methods for citizens' participation will vary among societies, but its importance cannot be emphasised enough (h) the social scientist can make an essential contribution to the formulation of media policy by supplying both quantifiable and non-quantifiable information on the structure of society as well as on the content and effects of the messages carried by the media⁴.

The role of information resources to accelerate the pace of development in any region has long been emphasized by communication scholars globally. It is widely believed that information provides the key foundation for the development. It has been a popular idea for over four decades that media provides information and knowledge that is vital for social development, and helps solve social, political and economic problems and thus accelerate the pace of development.⁵ Not only this but the changing trends in social economic and political environments globally have raised question about the viability of mass media because it is widely believed that media have a very important role to play in bringing social change. The sociology of mass media, which provides the theoretical framework for the following study is said to have been unable to grasp certain fundamental features of its subject. Some analysts believe that it has buried them, scanted and defined them out of existence, and therefore it has had the effect of justifying the existing system of mass media ownership, control, and purpose. The dominant paradigm in media sociology, according to Daniel Bell is the "received knowledge" of "personal influence, which he believes has drained attention from the power of the media to define normal and abnormal social and political activity, to say what is politically real and

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sajjad Ahmad Paracha at e-mail: drparacha_mediastudies@iub.edu.pk, Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan, Seemi Naghmana Tahir, Department of Mass Communication & Dean, Faculty of Arts.

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

legitimate and what is not.⁶ The representative bodies of mass media which not only frame the rules of the game but also have a direct role in monitoring and implementation of those rules thus may hold responsible for the working of mass media in any society. In the following discussion the role of All Pakistan Newspaper Society will be critically analyzed followed by a survey conducted to seek opinion of media professionals about the powerful forum of newspaper owners in the Country.

All Pakistan Newspaper Society: Introduction and brief history

All Pakistan Newspaper Society is the representative body of newspapers owners in Pakistan. This forum was initially established as Pakistan Newspapers Society, as a provincial body in the early 1950's primarily because of the efforts of the Hameed Nizami and Hamid Mahmood⁷. It functioned in Lahore for a number of years but failed to receive much support or recognition either from the publishers and advertising agencies in general and the authorities, in power in particular.

In 1956 headquarter of the organization was shifted to Karachi where majority publications originated. The organization expanded rapidly with the inclusion of new members from all over the country and was soon able to call itself the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS). Very soon it became a force to be reckoned with in the publishing and advertising world.⁸

The objectives for which APNS was formed are: to act as the central organization of the newspaper industry of Pakistan, to encourage, promote and originate the science and art of journalism and newspaper industry and to produce and publish the necessary literature; to originate and promote improvements in the law, to watch, protect, preserve and promote the rights and interest of newspaper owners; to make rules to govern the conduct of its members and for accreditation and conduct of business to provide penalties for the infringements thereof; to undertake or assist financially or otherwise in litigation affecting the interest of newspaper owners.⁹

All the publication from dailies to monthlies having regular publication may become the associate member of APNS, if the publication applies on prescribed form with specific membership fee and is supported by a two-third majority of the members present in a vote taken in a secret ballot. If membership to an applicant publication is denied, it may apply after six months of rejection with additional information and reasons in support of its eligibility. Such application shall be considered again for membership by the executive committee, but the decision of the executive committee on such second application shall not be appealable. The publication shall have the right to prefer the General body an appeal within thirty days after the rejection of application by the executive committee, which shall be considered at the first meeting held after the appeal is lodged.

Every member publication is bound to provide regular complimentary copies as for daily, 25 separate issues per month for a period of six months; for biweekly, 80 separate issues; for weekly, 40 separate issues and fortnightly, 20 separate issues.

The executive committee forms a scrutiny committee. Every year a scrutiny committee this on its own or on complaint of any member, examines if a certain member fulfils the criteria and present report to executive recommending the expulsion of a member for irregular publication. The executive takes the decision by simple majority, which is appealable in general, body within 90 days.

The executive committee can take a disciplinary action against a member if the member fails to pay subscription or charges due from it or commits a breach of discipline or violates rules or code of standard. Code of standard for acceptance of advertising business states that members shall take all reasonable precautions to ensure that all advertising accepted is legal, honest and truthful and that such advertising is in respect of reputable goods or services, members shall not favour direct advertisers, by giving them better facilities such as lower rates, longer credit periods, preferential positions, commission, discounts or supplying art work at nominal rates etc., however 6.25% discount to direct advertiser and 15% to advertising agencies is permissible. No member can print the advertisement of a client whose business is suspended by accredited advertising agency and also the advertisements of suspended advertising agency cannot be accepted by any member publication of APNS. Executive functions of APNS including the general management and control of business, conduct of relations with and between the advertising agencies and member publications and any other institution or bodies, accreditation of new members and advertising agencies are performed by executive committee. Executive committee is consisted 25 members. Three seats of the executive committee are permanently occupied by *The Jang*, *Dawn*, and *Nawa-i-Waqt* groups of publications. Elections on 21 seats are held among rest of the member publications of APNS.

The break-up of which is as: Karachi and Lahore dailies and periodical have two seats each. Dailies from Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwah (KPK), and Sind excluding Karachi have one seat each. News and views comment periodicals from Punjab/KPK and Sind/Balochistan, regional dailies, and technical papers have one seat each. One seat is occupied for dailies other than Urdu /English language. There are three general seats for dailies and periodicals each.

One member is nominated by the president of the executive committee for one year.¹⁰

The nature of the functions of APNS becomes clearer if we study the rules and regulation that it has adopted for accreditation and conduct of advertising agencies.

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

The society entertains the application for accreditation from an agency which is in active operation for last six months before applying and had placed business of Rs. 1 million with member publication of APNS within one year and has at least five clients two of whom should be fresh and guarantee the business of Rs. 1000,000/- every year in the member publications, produces letters of authorization from the agency's clients indicating their proposed budget for Press advertising in one year, bank guarantee of Rs. 1000,000/- and personal sureties from the proprietor etc. for the liabilities of the agency to member publications.

An advertising agency is first accredited provisionally for one year and then confirmed by executive committee of APNS if it is found to have fulfilled the terms and conditions to the satisfaction. The APNS treats as violation of the society if an agency had made any effort to negotiate for lowering the rates with member publication, or has given any rebate, concession, allowance, free service or commissions earned from member publications to its clients.¹¹

To encourage the competition among advertising agencies, the APNS has evolved Award for best business performance, client services, best copy, best visual design, and public service campaign. Special business award is given to clients of the agencies to encourage them for more business. This practice is continued for many years and many award giving ceremonies have been held so far.¹²

APNS as its objective is to promote standard of journalism, has introduced APNS journalists awards on best investigative reports on economic and social, political, developmental and other issues. Awards on best scoop, interview, column, feature, article, editorial, cartoon and photograph are also given every year.

APNS joins hands with CPNE and PFUJ in struggle for just cause of the Press freedom---- the freedom that suits to their business interest but where APNS feels that the struggle of PFUJ may harm their vested interest or may distort the image of APNS, the member publication do not even publish the statement of the leaders and activists of PFUJ.¹³

Survey Study on Awareness and Perception Regarding APNS

To examine the role of APNS as the professional organization of newspaper owners in Pakistan, the opinion of working journalists seems quite relevant because these are the people who are directly linked to the industry and have a very high stake in the profession. This study is designed to explore and document the respondents' awareness and perception with extra focus on experts' opinion regarding APNS. Keeping in view the nature and requirements of the study, survey research procedure is adopted to explore and document the respondents' perception on the APNS.

In this study the universe is the people working as reporters,

editorial, column & feature writers, free lancers, radio/TV producers & reporters, subeditors of print and electronic media & news agencies, government information departments and teachers of mass communication.

Quota and purposive sampling method for data collection was preferred. Before data collection field coordinators were appointed at different cities of all the four provinces and federal capital of the country. The criterion of selecting the cities was that units of analysis are readily available there due to their jobs in media organizations and other institutions

Due to time limitation and financial constraints it was not possible for the researchers to collect data from large population. Therefore a total of eight hundred printed questionnaires were sent to twenty six field coordinators all over the country, out of those total 411 filled in questionnaires were collected by the field coordinators of which 355 were found to be completed in all respects, thus having a response rate of 44.3%. As a result the sample of three hundred fifty five respondents is obtained.

Table 1

The demographic characteristics of the respondents

1.	<u>Gender</u>	
	Male	88%
	Female	12%
2.	<u>Age group</u>	
	20 - 29 years	29%
	30-39 years	40%
	40 - 49 years	22%
	50 - 59 years	06%
	60 years or above	03%
3.	<u>Province/area</u>	
	Federal capital territory	09%
	Punjab	36%
	Sindh	26%
	NWFP	15%
	Balochistan	14%
4.	<u>Education</u>	
	Matriculation	01%
	Intermediate	05%
	Graduate	21%
	Masters	66%
	M.Phil	04%
	Ph.D	03%

subeditors news editors, chief editors, district correspondents,

The figures in Table 1 show the majority of the respondents' (55%) view that there is monopoly of the press organizations in Pakistan. Almost the same number (53%) is not aware of the fact that Newspapers Employees (Conditions of Service) Act 1973 is enforced in Pakistan. However, a highly significant majority (79%) agrees with the suggestion that number of APNS executive committee members should be increased to ensure representation of all newspapers and magazines of the country. A vast majority of the respondents (86%) agree with the suggestion that number of permanent members of APNS be increased from 3 to include those newspapers which are being

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

published from at least two big cities of Pakistan. Highly significant respondents (79%) agree with the suggestion that newspaper owners should have no political affiliation for the sole purpose to promote and maintain professional fairness and to set good example.

Figure 1
Perception regarding monopoly of the Press Organizations in Pakistan (N=213)

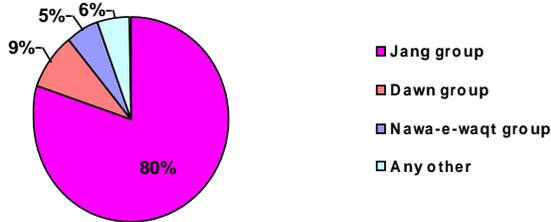


Figure 1 demonstrates that a significant majority of respondents (80%) perceive that there is monopoly of Jang group in Pakistan.

Table 2
Perceptions regarding integrity of APNS (n=355)

	Up to some		
	Fully	extent	Not at all
Represents all newspapers and magazines	26%	37%	37%
Safeguards interests of all the owners of newspapers and magazines	32%	39%	29%
Satisfaction with procedure of membership to newspapers and magazines	13%	31%	56%
Satisfaction with procedure of election for membership of Executive Committee	16%	32%	52%
Satisfaction with procedure of giving awards to journalists	08%	31%	61%
Performing its role for the press freedom	17%	46%	37%
Performing its role for promotion of good journalistic values	09%	47%	44%

The figures in Table 2 illustrate the respondents' split perception that APNS represents up to some extent (37%) the newspapers and magazines of the country, whereas the same number (37%) do not feel that it (APNS) represents all the

newspapers and magazines. Slightly more respondents (39%) are of the opinion that it safeguards up to some extent the interests of all the owners of the newspapers and magazines. Majority of the respondents (56%) are not satisfied with the procedure of giving membership to newspapers and magazines. Similarly, slightly more than half of the respondents (52%) are not at all satisfied with the procedure of election for membership of executive committee of APNS; whereas a significant majority of the respondents (61%) are also not at all satisfied with the procedure of giving awards to journalists by APNS. Less than half of the respondents (46%) opine that APNS is performing its positive role up to some extent for the press freedom in the country and almost similar (47%) are of the opinion that APNS is playing its role up to some extent for the promotion of good journalistic values

Figure 2
Suggestion regarding minimum members of executive council of APNS (n=288)

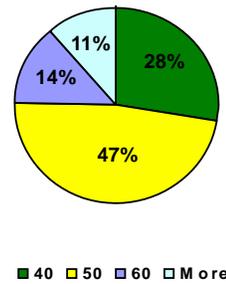


Figure 2 shows slightly less than half of the respondents' (47%) opinion that the number of executive council members of APNS should be extended up to 50 to ensure representation of all newspapers and magazines of the country.

Figure 3
Perception regarding the political affiliation of newspaper owners (n=78)

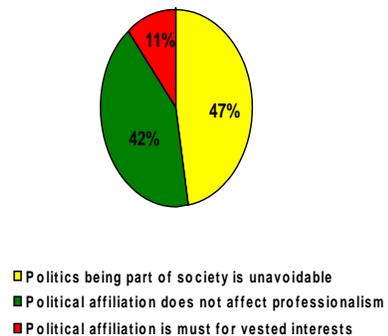


Figure 3 illustrates slightly less than half of the respondents' (47%) opinion that politics being part of the society is unavoidable for newspaper owners; whereas 42% are of the

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

opinion that political affiliation of newspaper owners does not affect professionalism.¹⁴

APNS' Stance on various Issues Confronted Industry

To further explore the role of APNS for the growth of press in Pakistan it will be pertinent to have a look at the stances this body has taken on various issues confronted by the different stakeholders at various points in time; the journalist fraternity, the newspaper industry, government and the consumers or readers at large.

Placed below is a reflection in the light of the various resolutions of APNS over a span of almost 54 years period from 1951- 2004. The following data is taken from the unpublished Ph.D dissertation of Dr. Tauseef Ahmed Khan Associate Professor, submitted to the Department of Mass Communication, Federal Urdu University Karachi.

APNS Resolves/ demands/ condemns 1951- 2004

19th Feb 1951, APNS condemned the policy of distribution of advertisements to the newspapers and the discriminatory attitude of the government towards Urdu press, similarly on 14th March 1951, again demanded withdrawal of taxes on newspapers. On 16th Dec 1951, the forum condemned the government of Punjab for creating hurdles in provision of declaration to daily Nawa-e-Waqt Lahore. In its meeting held on 26th April 1952, APNS demanded withdrawal of controls on import of newsprint and also reduction in increased postage charges for the newspapers. The provision of newsprint remained on the top of the agenda of the meetings of All Pakistan Newspaper Society and in the next meeting held on 16th July 1954, again demanded grant of permission for direct import of newsprint. In the beginning of next year in a meeting held on 4th March 1955, the body demanded the change in license system for newsprint import. In its next meeting on 28th June 1955, APNS criticized the government's procedure of granting advertisements to newspapers. In the subsequent meeting held on 25th July 1955, demanded provision of raw material and electricity to newspaper industry and also stressed on need to devise mechanism for quick transmission of news to the news papers of East Pakistan. In the next meeting held on 3rd June 1956, asked the government to ease out process of newsprint import and on 13th March 1957 not to enforce tax on advertisement revenue. In the subsequent meeting held on 21st July 1957, urged the government to stop discriminatory approach in distribution of newsprint to the news papers of East Pakistan. In a meeting on 29th January, 1958, East Pakistan Newspaper Society demanded withdrawal of surcharge and duties imposed on newspapers and on 24th April 1958, APNS asked the government to withdraw Rs.300 surety deposit demanded from daily Morning News Karachi.

The martial law government on 7th April 1959 confiscated the newspapers of Progressive Papers Limited under Security Act. The newspapers included *Daily Pakistan Times Lahore*,

Daily Imroz Lahore and *weekly Lailo Nehar and Sports Times*. The editor of Pakistan Times Mazhar Ali Khan and the editor of Imroz Ahmad Nadeem Qasmi resigned while the editor of Lailo Nehar Syed Sibte Hassan was dismissed. All three editors were arrested also. This was a very significant event in the press history of the country which badly impacted the industry for decades but APNS remained silent of this onslaught of the press freedom in the country besides the fact that these papers were members of APNS. Commenting on this particular event the deputy editor of daily Jang Karachi Muddasir Mirza said that there was no concept of joint effort for press freedom those days as the closure of these newspapers could have enhanced the opportunities and circulation of other newspapers therefore APNS remained silent on it. On the other hand, APNS rejected the Press and Publication Ordinance 1963 jointly fought against it and compelled the government to soften some of restriction imposed in the first draft of the Ordinance. This forum in its meeting on 5th May 1962 strongly condemned the increased prices of newsprint. It is noteworthy here that the struggle of APNS seems to revolve around safeguarding the business interest of the newspaper industry alone with few exceptions. During the years 1967-68 APNS did almost nothing to safe guard the press freedom so much so that it remained silent on the arrest of Shourish Kashmiri and the closure of his newspaper Chataan by the government. However in its meeting held on 29 June 1966, the forum condemned the arrest of Mr. Taffazul Hussain, editor daily Ittefaq Dhaka and ban on its printing press, similarly during January 1969, also condemned the attacks on the photographer of Pakistan Observer by a mob and on 2nd, Feb 1969 condemned the attacks on newspaper offices in the country in general. Again on March 1970, the body refused to accept the excise duty on newsprint and gave one day strike call on 23-3-1970 and on 29th May 1972, demanded the supply of newsprint at low price. But in its meeting in July 1972, condemned the sanctions imposed on daily Sun and issuance of notices to daily Nawa-e-Waqt Lahore, daily Imroz Multan and daily Jang Rawalpindi by the governments. Again on 29th August 1972, this forum refused to accept the reduced advertisement rates, fixed by the Bhutto government. But in its meeting held on 25th March 1973, condemned ban on daily Jasarat Karachi, also in Sept 1973, condemned actions against daily Hurriyat, daily Jasarat Karachi and Mehran Hyderabad and on 24th January 1974, demanded protection for newspaper workers and offices, on 15th March, 1974, condemned suspension of APP service for daily Pakistan Times. Again on 16th September 1975, expressed concern over increased prices of newsprint and on 16th November 1975, urged government to stop unpleasant relations with the newspaper industry. On 14th April 1977, condemned the attacks on newspaper offices and on 26th October, 1977 the closure of daily Mussawat Karachi. In its meeting held on 30th August, 1978, APNS urged the government to start dialogue with various groups of industry to safeguard press freedom in the Country. Again on April 1982, the body condemned the students' attack on the offices of daily Jang and Nawa-e-Waqt and gave call of strike on 25th November 1982 while demanding judicial inquiry of the incidents of the attacks. In another

meeting held on 30th November 1982, APNS condemned the
ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

pressure of Press Information Department on newspapers and also the use of newsprint quota and advertisements to curb the press. In the beginning of next year on 13th February 1983, the forum reviewed the government press relations and expressed apprehension over the use of advertisements as a weapon which was resulting in financial crises in the industry. During a meeting with federal secretary information General Mujeebur Rahman on 24th February 1983, the APNS delegation agreed on reduction of newspaper pages to control the publication of sensational material, it was decided that newspaper can published advertisements on 50% pages, and will restrain from publication of photos of women folk and from June 1st 1983 onward will stop publishing film editions. In this manner APNS accepted fresh restrictions on press without resistance. In the month of November 1983 the general secretary APNS Hameed Haroon said in a speech that due to illogical system of wages and expenses newspapers have to depend more on advertisements and the government uses it to control the press. In fact he was indirectly pointing towards the problems caused by wage board and that the attempts to increase wages of working journalists eventually result into curtailing press freedom. Next month on 6th December 1983 APNS condemned the attacks on the office of Nawa-e-Waqt Lahore by the students of a madarssah.

From 1981 daily Jang started its Lahore edition which adversely affected the circulation of Nawa-e-Waqt. Majeed Nizami the president of APNS & CPNE and also the Chief Editor of Nawa-e Waqt said in a statement on 17th April 1984 that circumstances for a healthy competition among newspapers do not exist and he would welcome a martial law order for it. The office bearers of PFUJ regretted such a statement from the president of APNS and CPNE and PFUJ president Minhaj Barna and secretary general PFUJ Nisar Usmani said that demanding issuance of martial law regulation to curtail circulation of newspaper is deplorable and it is meant to accept governmental curbs on press freedom. Mr. Minhaj Barna further said that there is no such example in history of press where President of Newspapers society demanded help from a military government just to secure the circulation of his own newspaper.

With the beginning of Movement for the Restoration of Democracy in 1983, the Zia government imposed fresh restriction on press banning the publication of political news in newspapers of the country. On 25th April 1984, Mr. Majeed Nizami the then president APNS invited President General Zia-ul-Haq as chief guest at the annual dinner of the society and in his speech urged the government to lift this ban. He also said that the ministry of information is taking control of the press through press advices. In a meeting on September 1, 1984 APNS demanded the newsprint import permit for daily Amn Karachi, the government had cancelled import permit of daily Amn, which was an anti Zia newspaper. On 15th October 1984, in a joint statement APNS & CPNE demanded the abolition of Press & Publication Ordinance 1963, removal of amendments in defamation law and press advice system and also lifting ban on

publication of political news. There were few instances when APNS raised voice for individual newspapers and some of these are being mentioned here. On December 1, 1984, condemned the banning of advertisements for daily Muslim, on 23rd January 1985 demanded end of pre censorship on daily Amn and release of advertisements for weekly Viewpoint Lahore. Some voices from the forum were raised for the collective good of the industry whether financial or professional; 4th January 1985 condemned 4% surcharge on newsprint, on 8th August 1985, appealed to abolish pre censorship, repeal of PPO and implementation of a unanimous code of conduct. On 12 January 1986 in a joint session of APNS and CPNE the forum demanded abolition of PPO, cancellation of amendments in Pakistan Penal Code and also urged the government to review its policy for distribution of advertisements and news print to the newspapers in the country. On 18th February 1986 Mr. Hameed Haroon president APNS demanded abolition of black laws. On 20th October 1986 the forum, asked the government to lift news print import duty and other taxes. On 28th November 1986, demanded issuance of advertisement for certain newspapers. On 13th March 1988, demanded restoration of advertisements for daily Aman Karachi, daily Muslim Islamabad, Frontier Post Peshawar and Weekly Viewpoint Lahore. On 17th August 1988, General Ziaul Haq died in a plane crash and a caretaker government was formed. This government announced the much awaited abolition of Press and Publication Ordinance 1963 replacing it with Registration of Printing Presses and Publishing Ordinance 1988 which lifted many restriction from the press. The decision was welcomed by APNS. Next year on 26th April 1989, APNS asked the government to withdraw its decision of imposing Rs 3000 per Ton duty on newsprint. On 31st May 1989, appealed to member national assembly to not to support imposition of duty on newsprint. Again on 22nd September 1989, demanded release of Zahid Malik Editor daily Pakistan Observer and abolition of Official Secret Act 1923. Another resolution condemned duty on newsprint, the request was repeated on 3rd October 1989, next week 12th October 1989, condemned the attacks on newspaper offices. On 16th December 1989, condemned the reduction of advertisements for newspapers by 15%. On 18th February 1990, condemned the attacks on the office of daily Haider Islamabad. In view of the increasing violence against the press in the country APNS in the beginning of March 1990, condemned attacks on journalists and newspaper offices in the Country, again in June 1990, demanded the arrest of the murderers of several journalists in the Country and gave one day strike call on 6-06-1990, on 10th July 1990 condemned the governments' attempt to stop advertisement to daily Dawn Karachi. In an effort to reconcile the situation, APNS on 23rd March 1991, met with MQM leadership to make them end boycott of daily Dawn. Again on 16th October 1991 condemned the confiscation of copies of monthly Herald by CIA police.

During the first tenure of Nawaz Sharif government in the country, on 29th July 1991, APNS condemned the reinforcement of newsprint import permit by the government. Later on 28th August 1991, appealed to the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

take notice of threats directed to the press from Sindh Chief Minister Jam Sadiq Ali. In September 1991, condemned registration of case against The News, Rawalpindi in a special anti terrorist court and demanded the withdrawal of the same. On 29th October 1991 APNS gave strike call to newspapers to protest the violence against journalists. The year 1991 proved the worst for the journalists in the country due to increasing incidents of violence against them. On October 1991, condemned the attack and ransacking of the house of Maulana Salahuddin editor monthly Takbeer, on 19th February 1993, the society, condemned the arrest of correspondent of daily Khabrain under Frontier Crimes Regulations. Again on 20th March 1993 APNS appealed to Supreme Court for the release of Shahid Orakzai a journalist from Islamabad arrested under contempt of court. Similarly on 8th September 1993, APNS condemned the police torture on photographer of daily Jang. On 5th October 1993, condemned the governments' policy of the distribution of advertisement to newspapers, while on February 1994, this forum condemned the attack on the office of daily Mashriq Peshawar and on 24th June 1994, condemned the rocket attack on office of the daily Nawa-e- Waqt Karachi. Later in the year on 7th December 1994 gave one day strike call to condemn and protest the murder of Maulana Salahuddin editor monthly Takbeer.

The pressure on press kept on mounting from all directions including government functionaries' and on 21st December 1994 APNS had to condemn the deputy commissioner south Karachi for banning publication of news reports about law and order situation in the city. On June 1995 APNS condemned the ban on six evening newspapers from Karachi, on 24th May 1996, condemned the attacks on the office of daily Mashriq Quetta, on 28th May 1996 condemned polices' torture of press photographer. In June 1996, APNS condemned the imposition of 5% GST on circulation of newspaper by the government and termed it as attack on press freedom. On 10th July condemned the bomb blast at the office of daily Dawn Karachi and on 24th September 1997 rejected the draft code of conduct and press council prepared by the federal government, also condemned the incident of setting bundles of daily Awam on fire.

From September 1998 the federal government started victimization of Jang group of newspapers, advertisements were stopped and income tax notices were issued to the group. According to Mir Shakeel ur Rahman, Chief Editor of the group the government wanted them to alter the policy and dismiss a number of staffers writing and reporting against the government. In its meeting held on 28th September the president APNS Mr. Majeed Nizami decline to condemn the governments' action against Jang group by saying that this is not first time that the advertisements of any publications have been stopped and that his newspaper Nawa-e- Waqt had also faced it in the past. It was the first time that APNS kept silent on governments' action against a newspaper group. Later in October 1998 condemned the kidnapping and torture of journalists and on 15th November 1998, APNS appealed to the Nawaz Sharif government for stop harassing newspapers. Again

on 15th February 1999 condemned the FIA raid on the office of Jang Karachi.

26th March 1999, the APNS leadership along with CPNE met with the information minister and developed agreement over setting up of press council but both the bodies rejected the question of journalists' representation on it.

On May 1999, APNS condemned the arrests of Rahmat Shah Afridi on 26th March and Najam Sethi on 8th May 1999. On 12th December 1999, APNS demanded the removal of barriers in covering case against Nawaz Sharif by the reporters. Next year on 7th October 2000, APNS demanded the arrest of culprits involved in bomb blast at the office of daily Nawa-e-Waqt Karachi and attack and ransacking of the office of daily Business Recorder similarly on 28th March 2001, APNS condemned the kidnapping and torture of chief reporter of daily The News International.

In the year 2002 government accepted the demand of PFUJ to enforce new Wage Board Award for the working journalists, APNS termed governments' acceptance, as an attempt to curtail press freedom.

On 5th February 2002 APNS condemned the snatching of copies of daily Jang by a political group and appealed the government to provide protection to working journalists and newspapers.

Again on March 1, 2002 APNS condemned the delay in enforcement of new press laws and also the fire incident at the offices of daily Zamana and Balochistan Times Quetta.

In September 2002, on the directives of the federal government the wage board award tribunal started functioning and issued warrants of arrests of publishers violating the wage board. APNS termed it as governments' attempt to curtail press freedom. Next month on 22nd October 2002, APNS condemned the murder of journalist associated with daily Kawish Hyderabad. In May 2003, demanded setting up of press council. On 6th July 2003 condemned the police torture of the editor of Shahrag Pakistan. On 30th July 2003, APNS condemned stoppage of advertisements to daily Dopahar Islamabad, daily Ausaf Islamabad and Shahrag Pakistan. On 4th March demanded the release of advertisement to daily Nawa-e-Waqt.¹⁵

Conclusion

To conclude the study a three dimension approach would be applied to the analysis of the role of APNS. (a) The objectives for which APNS was formed, (b) the opinion of media professionals sought through the above survey study regarding the role of APNS; (c) situation analysis with the help of an overview of the struggle of APNS in the country reflected in its resolutions from time to time during the period of 54 years.

In this age of private enterprise, journalism as it is now,

cannot be considered as mission alone, rather it is a
ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

business and a full fledged industry. It is also a fact that freedom of the press can only be maintained if journalism is considered and run as a business so that it is not forced to bow before government or any other agency for monetary help. Financial independence guarantees freedom of expression to a great extent. Similarly any financial support from any quarter can or will impair freedom of the press at the same time. The important point here is that in this business people do not manufacture and trade commodities instead they trade ideas and information which ultimately transforms into knowledge. The press as it is now in Pakistan, a powerful entity which has a direct role in nation building and must feel accountable to the people who provide resources for this industry. This research study focuses on the role of All Pakistan Newspaper Society so that in the light of the obtained results a set of improvements for future may be developed. The salient feature emerged out of this study are placed below.

This body is monopolized by three media conglomerates in the country that is, Jang, Dawn and Nawa-e-Waqt. The survey result also verifies this monopoly.

Large part of its struggle has been devoted to safeguard the business interests of newspaper owners and not for press freedom in the country as it usually claims.

There were some very important issues on which APNS should have raised voice but it did not like the confiscation of newspapers of PPL, closure of weekly Chataan and arrest of its editor Shourish Kashmiri. The president APNS Majeed Nizami's request to the martial law government to issue a martial law regulation to counter the popularity of Jang Lahore is just one such example.

The refusal of APNS to take stand against the governments' attempt to force the Jang group for dismissal of reporters writing against the government during 1998. The government had stopped the advertisements for Jang Group and income tax notices were served to the chief editor.

The three leading groups have shown an undemocratic attitude toward grant of permanent membership and denied the same to newly emerged Express Group besides the fact that Express Group is also coming out from eleven cities.

The struggle of this forum mostly revolved around attaining maximum advertisement revenue, more quotas of newsprint, not only this but at many times it created hurdles in formulation of laws to determine minimum wages for working journalists in the country. In the year 2002 government in principle accepted the demand made by PFUJ for the enforcement of wage board award for the working journalists. On 21st January 2001 APNS termed it

as an attempt against press freedom that pressurizes the newspaper owners to pay more wages to the working journalists in the country.

As reflected in its resolutions it is evident that this body raised voice for press freedom more loudly during democratic governments but adopted a passive role during martial laws, the worst cited example is the takeover of Progressive Papers Limited. It has accepted restrictions and curbs on press without resistance during Zia regime but fought bravely against violence against press from 1991 onwards.

It is noteworthy that the APNS takes a very hegemonic approach to any possible change in the way it's being run, based on solid hegemonic logic, and this is probably due to its existing influential membership. The media professional's perception survey results suggest that majority of respondents believe that number of APNS executive committee should increase to ensure the representation of all newspapers and magazines, where as a great majority of respondents want an increase in permanent members from only three. As far as the other procedure and rules of business of APNS concerned, majority of respondent expressed their dissatisfaction over the procedure to grant membership and procedures of election and award giving in various categories. This study has helped clarify how APNS carry out its functions, and what perception it has among the media professionals and the business-flip that it is providing in the industry to some media conglomerates.

Future research on the APNS can improve this understanding by studying how individual newspapers view and use their relationship with the APNS, the effectiveness of strategies and actions suggested in the various forums of the APNS such as its annual general meetings etc. and the award of new memberships and their profiles. In short it is clearly evident that All Pakistan Newspaper Society in realization to the power and strength it has as the representative body of newspaper owners and publishers in Pakistan needs to revisit its present role. Besides safeguarding the legitimate business interests of the industry; it also needs to adopt a democratically accepted and socially responsible role for itself.

References

Lee, John A.R. (1976). *Towards realistic communication policies*. Paris: UNESCO, p.3.

² In actual text word 'communication' was used but we have substituted it with the word 'media' to avoid any misunderstanding because the phrase 'communication' in Pakistan's public documents is meant for Roadways, Railways, and telecommunication etc.

³ Lee, John A.R. (1976). op.cit. p.4.

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY

⁴ Lee, John A.R. (1976). *Towards realistic communication policies*. Paris: UNESCO, p. 36.

⁵ Wang Zhen Guang& Pilai K. Vijayan (2002) Communication and Social Development, in Mahadewan K. , Prasad Kiran et al (eds) Communication Modernization and Social Development, BRPC India, p.30.

⁶ Todd Gitlin, Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm, in Theory and Society Vol,6 No, 2, September 1978, p.205, published by Springer Stable URL, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/657009> Accessed 26 -12-2011

⁷ Hamid Mahmood was co-founder of Nawa-i-Waqt and had also worked as Managing Editor of Civil and Military Gazette, Kohistan and Sayara Digest.

⁸ APNS Directory 1997

⁹ Memorandum and Articles of Association of APNS

¹⁰ Paracha, Sajjad. (1999) *Pakistan's print media policy: a perspective* unpublished thesis of M.Phil to the Department of Mass Communication, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

¹¹ Jabbar Javed *Mass media law and regulations in Pakistan*. Singapore: AMIC 1997, p. 492.

¹² APNS Award Souvenir-xiv 1999

¹³ Niazi, Zamir. (1986). *The press in chains*. Karachi: Royal Book Co. p. 206.

¹⁴ Paracha, Sajjad. (2007) *Pakistan's media policy: a normative approach*. An unpublished thesis of PhD submitted to the Institute of Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

¹⁵ The data collected by Dr. Tauseef Ahmed Khan Associate Professor Department of Mass Communication, Federal Urdu University Karachi for his Ph.D research titled 'Azadi-e- Sahafat Mein Akhbari Tanzeemon Ka kirdar' awarded in 2009' (Role of Newspaper Organizations in the Freedom of Press). He did this painstaking exercise with the help of newspaper clippings. These authors feel indebted for his support in making his valuable unpublished work accessible for this paper.

Received: January 27, 2012

Revision Received: March 30, 2012

ROLE OF ALL PAKISTAN NEWSPAPERS SOCIETY