

Representation of cultural diversity in Urdu newspapers in Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper examines ethnicity/race and religion as represented by the popular print media in Pakistan with an aim to furthering our understanding of the development of attitudes towards diversity, and to outline the prospects for multicultural policies in Pakistan. The paper examines how different ideologies are operative in the media texts and provides examples of perspectives towards cultural diversity. Newspaper columns related to ethnicity/ race and religion published in two leading Urdu newspapers during February-July 2006 were located and analysed. The data reveals that the issues related to subcultures in Pakistani society remain generally ignored or downplayed. There is an overwhelming emphasis on Pakistan's Islamic identity, which serves as a broad melting pot within which other forms of identity such as race/ethnicity and religious denomination remain widely invisible. Consequently, there is a significant discrepancy in the concept of Pakistani identity and how it fits with the realities of a multicultural society.

Keywords: culture; diversity; ethnicity; Islam; media; Pakistan

Introduction

Pakistan is a multiethnic, multicultural society comprising a population that is diverse in terms of ethnicity/race, language and religion. The people of Pakistan are generally considered to be a mixture of Indo-Iranian lineage (Renfrew 1987). The principal ethnic groups comprise the Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun, and Baloch. The population (157.91 million, 2006 estimate) is distributed over the four federating units (called provinces) as follows: Punjab (55.6 per cent); Sindh (23 per cent); North West Frontier Province - NWFP (13.4 per cent); Balochistan (5 per cent); and two territories - Federal Capital territory of Islamabad (0.6 per cent), and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (2.4 per cent). Punjab, the most populous province, has only 26 percent of the land area but is home to more than one-half of the population. In contrast, Balochistan, the largest

province in terms of area covering about 44 percent of total land area, represents less than 5 per cent of the population (GOP 2006a). In the past few decades, Pakistan has hosted millions of refugees fleeing a series of wars in Afghanistan. In 2003 the number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan was thought to exceed 1.1 million (UNHCR 2004). A substantial number of these refugees have permanently settled in Pakistan mainly concentrated in the NWFP and Balochistan. Accordingly to an estimate, about 60 per cent of these refugees are born in Pakistan and only 5 per cent are willing to go back to Afghanistan (Kemal 2006).

The question of minority identity and representation has been an issue of contention in Pakistani society since Pakistan's creation in 1947. The Bangalis' demand for Bangla as Pakistan's official language resulted in the street protests in Dacca in 1948. The continued under-representation of Bangalis in the structures of power culminated in the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, which transformed itself into Bangladesh as an independent country on the world map (Zaheer 1994). However the issue of inter-community tensions is still present in Pakistan, with the smaller provinces concerned about their under-representation in civil and military bureaucracy, and a lack of cultural recognition and control over their indigenous resources. Furthermore, several groups within the population have a history of intolerance and violence towards each other because of ethnic, linguistic, religious and sectarian differences.

The present paper examines the representation of ethnic/racial and religious diversity in Pakistani media, and its implications for managing diversity in Pakistani society and institutions. The paper is divided into three key sections. In the first section, the paper offers an overview of ethnic and religious diversity in Pakistani society, and the current diversity discourse (or the lack thereof) within social and legal contexts. In the second section, the paper discusses the role of media in the creation of the 'mainstream' and the 'other' identities in a society, and its implications for diversity and discrimination. In the third section, an empirical analysis of the representation of cultural diversity in two leading Urdu newspapers in Pakistan has been offered, which is followed by discussion and conclusions.

Cultural diversity in Pakistani society

Ethnic and linguistic diversity

Ethnicity of Pakistani population is generally described in terms of the geographically and administratively defined areas as Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns and Balochis. However these ethnic groups are further divided into various sub-categories, linguistic groups and castes. The main languages include Urdu, Punjabi, Pushto, Balochi, Sindhi, Seraiki, Hindko, Dari and Gujrati. Urdu enjoys the status of the national language, widely spoken and understood all over the country. Most people are bi-lingual, speaking their regional language and Urdu with almost equal facility.

The key ethnic groups are generally concentrated in their provinces but significant numbers are found in other provinces, and also across the borders in neighbouring Iran,

Afghanistan, and India. Within each province, there is considerable ethnic or linguistic diversity. The Punjab has a large number of Seraiki-speaking people who insist on their separate identity from Punjabis. Sindh has a significant proportion of Balochis, Bihari refugees from Bangladesh, Seraikis in the north, and a large concentration of Muhajir community in the Urban Sindh - the Urdu-speaking migrants who came to Pakistan after 1947. The NWFP has Hindko-speaking people, Hazaras, concentrated in the south-eastern part, and a Seraiki-speaking community in the south-western part. Balochistan has a large number of Pashtuns besides Brahui and Dari speaking communities and Punjabi settlers (Rehman 2003).

Faced with the diversity of ethnic and linguistic groups, Pakistan's national unity is mainly based on religious, historical, geographical and political factors. Islam and Urdu language serve as major unifying factors. Figure 1 presents an overview of ethnic diversity in Pakistani society, which is generally isomorphous with linguistic diversity. The variety of languages spoken in Pakistan represents the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the people who speak these languages. Most ethnic groups constitute a majority in their area of origin (province or region) and are indigenous to it but constitute a minority within other regions, and also in comparison to the entire population (Ali and Rehman 2002: 3). The linguistic and ethnic identification in Pakistani society has been traditionally characterised by the power politics, and discrimination in employment and other societal contexts (Jaffrelot 2002).

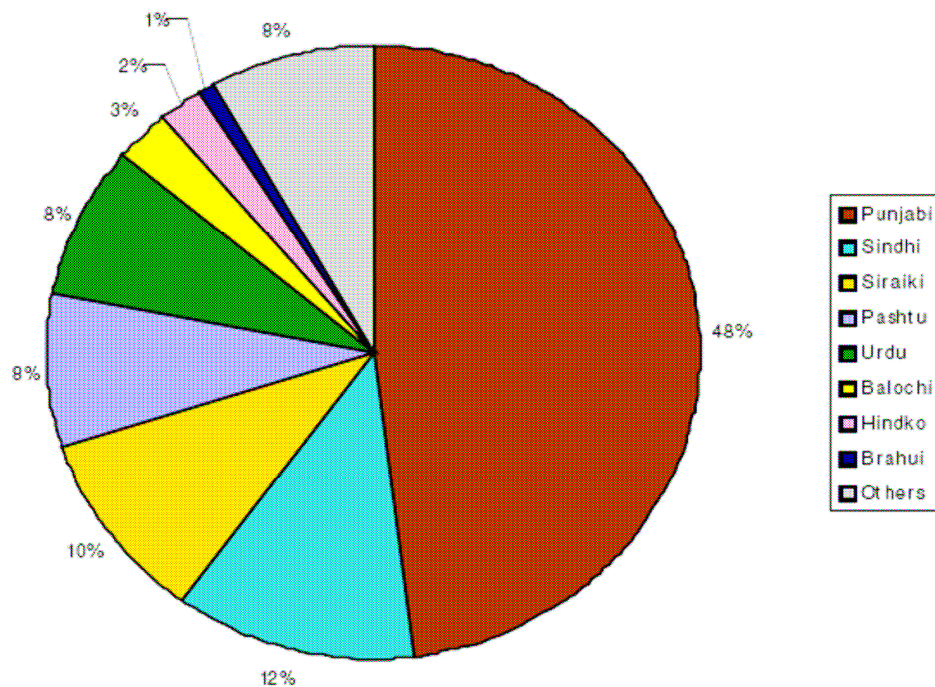


Figure 1. Ethnic diversity in Pakistan
(Source: Based on data from CIA 2005 and GOP 2006a)

Pakistan's constitution does not acknowledge the role of any ethnic and linguistic identity

in the make up and administration of society. The Punjab is the largest province representing about 56 per cent of the population. However the major ethnic-linguistic communities dominating three smaller provinces (Sindh, NWFP and Balochistan) do not accept the label of minorities and instead insist on being accepted as nations or nationalities. Even the Urdu-speaking Muhajirs in Sindh insist on being recognised as a distinct nationality. However, all of these communities may be treated as national minorities as together they are less than the population of the Punjab and their struggles for their rights have generally revolved around the question of provincial autonomy and cultural recognition (Rehman 2003).

Pakistan's first national constitution (1956) largely denied provincial rights, and the second constitution (1962) repudiated parliamentary democracy. The continued rule by the military led bureaucracy, and the lack of popular and cultural representation in the federal government culminated in East Pakistan's separation as Bangladesh in 1971. The 1973 constitution acknowledged and endeavoured to accommodate the issue of provincial autonomy. However problems have been arising because of the intermittent suspension of the constitution and its inadequate enforcement. This has kept the questions of provincial autonomy unresolved in today's Pakistan. Rehman (2003: 11-12) identifies five key autonomy demands of the federating units and ethnic communities in Pakistan. (1) The Pashtuns in the NWFP demand the right to name their province Pashtunkhwa (the land of Pashtuns) just as other provinces (Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan) bear the names of their dominant ethno-linguistic communities. Some of them also assert the unification of Pashtuns in the NWFP, Balochistan and tribal areas into a single unit through reorganisation of provinces on ethno-linguistic basis; (2) The Sindhis have been resisting being turned into a minority through continued influx of Muhajirs into their province. They are already a minority in the urban areas of Karachi and Haiderabad; (3) Balochistan, the largest province in terms of its territory and the smallest in terms of the population, rejects the division of revenues on population basis. Balochistan has persistently raised serious concerns about the distribution of the royalty in compensation of its natural gas and other mineral resources; (4) Balochistan and Sindh are aggrieved because of their under-representation in military and civil services. They also complain about the emergency provisions of the constitution under which the centre can dismiss their governments and dissolve their assemblies through its Governors; and (5) The 'Muhajirs' demand share in power in Sindh in accordance with their population but support the demand for provincial autonomy. They also demand the abolition of quota system, which has impacted urban residents' employment in provincial and federal jobs. These findings suggest that ethnic minorities in Pakistan are faced with the challenge of cultural recognition and adequate representation within legal structures and administrative institutions

Religious diversity

Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country with its Muslim population divided into about 77 per cent Sunnis and about 20 per cent Shiites. There are also a small number of non-Muslim communities (total number about 3.6 per cent) that remain largely concentrated in Sindh (Hindu community), and the Punjab (Christian community) (CIA

2005). Other smaller religious minorities include Parsis, mainly in the city of Karachi; Sikhs in Balochistan and NWFP; indigenous people in Northern Areas; and scheduled castes in Sindh. In 1974, Pakistan created a new religious minority, Ahmedis (also known as Qadianis), who assert to be Muslim but were declared non-Muslims through a constitutional amendment under the influence of the religio-political parties. Attempts have been made by mainly Sunni parties to get the Zikri sect in Balochistan declared as non-Muslim but so far these attempts have been unsuccessful. There are also minority Muslim sects, such as Isna Asharis (commonly known as Shias) and two minor Shiite sects - Ismailis and Bohras. None of these sects is treated as a religious minority (Rehman 2003) though some Sunni parties have demanded that Shiites be declared non-Muslims. The inter-religious and inter-sectarian tensions between rival sects such as Sunnis and Shias, Barelvis, Deobandis and Ahle Hadith (Wahabis), and Sunnis and Ahmedis are not uncommon in Pakistani society. The differences of beliefs and practices in these sects have frequently resulted in violence in Pakistani society claiming hundreds of lives in the last two decades (UNDP 2004). Figure 2 presents an overview of religious diversity in Pakistani society.

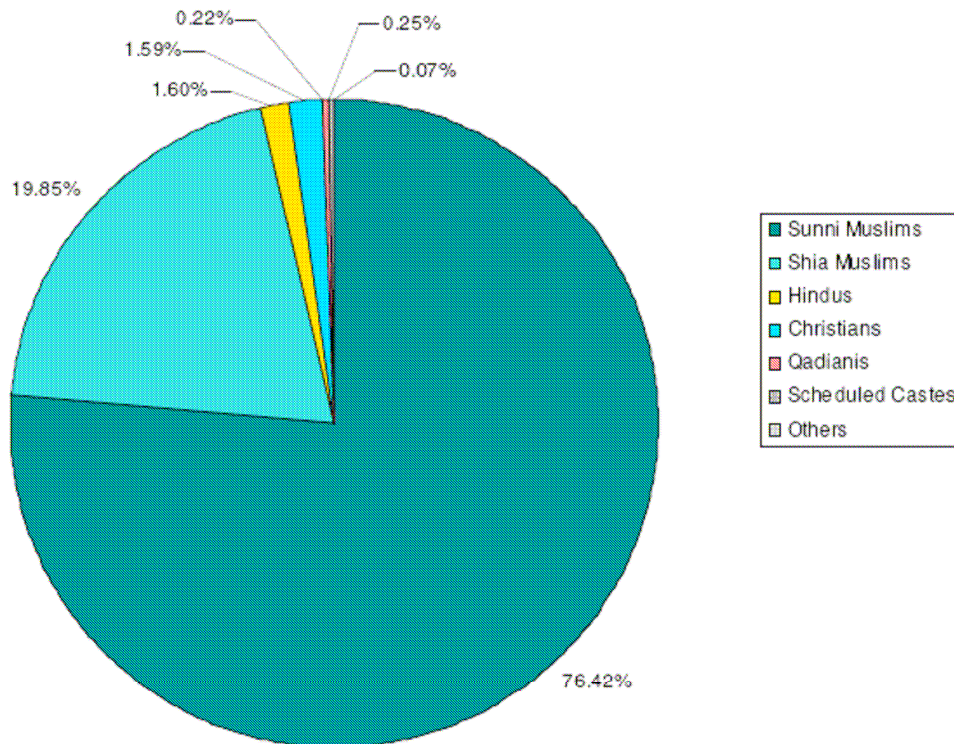


Figure 2. Religious diversity in Pakistan
(Source: Based on data from CIA 2005 and GOP 2006a)

Pakistan has a bicameral system of parliamentary democracy, however the state religion is Islam. The constitution acknowledges that the sovereignty belongs to God alone and the parliament exercises authority within the limits prescribed by God. It provides for the Islamic Ideology Council that has been formed to advise the government on Islamisation of laws and practices. During the martial law administration of General Zia-ul-Haq,

Hudood laws were enacted which prescribe Islamic punishments for crimes. The Islamic Court (Federal Shariat Court) has the power to annul any law on the ground of repugnancy to Islam and also to suggest amendments in statutes (Rehman 2003).

The constitution recognises religious diversity in the population, which has also been symbolically represented through a one-third white strip in Pakistan's otherwise green (with crescent and star) flag. The constitution guarantees religious minorities the freedom of belief and safeguards for their legitimate interests. Every religious denomination has the right to maintain its religious institutions. No one can be required to receive instruction in a religion or join a religious ceremony related to a belief, other than his own.

Because of Pakistan's emphasis on its Islamic identity – its *raison d'etre* – the legal and institutional structures in Pakistan reflect inherent biases against non-Muslim communities. For instance, the Hudood laws under which compensation for killing a non-Muslim is less than that for killing a Muslim; cases against non-Muslims can be heard by religious courts but they cannot be represented by non-Muslim counsel. Under the blasphemy law even a non-Muslim faces mandatory death penalty for insulting the Prophet of Islam or other Prophets including Jesus Christ. The head of state can only be a Muslim and in practical terms the Prime Minister too can only be a Muslim. The Ahmedis are prohibited by law to preach their belief, and disallowed to practice their faith in Muslim style. They can be punished for displaying epithets belonging to Islam. The constitution does not recognise the right to change one's belief. While non-Muslims' conversion to Islam is welcomed, a Muslim converting to any other faith is considered as 'Murtid', thus endangering his life because some Islamic schools condemn such person to death penalty.

There are a number of legislative projects, which act to safeguard minority interests in Pakistan as envisaged under the 1973 constitution. The Minorities Wing of former Ministry of Minorities, Culture, Sports, Tourism and Youth Affairs was upgraded as a full-fledged Ministry in September 2004. Though the current arrangement provides for a broader mandate, in practice the Ministry has yet to demonstrate a robust role to protect minority rights and interests. However, the following two projects within the Ministry are worth mentioning (GOP 2006b).

National Cultural Award. The Government of Pakistan introduced this scheme for promotion and preservation of culture of minorities since 1976. Under this scheme, a certificate and cash prize of Rupees 50,000/- are granted to eminent persons from minorities for their services in the areas of literature, education, medicine, performing arts, folk arts, fine arts and sports.

National Commission for Minorities. In response to a joint petition by some Minority parliamentarians, the cabinet decided to establish a high-powered National Commission for Minorities, in 1993, under chairpersonship of Minister for Minorities Affairs to protect and safeguard religious, social and cultural rights of the minorities in Pakistan. The latest commission was re-constituted and notified in June 2004. The commission

consists of thirteen members including official and non-official members with tenure of three years. The Commission takes care of a wide ranging issues related to religious minorities including the issues of illegal sale and transfer of communal property by the land mafia and low rates of scholarships offered to deserving students.

Rehman (2003:15-16) identifies four key issues of importance to religious minorities in Pakistan, which emerged after a series of consultations held during 2000-2002. First, the treatment of Muslims as a privileged majority reduces religious minorities to an inferior category compounding their vulnerability to discrimination. For instance, there are some positions (top bureaucratic jobs in some public institutions including head of the state and military) where minorities do not enjoy equal opportunity. In education institutions, non-Muslims are restricted to nominal quotas and are denied admission on merit. Second, some laws practically deny the freedom of belief (such as the provisions of the Penal Code targeting only Ahmedis, and certain clauses of the blasphemy law). Third, there are instances in which the life and property of religious minorities are treated as less equal to a Muslim citizen. For instance, it has been reported that sometimes girls belonging to minority communities are abducted, forcibly converted to Islam, and the state machinery often denies them justice. Another issue is related to the properties belonging to minorities' shrines and trusts, which have been taken over under the pretext that the owners have migrated to India while only the managers may have gone away and the community owning these properties is still here. Finally, it emerged that the minorities' lives and properties are threatened as a reaction to the events abroad. Many communities including Hindus and Christians have reported increased persecution and harassment in the aftermath of events such as the demolition of Babri mosque in India and the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The above discussion suggests that by virtue of the legal emphasis on Pakistan's Islamic identity and the inter-group tensions, religious minorities are faced with multiple challenges resulting in their generally inferior status to the mainstream Muslim population. Rehman's (2003) study suggests that state institutions and policy frameworks are inadequate to guarantee minorities equal rights and redress in the event of violation or discrimination. This is also verified by other studies, which suggest that despite the ethnic and religious diversity of its population, diversity management has not been on the agenda of Pakistani government and corporate sector. Naqvi (2003a) suggests that contrary to constitutional and international obligations, discrimination continues to exist on the basis of gender, religion, ethnicity, caste, and a host of other reasons. The lack of discourse on diversity is evident from the fact that there is no commonly used word for diversity in Urdu - Pakistan's national language. The closest Urdu equivalent for diversity are *Tanawwo* or *Ranga Rangi* which are not commonly used and understood by most Pakistanis; neither are they used to denote the concept of diversity. Accordingly, there is no concerted institutional effort to implement on a national scale policies related to managing diversity in Pakistan. The Government and corporate sector have been so far unable to produce a model for diversity management, and are themselves not conversant with its philosophy and rationale (Naqvi 2003b).

In addition to ethnic and religious divisions, the issues of class and power are also worthy

of consideration in Pakistani society. In many instances, the issues of ethnic or religious identity are tightly intersected with the issues related to power and class. Pakistan is a high power distance society due to strong patriarchal and feudal backgrounds and a deep-rooted social class division (Hofstede 2001). Pakistan's feudal history dates back to 200 years of British colonisation of the Indian sub-continent, which was a system of indirect control. Pakistan's centuries old caste system is an offshoot of stratification in Indian society that arose through violent inter-communal struggles relegating the vanquished to undesirable occupations. The ideology of the caste system moulded the private beliefs and preferences of many generations of materially disadvantaged people, effectively sapping their resistance, even ensuring their willing loyalty and compliance (Hutton 1963, Lal 1980). An individual's sense of self, which is inextricably linked to the social categories to which one belongs, often contributes critically to one's personal economic performance. The identities one develops in the course of socialisation (such as Muslim, Hindu, Ashraaf, Ajlaaf, Jatt, Irain and Baloch) will shape one's later experiences, constrain the pool from whom one chooses one's friends and trade markets, restrict one's opportunities for education, employment and socialisation, and affect one's life style (Akerlof and Kranton 2000).

Though Islam as a religion does not allow discrimination on any pretext, in practice social classification does exist in the Muslims of the subcontinent. For instance, Muslims of low caste are known as Ajlaaf, and those belonging to Muslim elite are known as Ashraaf (Engineer 2004). The social classification shapes the pressures one encounters in everyday life in society. One's membership in a particular class or tribe may greatly influence one's chances of employment and promotion. For instance Smith and Whitehead (1984) studied the attribution of promotion and demotion in USA and India. They observed that Indians are more influenced by class, and corporate corruption as compared to Americans, who are influenced by ability and effort. Since Pakistan and India share common social and cultural background (with the exception of religion), this study is also valuable in a Pakistani context. Another study used Hofstede's model to measure the formality and social and organisational distance of the Pakistanis and British (Shackleton and Ali 1990). The study mentions greater reserve and disbelief in social equity in the work-related values of Pakistanis compared to those of the British. High power distance as reflected in the social and organisational distance characteristics has implications for equal opportunity and human rights in Pakistani society and organisations. In the next section, the paper will offer a theoretical background of the cultural representation in media, and its implications for managing cultural diversity.

Theoretical background

Media is the primary crucible for representation in the world today (Daley 1997). It is an arena where ideologies are both produced and transformed, producing "representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works as it is said and shown to work" (Hall 1995: 19-20). Daley (1997) suggests that media ideologies work to model the way things are supposed to be. Media representations often feed into the realm of social myth, "a narrative... that people collectively believe in independently of its 'truth' or 'falsity'" (Rodman 1996: 30-31).

Such representations are generally revealing about the fears, imagination and desires of the people that circulate them, revolving around a particular point (or points) of articulation. Previous research has demonstrated how media can be effective in creating the fear of the 'other' in society by the way it portrays ethnic and religious minorities. Allen and Seaton (1999) suggest that media representations of ethnic and religious differences can play a central role in the construction of a particular notion of national identity. The mainstream version of national identity may be premised on the suppression or exclusion and criminalisation of 'the other' (i.e. non-mainstream) ethnic and religious groups. However, the dimensions of diversity and the otherness are not limited to ethnicity or religion, but are simultaneously influenced by Marxian class differences (Curran and Gurevitch 1996).

A critical perspective is instrumental to examine how media culture articulates the dominant values and socio-political ideologies in a society. Such examination is instrumental to understand how national culture and society can become a contested terrain with various groups and ideologies struggling for dominance (Kellner 1995). Some scholars suggest that minority groups are regularly excluded and marginalised, and the dominant culture is reinforced as the norm. In this context, media "constitute a monopoly of knowledge, and through their practices of selection, editing and production, they determine the kinds of news we receive about our nation" (Jiwani 1995). It has the power to choose which images of minorities dominate the public domain, propelling predominantly negative connotations about minorities whilst downplaying their issues almost completely from the debate arena (Fleras and Kunz 2001). Representation of various cultures and subcultures in media provides the materials for constructing views of the world, behaviour, and group and individual identities (Kellner 1995). Those who uncritically follow the media discourse tend to 'mainstream' themselves, conforming to the dominant values and behaviour. In contrast, a critical examination helps outline how sub-cultural groups and individuals resist dominant forms of culture and identity, creating their own identities and behaviour. Persons who identify with subcultures look and act differently from those in the mainstream, thus creating oppositional identities, defining themselves against the 'norm'.

Multicultural perspectives in media tend to promote multiculturalist politics and media pedagogy that alerts people to how relations of power are constructed and represented in the media (Kellner 1995). This understanding is instrumental to know how media culture manipulates, indoctrinates and empowers individuals to resist or conform to the dominant socio-cultural discourses. Dunn and Mahtani (2001) have demonstrated how complex forms of racism can emerge through various media representations of minorities. This is also verified by Essed (1991: 10) who suggests that the transmission of racism or exclusion as routine practices "can only mean that racism is not often recognized, not acknowledged—let alone problematised by the dominant group." Within this context, the role of ideological positions is of central importance because dominant ideologies serve to reproduce social relations of domination and subordination (Kellner 1979, Thomson 1990). Contemporary societies are structured by opposing groups who have different political ideologies (liberal, conservative, radical, etc.) and cultural studies specify what, if any, ideologies are operative in a given cultural artefact. Ideologies of

ethnicity and race utilise ethnic and racial representations of various minority groups, thus causing or regenerating inequalities and subordination, making them appear natural and thus inducing consent to the relations of power (Kellener 1995).

Method

The products of media culture require multidimensional textual readings to analyse their various forms of discourses, ideological positions, narrative strategies and image construction. The analysis is important to dissect and examine the images of ethnic minorities, and also to unpack the meanings of the texts or to explicate how texts function to produce meaning. In order to examine the representation of cultural diversity in the popular print media in Pakistan, newspaper columns related to ethnicity/ race and religion published in two leading Urdu newspapers were located and analysed. This was done in order to further our understanding of the development of attitudes towards cultural diversity and to outline the prospects for multicultural policies in Pakistan. Opinion columns and policy editorials in Daily Jang and Daily Nawaiwaqt published during February to July 2006 were content analysed. Jang is Pakistan's largest national daily published in Urdu from Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Quetta, Multan and London. It has a circulation of over 800,000 copies per day and a readership of over 7 million. Nawaiwaqt is the second largest Urdu daily published simultaneously from Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi and Multan. The circulation figures for Nawaiwaqt were not available.

| Newspaper | National editions | Dates | Days | Total columns | Theme columns |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------------|---|---------------|---------------|
| Daily Jang | Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Quetta, Multan | 5,15 and 25 of Feb - July 2006 | 2 Mon, 2 Tue, 4 Wed, 2 Thu, 1 Fri, 4 Sat, 3 Sun | 126 | 37 (29%) |
| Daily Nawaiwaqt | Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and Multan | 5,15 and 25 of Feb - July 2006 | 2 Mon, 2 Tue, 4 Wed, 2 Thu, 1 Fri, 4 Sat, 3 Sun | 144 | 36 (25%) |

Table 1. A comparison of Jang and Nawaiwaqt and the data analysed

For the sake of consistency and to avoid the provincial or regional biases likely in the local editions of these newspapers, the columns released on the national circuit only were analysed. To avoid the day-specific bias (such as Friday or Sunday editions), the columns (both opinion columns and the newspaper policy editorials) published on the 5th, 15th and 25th of each month were studied to locate the articles related to the issues of race/ethnicity, religion, sect, and linguistic, regional or provincial identity. Table 1 offers an overview of the columns analysed and an account of the days on which these columns appeared. Total 270 columns were analysed out of which 73 columns (27 per cent) were found to have some relevance with cultural diversity. In a few cases, a newspaper column in a preceding or following day was also analysed when it was an integral part of a series of columns by the same writer.

The key Urdu terms used for locating diversity related themes in the columns included

the names of the provinces, regions, racial/ethnic groups, religions, sects, languages, and tribes present within different regions and provinces in Pakistan. In addition, the following Urdu terms were used as markers of the key themes related to cultural diversity. These terms were identified on the basis of a pretest with 20 randomly selected columns. The list was not treated as exhaustive yet proved helpful in identifying and analysing the relevant columns (see Table 2). The translation and coding were performed by the author; later to be re-checked by a bilingual colleague at a university in Sydney, who is an expert in Urdu and English languages.

| Urdu | English | Urdu | English |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Aksariat | Majority | Qomiat | Nationality; Ethnicity |
| Aqeeda or Iman | Faith; Religion | Rang | Colour |
| Aqliat | Minority | Ranga Rangi or Tanawwo | Diversity; Difference |
| Barabari or Musawat | Equality | Riasat | State |
| Beradri | Fraternity; Tribe | Riwayat | Traditions |
| Fiqh | Islamic jurisprudence | Samaji Insaf | Social justice |
| Firqah | Sect | Saqafat | Culture |
| Ham Ahangi | Harmony | Sarmayadar | Capitalist |
| Ilaqa | Region | Sooba | Province |
| Imtiaz or Tafreeq | Discrimination; Distinction | Tabqa | Class |
| Jageerdar or Zameendar | Feudal lord | Tamaddun | Culture; Civilisation |
| Kafir | Non-believers i.e. non-Muslims | Tashakkhus or Shanakht | Identity |
| Lisani or Zuban | Language | Tassub | Prejudice |
| Markaz | Centre; Federation | Tehzeeb or Bood-o-bash | Culture |
| Mazhab or Deen | Religion | Ummat | Islamic fraternity |
| Muqami | Local; Indigenous | Wadaira or Sardar | Chief; Tribal chief |
| Nasal | Race | Yekjehti or Ittehad | Unity |
| Qabeela | Tribe | Zat Pat | Caste system |
| Qom | Nation | | |

Table 2. Key Urdu terms denoting issues related to cultural diversity

Analysis

Following is an account of the key themes that emerged as a result of this study. The explanations within the square brackets [] are by the author of this paper.

1. Islamic identity

An overwhelming emphasis on Pakistan's Islamic identity was witnessed in the columns analysed. Islam and Islamic identity seem to serve as a broad melting pot within which other forms of identity such as racial/ethnic or regional identities remain widely invisible.

“We duly associate our movement for independence [Pakistan movement] with the movement of Syed Ahmed Shaheed... We are proud that in the Indian land of non-believers, and in the atheist era of the 20th century, we were able to create a new country to revive God’s [chosen] faith, in the name of His Prophet, and to revise Islamic nation as Ummat-e-Wusta [the moderate nation]... What was the objective of the independence? ... Its express and implicit objective was that we, the Muslims, who in their composition are the nation of the Prophet of Islam, needed Pakistan so that we could practice Allah’s and His Prophet’s religion on this land. To establish a society that is based on the Qur’an and Sunnat, where we could be able to live our lives according to Islamic historical culture, civilisation and values, and where in national and everyday affairs, Muslims and non-Muslims will enjoy equal rights. There will be no compulsion in religion... and where class disparities, and sectarian or caste based differences will be abolished” (Muslim, *Kia Islam Pakistan main ajnabi hay*, *Nawaiwaqt*, 5 May).

“Kashmiris have not offered their sacrifices [in order to have] a bus services, evacuation of [Indian] military, self governance, or to have talks about the United States of Kashmir. Their destiny is Islam and Pakistan” (Ahmed, 5 Farwary - Yom yekjehti Kashmir, *Nawaiwaqt*, 5 February).

“Urdu, the national language, is the second greatest symbol of Pakistan’s integrity, after Islam” (Aali, *Naqar khanay main*, *Jang*, 5 February).

“In my opinion, in order to ensure Pakistan’s existence, we must implement its objectives. The first and the foremost is to implement Islamic system in this country, to bring peace and prosperity to the entire world...” (Ali, *Pakistan aur us kay masail ka hal*, *Jang* 15 June).

2. Connotations about ethnic or religious sub-identities

Perhaps as a result of the overwhelming emphasis on Pakistan’s Islamic and national identity, there are generally negative connotations associated with any ethnic or religious sub-identity – other than Islam and Pakistan. Any groups asserting their rights based on their ethnic or religious identities remain prone to be treated as ‘others’, associated with a ‘foreign conspiracy’, inconsistent with or injurious to Pakistan’s identity and integrity.

“Whether it is Balochistan issue or the increased activities of regionalists in Sindh, this is the outcome of a non-democratic era. Whenever popular political forces are pushed to the wall, then such elements [which otherwise lack popular support] raise their head and make much noise” (Idaria, *Nawaiwaqt*, 5 February).

“We have seen that Mr Hameed Nizami in his letter to the father of the nation [Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah] dated 5 June 1944 described that ‘Qadianis considers all Muslims as Kafir [non-believers]’. This is an irrefutable fact that after 62 years [when that letter was written], the problem is still as grave as it was at that time, rather in my opinion now its intensity has become manifold, and now this problem [i.e. Qadiani

religion] is spreading fast in the East Africa, UK, USA and Canada.” [Then quoting Iqbal in the concluding paragraph of his column, the columnist writes] “I have no doubt in my mind that the Ahmedis [i.e. Qadianis] are ‘traitors’ both to Islam and India” (Shahid, Qadiani sab musalmanon ko kafir samajhtay hain, Nawaiwaqt, 26 February).

The present unrest in the Balochistan province was the focus of a significant number of columns studies. Yet, a negative connotation with the ethnic identity is quite noticeable.

“It is worth considering that [Bush government] has condemned Jihad and terrorism in Kashmir but did not talk about Afghan and Indian sponsored terrorism in Balochistan, such as their role in the creation of the terrorist group Balochistan Liberation Army, bomb explosions at government buildings, interruption of railway traffic, and other acts of terror and destruction. ... We are surprised that the movement for greater Balochistan in the Baloch areas of Iran and Pakistan, and the Baloch leaders in the USA, UK and Gulf countries are engaged in anti-Iran and anti-Pakistan activities. Irani and Pakistani Baloch organisations have written letters to President Bush, UN secretary general Kofi Annan, European Union and Amnesty International, in which they have mentioned the excesses against Balochs in Iran and Pakistan...in Balochistan, we must beware of our enemies and their tactics...” (Baqi, Sadr bush ka dora-e-pakistan, and masala kashmiro Balochistan, Nawaiwaqt, 5 March).

Sometimes there is a subtle but far reaching twist in translation. For instance, following is the original sentence in English language that appeared in a foreign periodical:

“The (US) administration should call on Musharraf to start negotiations (with Baloch leaders) immediately, and President Bush should keep up the pressure when he visits Islamabad in March”

The above sentence was thus translated by a columnist in Nawaiwaqt: “The US should force President Musharraf to touch the feet of Baloch rebel chiefs.” [The columnist comments that] “In this last line, Harrison has suggested to Bush to continue the US pressure to support the separatist chiefs of Balochistan... This American patronage has resulted in the problem that Ataulah Maingal [a Baloch tribal leader] in his TV interview justified the killing of Chinese engineers. His arguments on the ARY channel reflected savagery and barbarism. He questioned the arrival of Chinese engineers in Balochistan without the permission of the Baloch tribal chiefs, and suggested that the Baloch terrorists had the right to kill them” (Malik, Balochistan main amreeki sipah-e-danish ki pesh qadmi, Nawaiwaqt, 15 March).

Newspapers’ official policy editorials are also actively engaged in this debate, thus representing a widening gap between the Muslims and the West.

“Western imperialism always tried to divide Muslims; encouraging religious racial/ethnic and linguistic divisions to break the Muslims strength” (Idaria, Musalmanon kay ittehad aur yekjehti ko todnay kay liay israeli or amreeki sazish, 25 February).

“Indian support for Balochistan’s so-called war of independence or the movement for separation, and its support for separatists in Balochistan, Sarhad [NWFP] and Sindh, and, resembling Paki-India border as Berlin wall at the cultural forums are part of the same campaign” (Baqi, Bharat afghan gath jode, Nawaiwaqt, 25 May).

Some communities remain subject to direct hatred and exclusion. For others the disgust is rather indirect. For instance, these words of admiration for Abu Musab Zarqawi, the killed leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, whose hatred for Christians and Jews as well as Shias is no secret:

“Another flame in Iraqi resistance was extinguished; another thorn in the heart of the capitalism was taken out... Abu Musab Zarqawi was martyred” (Siddiqui, Istiaary mara naheen kartay, Nawaiwaqt, 15 June).

“We must consider the fact that Hindu civilisation has never accepted [the creation of] Pakistan by heart. Ridden in the caste system, the Chankia Hindu psyche has ill intentions to destabilise and weaken Pakistan so that it becomes an integral part of the mother India” (Baqi, Bharat afhan gath jode, Nawaiwaqt, 25 May).

“Due to the British and Hindu conspiracy, Kashmir was illegally integrated with India” (Sarwar, 5 Farwary - Kashmiri awam say yekjehti ka din, Nawaiwaqt, 5 February).

Following excerpt of a policy editorial is particularly value laden in terms of its criticism of Sikh-Muslim ‘brotherhood’.

“Today, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz is addressing a seminar on Sikh-Muslim brotherhood, which is being held in respect of the fifth Guru Arjan Devji’s 400th birthday. The term ‘Sikh-Muslim brotherhood’ is incomprehensible... The Prime minister can forget, but the nation can never forget that in 1947, Sikh leadership and people treated Pakistan with animosity, and massacres unarmed Muslims. Even today thousands of [kidnapped] Muslim women, not hundreds, are giving birth to children in Sikh families in the Eastern Punjab, wishing ill for Pakistani rulers, scholars and analysts, who forgot the rapes [of these women], and are more than willing to extend an ambitious welcome to every Sikh who arrives in Lahore and Islamabad” (Idaria, Nawaiwaqt, 15 June).

The following is an excerpt from a column in which the columnist has suggested to the Government of Pakistan that it must not agree to a request by the Bangladesh Government for the handover of the remains of one of their national heroes. It is worth noting that Mutiur-Rehman was a Bangali nationalist who is a hero for Bangladesh but a traitor for Pakistan.

“Mutiur-Rehman is not just a grave, a plaque or some bones... This [issue] is associated with the confidence and honour of our air force... If we send Mutiur-Rehman’s coffin to Bangladesh with full honour, then what would be the status of our hero [Rashid Minhas]? Where will we place Rashid Minhas’s sacrifice and his feat? If we handover the remains of Mutiur-Rehman to Bangladesh, this would mean that we are certifying the

Bangladesh's movement for independence. ...I have nothing to do with the remains of Mutiur-Rehman, whether they are taken to Bangladesh or they remain in Pakistan. The only thing that concerns me, is that, when tomorrow we meet Rashid Minhas, we should not feel embarrassed. We should not be answerless in response to our Martyr's questions" (Chaudhary, Shaheed kay sawal, Jang, 25 April).

3. Democracy and autonomy

Despite the generally negative connotations about sub-cultural identities, there is a visible emphasis on the need for free and fair elections, strong democratic institutions and adequate representation of local people in the structures of power.

"Whether it is the Balochistan issue or the increased activities of regionalists in Sindh, this is an outcome of a non-democratic era. Whenever popular political forces are pushed to the wall, then such elements (which otherwise lack popular support) raise their head and make much noise" (Idaria, Nawaiwaqt, 5 February).

"In Pakistan's present circumstances, it is utmost necessary that autonomy is given to all provinces. It is not a course to lose but a course to gain, and to strengthen this country. We have forgotten the objectives of Pakistan. If we had implemented those objectives we would not have lost East Pakistan [Bangladesh]" (Ali, Pakistan aur us kay masail ka hal, Jang 15 June).

"Though it is important to safeguard the sensitive installations and restore law and order, yet Pakistani people expect that government will pursue fair policies, expedite the pace of progress in the province [Balochistan] and prioritise the interests of the people native to the province" (Ahsan, Balochistan kay gambhir masail, Nawaiwaqt, 15 February).

There is a noticeable opposition to the present military operation in the NWFP and Balochistan. The columnists suggest that the government (including the military) must follow a course of dialogue and negotiations with the local people and their leaders.

"Pakistan's rulers, politicians, scholars and journalists must consider the factors which they have ignored in the formulation of democracy. Pakistan was created as an Islamic democratic parliamentary welfare state so that every Pakistani could practice her life independently according to her religions, faith, and political perspectives; so that everyone has the security of life, property, honour and employment; so that health, education and shelter are provided to everyone. But we have not achieved that objective as yet. That is because we never implemented the ideologies of Quaid and Iqbal, yet it is never too late. The present government must ensure that the objectives of Pakistan are implemented. For that, it is necessary that democratic values be developed in Pakistan; the military act in the North and South Waziristan in the NWFP is abolished; dialogue takes place with the tribal people, senior members and elected leaders; all important decisions should be made by taking local people into confidence, because the tribal areas decided to be a part of Pakistan with their willingness and with their majority opinion. Similarly, in Balochistan, military action must be immediately abolished. All Baloch

leaders, elected representatives and politicians must be engaged in a dialogue and negotiations, whatever the demands of the local people and their needs, must be accepted on democratic principles. All important and unimportant matters must be tackled through consultations with elected representatives (Idaria, *Nawaiwaqt*, 5 May).

“Balochis must get their due share from Balochistan’s mineral resources... The injustices of the past must be redressed and if there is a need, we must not hesitate to give Balochistan more than its due, I don’t think any province will oppose that. It is the need of the hour that the old feudal and tribal chieftancies, bureaucracy, and ‘Mullah-crazy’ are abolished” (Fatima, Punjab say aisi nafrat kyun, *Nawaiwaqt*, 15 February).

“Pakistan’s split into two countries and the creation of Bangladesh was an outcome of the wrong policies of the past rulers of Pakistan; violation of democracy and the objectives of Pakistan movement” (Idaria, Pak Bangladesh iqtisadi taawun kay firogh kay liay iqdamat, *Jang*, 15 February).

“We must immediately satisfy the masses, in particular the Baloch people, so that they could themselves take care of the law and order [in their province], and the country could progress towards development and prosperity” (Haqqani, Pakistan ki siyasi aur aeeni soorathaal kay liay chand tajaweez, *Jang*, 25 February)

“We must adopt the democratic means to resolve conflict... the only way is to eliminate them through dialogue. The parties must first examine their position, and then through a table dialogue must try to eliminate or diminish differences. If the differences are eliminated and there is solidarity, it is a great thing for the nation and the country. If the differences are curtailed and there is a spirit of team work, then it is the conquest of the democratic values” (Yazdani, Jamhooriyat main ikhtilafay rai ki ahmiyat, *Jang*, 25 May).

Some columnists suggest that the entire constitution needs to be overhauled in order to implement the ‘real democracy’ in the country.

“In the imitation of the colonial act, the size of constituencies in the assembly as prescribed by the 1973 constitution, is enormously large. This means that only feudal lords, tribal chiefs, and billionaire capitalists can afford to contest the expensive elections. ... Thus, we can never have a real house of commons, the basis of parliamentary democracy, in this country. The present constitution does not place any sanctions on the lack of democracy within the political parties. Thus, people in general remain disenfranchised.... The 1973 constitution does not offer a system for local governments as the basis for democracy, which should be responsible for local administration, police, education, health and social services. Consequently, people are subject to exploitation by the centralised administration. Pakistan is in fact a police state, which provides the mainstay for the civil and military dictatorship... The colonial pattern of the constitution refutes provincial autonomy, which adversely impacts on national integrity and solidarity... As a result of this colonial system, feudalism and tribal systems have become stronger, their influence ever increasing” (Haqqani, Aik adilana jamhoori muashray kay qiam kay liay chand tajaweez, *Jang*, 4 February).

“In order to create the balance between the federal centre and the provinces, the four provinces of Pakistan should be administratively subdivided to create 11 provinces: (1) Peshawar or Khaiber province, (2) Hazara, (3) Rawalpindi (Pothwar), (4) Lahore, (5) Faisalabad, (6) Multan, (7) Bahawalpur, (8) Khairpur, (9) Karachi (southern Sindh), (10) Quetta (northern Balochistan), and (11) Khuzdar (southern Balochistan)... The federal centre should take care of only defence, foreign affairs, transport and treasury/currency. The provincial autonomy should be modelled according the states in the USA... In order to provide justice without delay to the people, it is imperative to have an impartial judiciary.... Similarly in order to have a real democracy, it is imperative to have impartial and fully independent election commission” (Haqqani, Aik adilana jamhoori muashray kay qiam kay liay chand tajaweez, Jang, 5 February).

“Practically, the system of democracy that we have [in Pakistan] is a means for the rule of minority over majority.... The real democracy i.e. a system based on maximum popular representation is the system of proportionate representation. In a democratic system it is not the individuals but the parties that are important... If political parties are to be voted for, then the issues of fraternities, personal confrontations and financial corruption which are related to individual candidacy may be eradicated” (Ismail, Hamara intikhabi nizam, aqliyat ki hukmarani ka zaria, Jang, 15 April).

Some opinion columns openly challenge the idea of a military-led government, which they find consistent with the principles of democracy and the ideologies of the founders of Pakistan.

“First of all, [I would like to mention] the grand public meeting which was held by Pakistan’s founder party Pakistan Muslim League, at Minar-e-Pakistan. When I saw that party reviving its commitment to Pakistan under the leadership of an on-duty general [General Musharraf], I immediately thought of Quaid-i-Azam [the founder of Pakistan]. It is a hard thing to be an orphan, national as well as political. Sadly we are faced with the both situations at present.... Then I saw another General Ashraf Javed Qazi addressing students after a bicycle race. He was preaching to children that they must never forget the purposes that were the basis of the Pakistan resolution presented on 23 March. I first laughed, then wept, and then found myself extremely angry. I had to immediately switch to another TV channel to watch a better version of comedy” (Iqbal, Qarardad-e-Pakistan, jor-nail aur maqasid, Nawaiwaqt, 25 March).

“In the current global and regional situation, the Government of Pakistan must revive real democratic parliamentary system in the country in accordance with Iqbal’s and Quaid’s democratic Islamic ideologies... so that the state and nation and administrators could spend their energies in the elimination of terrorism, sabotage, and disorder, and to make this country a real Islamic welfare state; so that we could face those conspiracies which are being hatched [against Pakistan] at global and regional levels” (Idaria, Nawaiwaqt, 25 March).

“It seems that the rulers want to divide this nation. Many leaders of the government and

the Pakistan Muslim League have said that President Musharraf will be elected once again as the President while he is in uniform... There seems no chance that in future the issues of presidential and general elections will be resolved adequately... This means that we are going to witness more confrontation between the government and the opposition parties. The country is already in a state of internal turmoil... The situation in Balochistan and Waziristan is appalling. Even [retired] General Jahangir Karamat, a General of high calibre, has said that the continued involvement of military in Balochistan and Waziristan is not in Pakistan's long-term interest... I would like to suggest to the rulers that they must not create any further divisions in the country... They must refrain from taming all the state institutions according to their own wishes, and must not enforce their chosen decisions through the use of the state power. They must instead follow a course, which does not bring more division and unrest to this country. This country cannot afford it" (Haqqani, *Kia hukmran qom ko taqseem karnay per tul gaye hain*, Jang, 15 June).

4. Class and power

Some newspaper columns mention the increasing class and power gaps in Pakistani society. The issues of uneven distribution of resources and lack of social accountability are also discussed. However there is little emphasis on the intersectionality of ethnicity/ race and class.

"We are a nation which is divided because of the political power, [conflicting] economic interests, geographical divisions, and many other factors. In terms of religion we are divided into many sects" (Naji, *Aalmi qanoon sazi ki zuroorat*, Jang, 15 February).

"Islam is a comprehensive revolutionary political system, which started its movement by bringing down the elite Arabs, and by elevating the oppressed of the world.... At the eve of the conquest of Makkah, when the founder of the revolution [the Prophet of Islam] entered Allah's house [Ka'ba], there was no Arab chief or representative of the powerful groups accompanying him, it was an ex-slave from Habsha [Ethiopia] who raised the name of Allah at the roof of the Ka'ba and said to the world...come to the welfare... This was the first proclamation of a welfare state for all the people.... This country [Pakistan], which was created in the name of Islam, has neither Islam nor democracy. We are the slaves of a worse form of the capitalistic system, which does not have any relation to the Islamic principles [of welfare]" (Hasan, *Namoosay risalat aur paighamay risalat*, Jang, 25 February).

Some columnists highlight the subtle or visible collusion between different axes of power, such as between Mullahs and military, or between the feudal lords, Mullahs and the political parties.

"Mullah politicians are the traditional supporters of the military rule. For both of them, [military and Mullahs], [remaining in power] government and their own interests is the first priority" (Naji, *Siasat siasat hay*, Jang, 15 March).

"Islamic ideology council was a deceitful creation.... The greedy feudal lords of the

Muslim League (the false coins in the Quaid's pocket) had started their 'transactions' in the exchange market of political shares through false and capitalistic means... Truth had become a stranger in this country" (Haq, *Aur sach ajnabi hota gaya*, Jang, 5 July).

"If we examine the present situation and society in Pakistan, we will see that the people are not at all satisfied with the traditional political parties. The people are now left with two key ideologies as options. One option involves the adoption of a puritanical Islamic system. Such party may be termed as the rightist party... Second ideology, which is now becoming more visible, is the socialist system of equity. This ideology is becoming popular because of the unleashed prevalence of capitalism in this country... The time is ripe that either people should have a permanent party based on pure Islamic principles otherwise people shall support a party that promotes the idea of socialist equity.... All Islamic parties in Pakistan seem to be incapable of implementing the Islamic system. If we examine the 60 years of Pakistan's history, we will see that the religious parties have only created sectarian grouping in this country. Nevertheless people don't trust them anymore. To bring Islamic system, we don't need a party labelled as Islamic. Every Pakistani can do that" (Ali, *Pakistan aur us kay masail ka hal*, Jang 15 June).

The following anecdote cleverly depicts the role of class and power divide in Pakistani style of democracy.

"Our politicians have become mini gods. Once, Rana Sahib, who was a respected member in a previous national assembly, was told [by his staff] that his very close servant Karmoo has been apprehended by the police, for his alleged involvement in the setting on fire the farms of his (Rana's) opponents. Rana did not pay any heed. He was retold that the police has arrested Karmoo; and that Karmoo's wife and children beg you that Karmoo be rescued from the police torture. Rana kept on smoking, without paying any heed. When someone tried to repeat this [urgent] news once again, Rana said, "I have heard what you told me. Have a bit of patience, which is the greatest blessing of God for the poor. I will go to the police station to rescue Karmoo. But before that let him have a bit of bashing [torture/insult] at the police station, otherwise he will not be that grateful to me" (Bhai, *Kyun daray zindan khulta hay*, Jang, 5 July).

"A state bereft of ideology is like a drowning man clutching at straws that are but alien systems or ideologies that can't keep it afloat. ... If they turn away from what is natural to them and try and be something they are not, they flounder and finally drown. The graveyards of the world are littered with failed states, and there is room for many more. A state that fails its people fails humanity and when it fails humanity it fails God. Man is not only God's greatest creation, Ashraful Makhlookat; he is also His vicegerent or Khalifa on earth. To Him belongs all Sovereignty, which He has devolved on his Khalifa. To fail God's greatest creation is to fail God. It becomes far worse for a state for the creation of which people agitated in the name of God and which took upon itself the mantle of "Islamic republic" and then forgot all about it and became a model of what an Islamic state ought not to be, instead of a model to be emulated... Which is why I suggested that our ideology, indeed every Muslim's and Muslim country's ideology, ought to be Haqooqul Ibad and their implementation, central to which is the concept of

adl or balance. Only by doing that can a state become a central community or ummatun wasata and the Muslims can be justifiably called, "A People Most Balanced" (Gauhar, *Kia tum aql say kam naheen laitay*, *Nawaiwaqt*, 5 June).

“Agricultural reforms must be enacted so that poor farmers and bonder labourers can have their own lands free from the exploitative occupation of the feudal lords and tribal chiefs. Such lands owned by the poor must be protected by social cooperative organisations” (Haqqani, *Aik adilana jamhoori muashray kay qiam kay liay chand tajaweez*, *Jang*, 5 February).

“The history of Islam is a witness that before the Prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad, nobody was aware of democracy, secularism or judiciary. The entire world was being ruled by monarchs. Every single word uttered by the monarch was law and justice... God bestowed the nation of his last Prophet the system of democracy, so that the deserving could get their due, and so that human beings could get rid of monarchs and dictators, and have peace on earth.... Because of the virtues of the democratic system, non-Muslims liked it and adopted it in their countries, whereas Muslims reverted back to the same monarchy which they had got rid of through God’s religion” (Islahi, *Islami nizamay jamhooriyat*, *Jang*, 5 July).

“There has to be a reason why a country is deliberately carved out from another. That reason is its justification for existence, its *raison d'etre*. It is that reason that is the raw material from which its ideology is fashioned and crafted. "Islamic republic" and "homeland for Muslims" are not ideologies; the first is a description, the other is a reason. And that is as far as we have gone in nearly sixty years. We couldn't - or wouldn't - craft a modern, dynamic and progressive Islamic ideology that was social-democratic and egalitarian because that would have gone against the interests of the tribal warlord and the feudal robber baron. But the time has now come that if we don't give the nation an ideological anchor and go on pandering to the primitive tribal-feudal combine, it will either remain in the doldrums celebrating spasmodic rises in economic indicators or its existence will come under threat. Next week we will look at what that ideological anchor could be” (Gauhar, *Leadership ka fuqdan*, *Nawaiwaqt*, 15 May 2006).

Some columns highlight the past experiences (such as the creation of Bangladesh) as a way to examine the current inter-province mistrust and tensions in today’s Pakistan.

“In East Pakistan, elections were contested not for the government but as an opportunity to [challenge and] undo the deprivations. Since Bangalis had been distanced from the decision making at the national level by denying their majority rights, and even in their provincial affairs, West Pakistan was playing a dominant role. The Bangali people were in fact fighting for their freedom [through participation in elections], and Awami League had transformed the election campaign into the war for independence. ... On the one side there were the rulers of the West Pakistan and their agents, on the other, there was Bangalis revolt, which was a popular movement against the neo-colonial dictatorship...” (Naji, *Mawazna*, *Jang*, 25 June).

“Pakistani politicians must realise that the acutely dangerous situation in Balochistan is the greatest challenge for this country after the 1971 tragedy [the separation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh]. The resolution to this problem lies in an honest and democratic approach. Semi-military organisations such as the Frontier Constabulary and the colonial style police and administration are incapable of resolving this conflict” (Haqqani, *Pakistan ki siyasi aur aeeni soorathaal kay liay chand tajaweez*, Jang, 25 February).

5. Domestic disputes and the inter-group tensions

A number of issues highlighted in the columns relate to the domestic disputes and inter-group tensions in Pakistanis society such as the conflict on sharing of the river water, the royalty of natural gas and other mineral resources, Islamisation of laws, and the representation and recognition of cultural groups within the structures of power. The river Indus, and a proposal for the construction of Kala Bagh Dam is one of the key inter-provincial disputes in today’s Pakistan.

“Mr Ghulam Akbar Malik has declared Sindhis as the historical heir and the only owners of the river Indus, which is completely wrong. This has hurt the feelings of the millions of Seraikis who live on the both sides of the river and also the people in Pakhtunkhwa and Pothwar regions. We very much acknowledge the right of Sindhis on the Indus river, but how can we deprive Hindkos of Peshawar, Pothwaris of Islamabad, Pashtuns of Kohat and Nowshehra, and millions of Seraikis from Kala Bagh to Kashmore to have a right on this river” (Haqqani, *Daryay sindh say taaluq aur ishq kay mazeed dawaydar*, Jang, 15 February).

“There are debates on the renaming of the NWFP.... Punjab has not been named after a nation or race, but because of the land of five rivers, Sindh has been named after the river Indus. However Balochistan is named after the Baloch nation, that’s why Sarhad’s (NWFP) name should be related to it. Gandhara and Waziristan could be two options. After that the third natural option could be Pathanistan. Generally when someone asks us who lives in the NWFP, our reply in one word is Pathan” (Ali, *Pakistan aur us kay msail ka hal*, Jang, 15 June).

Some columns highlight the complexities of domestic issues such as the issue of religious madrassahs and religious extremism, which have enormous implications for the sectarian divisions within Pakistani society.

“President Musharraf is right when he says that it is not possible to close down the Madrassahs because by doing that one million students will be forced to come on the streets. I understand that this figure is more than a million because it does not include the hundreds rather thousands of minor madrassahs which are located in the rural mosques... According to an estimate, Pakistan has about 14,000 or more madrassahs, out of which Deobandi school has 9000 madrassahs, Barevli school has 3500, about 300madrassahs are under the auspices of Jamaat Islami, 700 are affiliated with Ahle Hadith school whereas 500 are affiliated with Fiqh Jafria.... Any madrassah where they teach Qur’an and Hadith does not preach violence and hatred against the fellow human beings created

by God. This thing [preaching of violence] is only possible in those madrassahs where teachers are propagating their personal agendas or opinions” (Yazdani, Deeni madarson ki ahmiat, Jang, 5 April).

“Let us examine the last ten or fifteen years... Since there have been bomb blasts in mosques, imam bargahs, graveyards and religious congregations, people have become afraid of going to the places of worship for worshipping... On the other hand, our official machinery has completely failed. Whether it is the earthquake [of Kashmir] or the Nishtar Park bomb blast, it is now confirmed that our administration is uninformed and poorly equipped” (Chaudhary, Insaan insan kay saiy say darta hay, Jang, 15 April).

“In the current times, terrorism has disguised itself within the religious and political outfit. That’s why it has become more grave and threatening. Thus, it is the need of the hour to monitor the situation, and remain vigilant without any room for relaxing or compromise. In these circumstances, it is not only the government but also the family and society which must keep an eye on their members [to see] if there is any emotional or attitudinal change taking place in a person which might be harmful to the country or the society” (Idaria, Khufia idaray aur dehshat gardi ka challenge, Jang, 15 April).

“Hudood laws are such a matter that a person fond of Islam (like me) too thinks (because of clear cut reasons) that in its current form, the Hudood laws are not only in contradiction with the spirit of Islam, but they prove Islam’s message based on justice as discriminatory. Therefore, it is in the interest of Islam that these laws are amended” (Nadeem, Ab usama say la talluqi kyun, Jang, 5 April).

Some columnists highlight the importance of locally accessible resources and the representation of local people in the regional projects.

“When President General Musharraf went to Multan, he promised to give Multan a women’s university and a TV station. We can’t find a TV station as yet, however there is now a so-called women’s university in Multan. It is a half-made university because the classes are being conducted in the Girls College and the degree will be awarded by the Bahauddin Zakria University... Yet no decision has been made for the Vice Chancellor’s post. If they were searching for somebody for this post outside Multan, then it would be unfair with Multan. Everyone knows that there are capable female professors in Multan whose knowledge and abilities are acknowledged the world over” (Ashar, Munafa bakhsh ohday aur multan ki khawateen university, Jang, 5 April).

“Wapda has been instructed to explore the possibilities of [providing reliable] electricity to the people in Karachi, which if Wapda finds them [‘the possibilities’] can rescue the citizens of Karachi from the harsh summer of June and July. This instruction for exploring the options has been given to Wapda at a time when three-fourths of Karachiites, old, children and sick have lost their mental balance. Does Wapda exist somewhere very far from Pakistan at a heavenly location? Or does not its administration read newspapers? This is the issue of about fifteen to twenty million human beings; and also billions of rupees worth of industrial production every day... Karachi expected better

than this treatment by the Prime Minister” (Aali, Naqqar khanay main, Jang, 25 June).

6. International political influences

International politics has further reinforced Pakistan’s Islamic identity; generating a fear in its people that Muslims all over the world are suffering because of their Islamic identity.

“The treatment of Muslims at the airports in the Western countries is shameful. Every Muslim is treated as a terrorist. Even, state delegations are mistreated. Sometime ago Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz lead a state delegate to the USA; members of his delegation were mistreated, which everyone saw [on TV], and they were extremely embarrassed” (Shah, Ghazi ilmuddin shaheed aur halia khakay, Nawaiwaqt, 15 March).

“If the world of Islam is facing humiliation and oppression that is because our rulers never had a coherent strategy to cope with such circumstances” (Rasheed, Mot aur zindagi, Nawaiwaqt, 25 July).

Most columnists treat the US-led war on terror and other conflicts involving Muslim peoples as an extension of the colonial era, and the next generation of crusades against Muslim countries.

“Western imperialism always tried to divide Muslims and encouraged religious racial/ethnic and linguistic divisions to break Muslims strength.” (Idaria, Musalmanon kay ittehad aur yekjehti ko todnay kay liay israeli or amreeki sazish, 25 February)

“American agenda was aimed at creating certain circumstances in Pakistan to achieve the following objectives: first, Pakistan Afghanistan and Iran troika should not forge an alliance. If they became together, then according to a Brooklyn institute hypothesis, due to joint human resources, technology and natural resources in this area, the troika will become extremely influential; the West will lose its influence in the central Asia and the Middle East, and it will not be possible for the West to access natural resources in this region. Second, if Iran and Pakistan are engaged in confrontation against each other it will enable the US to deal with Iran so that Israel’s security is ensured. Third, Afghanistan’s natural resources are mostly located in the areas controlled by the Northern Alliance, thus the US wants to focus its attention on the northern Afghanistan and also wants to get rid of the Taliban controlled South East Afghanistan. In order to achieve that aim, the US may instigate the Pakhtunistan issue. Fourth, in order to safely access the Central Asian natural resources, the US wants to reduce the size of Pakistan, and for that purpose, the tribes may be instigated to continue their guerrilla activities against the Pakistan government, including sabotage activities in the Pak-Afghan border area, Waziristan, Mehmend agency. Now, military cantonments in Wana and Shabqadr are as much in danger as they used to be during the British colonial era. Fifth, Balochistan is the second key barrier [to the US] in accessing the Central Asian resources. Through its independence it will be possible for the US and the West to coerce the two small independent states [Pakhtunistan and Balochistan which will be subservient to the

Western interests] by serving as a conduit to ship the Central Asian resources to the West through the Arabian sea” (Malik, Qomi baqa ka aik hi rasta, Nawaiwaqt, 5 July).

“In Palestine and Lebanon, Israel has devastated everything. The next target is Syria; civilians - men, women and children are dying. Property is being damaged, no one is helping the oppressed and the devastated people, no one is asking the Jewish state to respect the international laws, and peace and civilisation. Nobody is paying attention to the situation of the oppressed Palestinians. This is an era which is known as an era of the superiority of civilisations, in which Palestinians are subject to continued oppression, injustice and violence, which was unprecedented even in the dark ages... Muslim countries seem to be unable to help” (Rahman, Barbariat ki sarparasti kab tak, Nawaiwaqt, 15 July).

“The ongoing blasphemy against the Prophet of Islam [in the context of the Danish cartoons] is a serious incident, which may have far reaching consequences. If the West did not refrain from this unwise approach, then the growth of the extremist Muslims within the Islamic world will be attributable to those Western governments and media which are unaware of Muslims’ sensitivity and utmost regard for Islam and the Prophet of Islam” (Idaria, Jang, Maghribi mumalik islam kay baray main muanidana rawayon ko rokain, Jang, 5 February 2006).

“From a realistic perspective, soon the West will need to admit that inter-religious understanding is not possible unless we learn to respect the founders of the sacred religions, and respect their sacred books and teachings” (Haq, Bainulmazahib mufahimat ka wahid rasta, Jang, 15 February).

Pakistan’s long-standing conflict with India over the state of Jammu and Kashmir is perhaps the most important influence on Pakistani society and politics. Many articles highlight that Pakistan’s identity is incomplete without Kashmir.

“Kashmir and Pakistan are integral parts of each other. Without Kashmir Pakistan is geographically as well in terms of its name incomplete...” (Ahmed, 5 Farwary - yom yekjehti kashmir, Nawaiwaqt, 5 February).

“To express solidarity with Kashmiris is not just a question of moral support, Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan. Because of its importance, the British rulers created this pre-planned problem with the emergence of the two independent states of India and Pakistan... Kashmiris are not only fighting for their right of self-determination. They are also fighting for the integrity and strengthening of Pakistan” (Kazemi, Kashmirion say yekjehti, hamara imani taqaza, Jang, 5 February).

Some articles highlight that the internal unrest in some provinces in Pakistan is caused by certain foreign forces, which are bent on destabilising Pakistan in order to promote their own ‘ulterior motives’.

“Ever since the expedition of a process of development in Balochistan, the pace of

destabilisation in Balochistan has also been expedited. One key reason is the construction of Gawadar Port. When Gawadar Port becomes operational, it will become the largest commercial, industrial and economic centre of the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, bringing about an economic revolution not only in Balochistan and Sindh but the entire Pakistan... When Pakistan's economic circumstances are improved, it will then become a strong country in terms of defence, and when it will play its due role because of its political and military influence, the geo-strategic importance of many other countries will be curtailed in the region... Obviously those countries do not want that, and they are playing their role in creating destabilisation in Balochistan, and are convincing Balochi population that Balochistan's development will make Balochis a minority within their own province... Those who want to create economic and political destabilisation in Balochistan and Sindh cannot be the well wishers of Pakistan" (Yazdani, *Jamhooriat main ikhtilafay rai ki ahmiyat*, Jang, 25 May).

7. The way forward

Some opinion columns and policy editorials highlight the possible way forward to the issues and challenges faced by Pakistani society. Such approaches underscore the need for creating harmony and peaceful coexistence through dialogue and negotiations.

"He used to say that Urdu and Hindi literature and these two languages can play a key role in restoring and maintaining peace in the subcontinent" (Hina, *Siah burqay main kamla das surayya*, Jang, 5 April).

In response to the inter-group tensions and violence, there are suggestions that the people must exercise tolerance and patience to tackle the divisions in society.

"[In response to a terrorist/sectarian incident] I would like to submit that one cannot but accept the gravity and seriousness of the tragedy...however tolerance, patience and control can be exercised so that the results and consequences are not adverse...We should control the emotions in order to save human lives... We must need to take care of the innocent lives, which become victim of our angst and grief" (Sabzwari, *Josh ki bajay hosh ki zuroorat*, Jang, 25 April).

"It is agreed that the entire country is aggrieved and angry because of this blasphemy [against the Prophet of Islam – in the context of the Danish cartoons], however the expression should have been different to what was unfortunately adopted. Rampage and burning [property] is not a civilised way to protesting. The loss of human life is most deplorable.... Such sabotage activities have no connection with the honour of the Prophet" (Qureshi, *Tazheeki khakay, ihtijaj, intizamia*, Jang, 25 February).

"The people who are responsible for this tragedy [a sectarian terrorist incident in Nishtar Park, Karachi] could be only those who want to defame Islam, Pakistan and Karachi" (Sabzwari, *Josh ki bajay hosh ki zuroorat*, Jang, 25 April).

"Geo TV channel has started consultations with Pakistan's eminent religious scholars

from every school on the issue of the contradictory Hudood Ordinance. This is worth noticing in the context that it has opened the pathway for the citizens of this country to speak on those topics openly, which were previously left untouched. In view of the religious affairs in the world today, and in the backdrop of a process of inter-religious harmony through dialogue, it is imperative that we are engaged in national debates on Hudood Ordinance. It is an important step to build a civil society in Pakistan where religion cannot be used for people's exploitation. It is encouraging people to think. 'Think for a while' movement is a positive step to bring the imperative of logic and rationality to a society which traditionally experiences an undeclared ban on thinking about one's beliefs; where the tribal, feudal, capitalistic cultures have deprived people from living the way of life they want to live" (Idaria, Hudood ordinance per ulmay karam ka mutwazan izaharay khyal, Jang, 25 May).

Some articles strongly advocate the importance of a dialogue in order to resolve the inter-provincial tensions and misunderstandings.

"Today there is no leader in Balochistan, of the calibre of Qazi Isa, who could tell people and convince them that their culture is not endangered, and nobody is challenging their cultural traditions.... It is important that those who are negotiating on Balochistan affairs are from Balochistan, who are aware of the Baloch thoughts, local culture and values, and their emotions.... Ataullah Maingal and Akbar Bugti are the name of a psychological position. We must not look at them as tribal chiefs. They are tribal chiefs, but before that they are Baloch.... It is the need of the hour that the dialogue must take place in their own language, in view of their own traditions, and through their own people" (Yazdani, Leader who hay jis ko qom tasleem karay, Jang, 5 July).

"The internal and external forces which want to obstruct Pakistan's progress are bent on destabilising the Sindh politically and economically... There is a need to examine the Balochistan issue in depth. There is a need to think and to act wisely to resolve these issues. The difference of opinion there has resulted in open clash. There is a history of the problems and conflicts in Balochistan... No body has given due importance to dialogue... The solution enforced by gun is never durable. That is why all disputes should be resolved through negotiations" (Yazdani, Jamhooriyat main ikhtilafay rai ki ahmiyat, Jang, 25 May).

"In my opinion, in order to safeguard Pakistan's existence [integrity], we must implement its objectives. The first and the foremost is to bring Islamic system in this country, to bring peace and prosperity for the entire world, and also to strengthen and give due autonomy to every unit in this country... Provincial autonomy will result in harmony and affection in this country... In Balochistan, the situation today is a result of the denial of the objectives of Pakistan Resolution. The time is ripe that we must implement that resolution, and in the spirit of love, welfare and harmony, must give Balochistan its rights so that Pakistan is strengthened. Balochistan will then become a strong arm of Pakistan which will demonstrate better results than other provinces" (Ali, Pakistan aur us kay msail ka hal, Jang 15 June).

Discussion and conclusions

The data reveals that the issues related to diversity and subcultures in Pakistani society remain generally ignored or downplayed. The media's portrayal of cultural diversity is problematic in several respects: (1) there is an overwhelming emphasis on Pakistan's Islamic identity, which serves as a broad melting pot within which other forms of identity such as race/ethnicity or sect seem to be dissolved or remain widely invisible; (2) there is evidence of generally negative connotations about ethnic or religious sub-identities. Any identity other than Pakistan's national identity or Islam is considered injurious to Pakistan. Consequently, there is significant discrepancy in the concept of 'Pakistani identity' and how it fits with the realities of a multicultural society. Some communities remain subject to direct abhorrence and exclusion e.g. Ahmedis, Hindus and Sikhs, whereas for others the aversion is more indirect e.g. Christians and Shias. Also there is a lack of understanding of the issues and challenges faced by ethnic and religious minorities. Information available through the popular media is minimal and insufficient; (3) there is a frequent emphasis on the need for free and fair democratic institutions and provincial autonomy. There is noticeable resentment against the issues of a lack of popular or indigenous representation in the government and administration, uneven distribution of power and wealth, unchecked police authority, ineffective judiciary, and a lack of social accountability; (4) class and power gaps are mentioned but the intersectionality of various forms of identity and class is generally ignored. A noticeable resentment was there against unchecked policy authority, ineffective judiciary, and the uneven distribution of resources and power. The powerful groups highlighted by the media include military, feudal lords, tribal chiefs, and Mullahs; (5) there are a number of domestic disputes, which are a source of inter-group tensions and mistrust. Such issues include sharing of water and mineral resources, preservation of sub-cultural identity, lack of provincial autonomy, and indigenous under-representation in the structures of power; (6) international politics and Pakistan's geo-strategic location seem to reinforce the focus on Pakistan's Islamic identity, and a widely shared concern in its population that their fellow Muslims in the neighbouring Muslim countries such as Afghanistan and the Middle East are suffering because of their Islamic identity. Pakistan's long-standing dispute over Kashmir with India has further reinforced this concern; (7) some analysts do suggest pragmatic resolution to Pakistan multicultural issues and challenges through dialogue and negotiations. Table 3 offers a summary of the key themes identified in this paper.

The paper has demonstrated that Islam is the predominant discourse in Pakistan, which serves as the overwhelming melting pot of any sub-cultures including ethnic and religious identities. The opinion columns and policy editorials seem to present and perpetuate the discourses in which any identity other than the Islam or Pakistan is treated as undesirable or less valued. Issues of ethnic minorities though highlighted at macro-political level lack thorough understanding and information. For instance, no data and analysis is presented in terms of issues such as unemployment, indigenous cultural practices and their protection, local environment, etc. Their perspectives remain hidden, issues and challenges largely misunderstood.

| Theme | Description |
|---|--|
| Islamic melting pot | An overwhelming emphasis on Pakistan's Islamic identity, which serves as a broad melting pot within which other forms of identity such as race/ethnicity or sect seem to be dissolved or remain widely invisible; |
| Negative connotations about diversity | Generally negative connotations about ethnic or religious sub-identities. Any identity other than Pakistan's national identity or Islam is considered injurious to Pakistan. Consequently, there is significant discrepancy in the concept of 'Pakistani identity' and how it fits with the realities of a multicultural society. Some communities remain subject to direct abhorrence and exclusion e.g. Ahmedis, Hindus and Sikhs, whereas for others the aversion is more indirect e.g. Christians and Shias. |
| Emphasis on democracy and provincial autonomy | A frequent emphasis on the need for free and fair democratic institutions and provincial autonomy. There is noticeable resentment against the issues of a lack of popular or indigenous representation in the government and administration and centralised power structures, |
| Limited emphasis on class and power gaps | An emphasis on class and power gaps, and social justice; but the intersectionality of various forms of identity and class is generally ignored. The powerful groups highlighted by the media include military, feudal lords, tribal chiefs, capitalists, and Mullahs. There is resentment against the unchecked police authority, ineffective judiciary, and a lack of social accountability. |
| Domestic disputes | There are a number of domestic disputes, which are a source of inter-group tensions and distrust. Such issues include sharing of water and mineral resources, preservation of sub-cultural identity, and indigenous under-representation in the structures of power; |
| International politics | International politics and Pakistan's geo-strategic location seem to reinforce the focus on Pakistan's Islamic identity, and a widely shared concern in its population that their fellow Muslims in the world are suffering because of their Islamic identity. Pakistan's long-standing dispute over Kashmir with India has further reinforced this concern |
| Lack of information and understanding of issues faced by minorities | Information available through the popular media is minimal and insufficient, and there seems to be little appreciation of the issues and challenges faced by ethnic and religious minorities in Pakistani society and institutions. For instance, issues related to unemployment, low literacy rates, access to basic health and education are hardly discussed. |
| The way forward | Some analysts do suggest pragmatic resolution to Pakistan's multicultural issues and challenges through dialogue and negotiations. |

Table 3. Representation of cultural diversity in Pakistani media

The paper has highlighted the generally negative connotations associated with ethnic, religious or sectarian identity other than Islam. Any other form of identification remains prone to the allegations of foreign conspiracy or collusion. Within the political contexts, the paper has identified two key factors: First, the internal political factors i.e. the lack of democratic institutions and political participation has further fuelled the resentment within the population, in particular within the ethnic and religious minorities. Second, the external political factors, which are an outcome of Pakistan's pan-Islamic discourse,

influenced in particular by the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. The paper has demonstrated that despite the diversity of its population, an overwhelming emphasis on Islam, the negative connotations with the subcultures and a lack of political participation and representation have meant that in practice Pakistan is pursuing socio-political policies which are assimilationist, not multicultural in nature. It is important that the voices, which are calling for a constructive inter-group dialogue and political participation, are heard and their suggestions implemented. An assimilationist and centre-focused approach has not proved useful in the past - resulting in the East Pakistan's separation from Pakistan in 1971. There is little evidence to suggest that such an approach will be useful in the future.

In terms of the implications of this study, researchers may like to examine the issues and challenges faced by the members of various minority groups within the employment contexts in Pakistan. Kemal (2005) suggests that Pakistan lies in the low level of skill development, lacking in all three types of skills: creative and cognitive skills, personal and social skills and most importantly vocational skills. Kemal suggests that skill development and human resource development are crucial if Pakistan is to make steady progress in terms of sustained economic growth. Within this context, researchers may like to examine how employers and managers tackle the socio-political and legal biases against the ethnic and religious subcultures within an employment market faced with a dearth of skilled human capital.

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