

## Appendix 1: Interviews for the Thesis

1. Manzar Turk - Editor Geo.tv - Member Jang editorial board - Male
2. Sohail Warraich - Editor Jang Editorial - Male
3. Mazhar Abbas - Team Member - Jang Editorial - Male
4. Zia ur Rehman - Former Jang staffer - Male
5. Dr Tauseef - Former Jang staffer - Male

Appendix 2: Manzar Elahi Turk – Member Jang group editorial board – Editor Geo.tv

1. Where do you position Jang Newspaper in ideological spectrum?

Manzar: In my opinion it is a center-right paper. But it is important to note that the Jang group owns two newspaper: Jang News and The News. The latter is in English. You will find difference in the voice of both the newspapers. The Urdu medium newspaper in general in Pakistan is inclined towards conservatism but not totally though as in many of the cases the response of the newspaper is gauged by the situation. Because we have a strong reach all over Pakistan to even the segment of the society that are not strictly tolerant hence we have to be very cautious. We make decisions based on the social acceptance of the issues in hand - we can gradually or slowly educate them but we can not bombard them with information that they can not understand.

2. What factors are taken into consideration by the Jang editorial department on writing editorials linked with the foreign policy.

Manzar: Let's keep aside India in this equation. We totally toes the line of national interest there; and our national interest lies against what India does. We don't have to be cautious there because there is nothing there to be taken care of. There are no existing relations right now. But when it comes to the

diplomatic relationship with the United States of America, China, Iran and Afghanistan, there are some other factors that are taken into consideration. For Afghanistan, for instance, it is a neighbourly Muslim nation but the diplomatic engagement of the day - the state policy - with them are the most prominent factor that is taken into consideration in the editorials. The editorial team always have that consideration that our work should not deteriorate our diplomatic relations especially with China and the United States of America.

3. Was there any dissent in the editorial meetings when devising editorials centered on Afghan Taliban takeover

Manzar: The reactions were centered on the anti-American premise. The general society, including the editorial board, were looking at the Afghan question with a zero-sum approach. They said that the US presence was harmful for the region's interest, and because of them our situation deteriorated, the US-backed Afghan government was pro-India. The impression was that the anti-Pakistan insurgency are instigated by New Delhi with Afghanistan being a safe haven. The general editorial opinion had some sympathy for Taliban. If there was no pro-Taliban editorials, there were no anti-Taliban editorials either.

**4. Can you tell us the general interest of the people on this issue?**

Manzar: To be honest, the country is not interested in in depth coverage of Afghanistan so are the advertisers. The revenue and interest of the people play a very prominent role here. The Jang newspaper also sides with the state narrative on the issue because its major finances comes from the state advertisements, it does not want to risk its revenue by going critical against it”.

5. Did our good bilateral historical relations with Taliban also influence the editorial judgment?

Manzar: The India factor, our relations with Afghanistan after 9/11, the Afghan Jihad all were influencing factor; perhaps that is why the men on street and journalist in editorial room had a positive outlook towards Taliban.

6. Censorship is an elephant in the room in Pakistan. Are editorials written while taking into consideration the state’ s narrative, or becoming cautious of not crossing the state’ s red line.

Manzar: Censorship is a reality that we can not deny. The powers-that-be enforce censorship, but what we have seen that the editorial rooms now self- censor content especially in regards to Afghanistan without even the dictation. But I can say with

confidence that I have not personally witnessed any directive during the takeover where the state has told the media to portray Taliban as hero or villain. We covered Afghanistan with independence with no pressure. But that being said the majority saw Taliban with less skeptic way than the previous regime which we believed facilitated terror bombing inside Pakistan. The editorial board took the widely held opinion that while the American forces if not spread the terror inside Pakistan, did not stop it either. The editorials reflected the public view that maybe the region will be

peaceful if the US leaves Afghanistan, and it can improve our situation. Pakistani media has a lot of polarization, we have seen increased in it lately, hence there is a lot of danger of push back through negative campaigns because in our country it is not a difficult task to arrange mob attacks; the space for dissent is shrinking leading to violence. The media houses face disastrous reaction if it goes against the popular opinion perpetuated by the state. Jang press prefers to give dissenting opinion in subtlety, between the lines, but not in a hard-hitting manner that may warrant a negative reaction.

7. How as a journalist do you view personally the Pakistani foreign policy on the Afghan Taliban takeover.

Manzar: Pakistan has always been confused about Afghanistan. The powers that decides everything in Pakistan are also confused whether we have to support them, be neutral or be against them. I find our foreign policy to meddle in internal matters of other countries counter-productive that has not given positive results to us. The US exit was supported by Pakistan but when they left our issues multi folded, because the people we considered our allies devised policies that were in their own interest not ours. To counter them, we sent back their refugees now it has stopped. The lack of consistency in our

policy in our foreign policy especially in regards to Afghanistan. As a Muslim brother, our sympathies lies with them but then the relatively open border has economically hurt us because of dollar smuggling. We are not certain what our state policy would be in terms of Afghanistan because every new regime follows a new policy.

## Appendix 3: Sohail Warraich – Editor Jang Editorial

### **1. Where do you position Jang Newspaper in ideological spectrum?**

Sohail: In the past the Jang newspaper ideologically aligned towards right wing on ideological spectrum but under my editorship I believed today it is a paper with center-left ideology.

### **2. What factors are taken into consideration by the Jang editorial department on writing editorials linked with the foreign policy?**

Sohail: The state foreign policy is the biggest factor that is taken into consideration before writing editorials especially on Afghanistan issue. We protect, promote and secure the national interest through our platform. But

that does not mean that we are never critical about the state's foreign policy, indeed we are, we try to give our advisory take on the state's policy but of course the biggest priority is the national interest on the issue.

3. Censorship is an elephant in the room in Pakistan. Are editorials written while taking into consideration the state's narrative, or becoming cautious of not crossing the state's redline.

Sohail: I can confirm that there was no pressure from any state quarters to dictate us on what to write and what not to write in the editorials. It was all our call. The censorship is of course a reality in Pakistan and we have been a victim of it but on this particular issue of Afghan Taliban takeover in 2021 there was no directive or guideline. But we are of course cautious.

4. Can you please elaborate what does it mean to be cautious as an editor?

Sohail: The Jang newspaper has the biggest share in the market, with the maximum reach, hence it makes it the most effective opinion-maker of the country. We are a strong player in the country. Our news, opinions, editorials, even cartoons have an impact on the country. While it makes us stand out from the rest, it is also true that the state looks at us through a very critical lens. It



may forgive and give leniency to the mistake of others but for us it is a different ball game. We have suffered state oppression in different times because of being in clash with the state narrative, this is why for the sake of the well being of the press and its employees, we understand that it is in our interest to always remain cautious when it comes on writing editorials centering on the state policies that it considers sensitive.

5. Was there any dissent in the editorial meetings when devising editorials centered on Afghan Taliban takeover

Sohail: I believe we reflected the general sentiment of the people and state of Pakistan in our editorials. I don't remember any dissent or debate within the editorial rooms.

6. How as a journalist do you view personally the Pakistani foreign policy on the Afghan Taliban takeover.

Sohail: In my opinion, Pakistani foreign policy on the Afghan Taliban takeover was wrong on my many accounts. Our biggest issue is our confusion on what should be our foreign policy for Afghanistan. The biggest lesson that we should learn from our ordeals is that we should not interfere in their internal matters and if they are interfering we should give them a

proportionate response. We should not conspire against them neither let them conspire against us. We called them our brothers, celebrated their takeover - now they have become a problem, we first cheered for American presence in Afghanistan then called for American withdrawal from the region. There is definitely something wrong with our foreign policy. We are still unsure what should we do.

7. What is your personal opinion about Taliban as a group and its governance?

Sohail: I don't subscribe to their views and mode of governance. It is an armed group that is imposing their views through the barrel of gun.

Afghanistan today is not a free society. It does not have freedom of expression, it does not give freedom of choice neither freedom to practice religion of one's own choice.

## Appendix 4: Mazhar Abbas – Team Member – Jang Editorial

**1. Where do you position of Jang Newspaper in ideological spectrum?**

Mazhar: The Jang newspaper can be placed center to the right on the ideological spectrum. I believe that it has a professional approach to give news. It does indeed give news. We overplay or underplay news, we may have some tilt, traditionally we have been a right wing paper but it is always our priority to not miss, ignore or hide news.

2. What factors are taken into consideration by the Jang editorial department on writing editorials linked with the foreign policy.

Mazhar: First of all we need to understand one thing and it is that unlike in English papers, editorials in Urdu newspapers are not powerful. It pretty much reflects Pakistan' state policy as it can be seen when the US forces left Afghanistan - and even if the editorials are critical on the state, they are pretty much diluted to the extent that the state does not consider it offensive.

The reason behind it is the fact that while a disclaimer can be given on opinion pages that this is author's personal opinion and the newspaper does not necessarily subscribe to his views, the editorial is newspaper's opinion. The newspaper owners including Jang owner is cautious about what is being printed because it can attract coercive state measures because of the reach and impact of the paper. The state is pretty sensitive there.

We have observed that generally people were celebrating US withdrawal than Taliban takeover, and the editorials generally took that public pleasing editorial line without any caveats.

3. Was there any dissent in the editorial meetings when devising editorials centered on Afghan Taliban takeover

Mazhar: We generally don't have any dissent or disagreement on such matters in the meeting editorial rooms. Even if there is any, we opt for writing advisory editorials which centers on suggesting the Pakistani state authorities to adopt which course of action rather than criticizing the state foreign policy.

4. How as a journalist do you view personally the Pakistani foreign policy on the Afghan Taliban takeover.

Mazhar: Of course it is a testing time for both the countries. It does not matter what one thinks of another but the Pakistani foreign policy went with the general public sentiments on ground that was friendly towards Taliban. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) who we consider a terrorist group assisted the Afghan Taliban in their insurgency against the Americans, now today they are stationed, harbored in the Afghan safe havens. I think our foreign policy

during the takeover could have been better.

## Appendix 5: Zia ur Rehman – Team Member – Jang/The News

### **1. Where do you position Jang Newspaper in ideological spectrum?**

Zia: Jang newspaper does not have any permanent ideological position. It varies according to situation. But having said that generally the Jang newspaper can be said that it is a right-wing paper but it accommodates liberal and leftist voices as well in the opinion section. If looks closely there are times when the newspaper is seen not supportive of Pakistan's policy on Taliban takeover in 2021 but in subtle, hidden words. I will disagree that it is a center-left paper because if it is, then the newspaper should be representing the same ideological position in every of the issue which it does not.

**2. What factors are taken into consideration by the Jang editorial department on writing editorials linked with the foreign policy.**

Zia: In relation to Afghanistan, there are indeed diverse voices within the editorial team. There is indeed division between pro and anti-Taliban voices but when it comes to the security perspective, the entire newspaper follows the narrative and policy guideline given by the security forces. The reason

being that there is no dichotomy or division between owner and editor, at the end of the day it is the owner who gives the final nod on what is going to be printed. The owners for the sake of their business interest obviously align with the state and that in reality is the Pakistan Army. However, the journalists within the editorial rooms sometimes try to give their independent opinion in context to Afghanistan but in a way that it does not alarm the authorities.

3. Censorship is an elephant in the room in Pakistan. Are editorials written while taking into consideration the state's narrative, or becoming cautious of not crossing the state's redline.

Zia: Rather than censorship, in the context of Afghanistan we see that there is self-censorship adopted by the journalists in view of not attracting any trouble with the state. People don't really want to touch those domains that are considered to bring trouble in the future. A big part of the blame lies with the opportunism of the media owners.

4. How as a journalist do you view personally the Pakistani foreign policy on the Afghan Taliban takeover.

Zia: Welcoming Taliban to power was a wrong foreign policy decision perhaps due to the fact that the Pakistanis could not understand the new Taliban phenomena. Our leverage over Taliban has finished with them in

power. Before, the world used to ask us to broker talks with them, now they are directly in contact with them. We are having a tense relationship with them since their takeover; they are not addressing our grievances on refugee crisis, TTP and trade issues.

## Appendix 6: Dr Tauseef – Former Jang staffer

### 1. Where do you position Jang Newspaper in ideological spectrum?

Dr Tauseef: Jang Newspaper has historically been a right-wing newspaper that has always promoted fundamentalist approach. The newspaper's agenda has remained to protect the interest of the military from its news, editorials, and even cartoons. They portrayed military generals as hero and those against them as traitors, but it underwent a gradual change in 1983 when the family ownership was passed on to Mir Shakil ur Rehman. It tried to go towards the progressive-centrist approach but overall the mindset is still pretty right-wing. The religion-nationalism of the Pakistani state is established through this newspaper but there are some instances when the paper moved away from its ideological position for instance the famous Lawyers' Movement, where the lawyers all over Pakistan started a movement for restoration of former Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry who was sacked by the former military general President General Pervaiz Musharraf. Today, the Jang press with all its right-

wing tendencies still give space to the left and liberal voices. It is not as right wing as it was 20-30 years back.

2. What factors are taken into consideration by the Jang editorial department on writing editorials linked with the foreign policy.

Dr Tauseef: Pakistan's foreign policy is formed, executed and regulated by its deep state - Pakistan Army. The Jang newspaper follows the agenda of the deep state. The Urdu newspapers - most prominently Jang - are the prime source of opinion-making in the country. The Jang editorials, which are the stance of the newspaper, are weak and are written for the sake of writing, they don't give the reader any valuable opinion or critical thought but rather a sugarcoated version of the state's press release on issues.

3. Censorship is an elephant in the room in Pakistan. Are editorials written while taking into consideration the state's narrative, or becoming cautious of not crossing the state's redline.

Dr Tauseef: There is no clear cut coercive censorship by the state right now in Pakistan. It is not official or given any legal cover, but it happens. It happens through guidelines given by the army to the media owners. The intelligence



agencies and Jang newspaper work in tandem, a lot of the journalists from the Jang newspaper attend annual workshops held at the National Defence University. There are clear red lines when it comes to the foreign policy, and those red lines are put to protect the state interests laid out by the army. Let's say it is an institutionalized censorship practiced by the media including Jang newspaper to protect the interest of the media owner and the state.

4. Was there any dissent in the editorial meetings when devising editorials centered on Afghan Taliban takeover.

Dr Tauseef: Afghanistan is not big of an issue for the Pakistani journalist to express their dissent or disagreement from the official state policy. There was none. At best there were advisory editorials, calling for restraint on certain matters, but nothing more than that. It has also a lot to do with the financial interests as well. The monopoly of the urban readers for the Jang newspaper does not give a reason to pursue independent, critical journalism on the peripheries of the country including on developments linked to Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The Jang newspaper does not think that Afghanistan is worth the hill to die on by clashing with the Pakistan army. It is a risk without any financial dividend.

5. How as a journalist do you view personally the Pakistani foreign policy on the Afghan Taliban takeover.

Dr Tauseef: It is a disaster. An extension of the age-old disastrous foreign policy that has engulfed the region into violence. The Taliban takeover has not ended the war but has inflamed it further. The Pakistani state can say

whatever on it through its official or unofficial spokesperson the reality remains  
that we have always bet on the wrong horses.