

USES AND ABUSES OF FM RADIOS BY MILITANTS IN FORMER FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS (FATA) AND PROVINCIAALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS (PATA), PAKISTAN (2003-2018)

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Abstract

This research deals with the uses of abuses of FM radios in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the recently merged districts – former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) during the period ranging from 2003 to 2018. Radio is the most effective mean of mass communication. The rapid increase in FM radios and its cheap and easy operation was a source of attraction for many to disseminate their message. The use of FM radio has been on the rapid rise for the last nearly two decades, both for propaganda, political and commercial purposes. The government, private entities and some anti-state elements have made effective use of this media tool. This study analyses the role of government and non-state actors' launched FM radio stations, which include both the legal stations and the pirated or illegal ones. The objectives and functions of Government run FM radio have been discussed. The use of the FM radio for promotion of Islamic teachings has also been thoroughly looked into. Its use by different militant outfits for propagating their message has also been covered. The commercial use of the tool by private entities has also been taken into account.

Key Words

FM radio, communication tool, propaganda, education, information, entertainment

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Introduction

The government launched several FM radio channels after 2000 for what it called education, entertainment and information. But it was observed during this study that the government owned FM channels were mostly used to counter the propaganda of non-state actors and promoting the government version on different issues. Some leading religious scholars in the province also started delivering sermons based on Quranic teachings which gained much popularity among the common masses and they are still considered as the most listened to channels. Impressed by the easy connectivity, not-so-costly installation and massive impact of the FM radios, a number of commercial entities also jumped into the field and launched FM channels, which mostly play music and other entertainment programmes. Limited airtime is allocated for transmission of news and current affairs on these privately-owned FM radios.

The most effective use of this mean of communication was made by the militant outfits during the prolonged wave of militancy in this region. They found FM radio as the most valuable tool for spreading their messages, making announcements and issuing threats to people. This study is significant as it looks into different kind of the FM radios both official and non-official. Before, this no such comprehensive research has been done on the topic.

This study collects data of the number and kinds of FM radio channels established in the KP. It further makes content analysis of the FM radios run by different entities. The aim is to know to know and understand how is this tool of communication used for information, education and entertainment especially by the militants in KP and its new districts for propagation of their cause. It analyzes how this very important tool of communication has been used or misused by promoting a specific version/interpretation of religion, creating hate and terrorising people.

Theoretical Framework

Bullet theory, which is also referred to as ‘hypodermic-needle theory’ or the ‘transmission belt theory’ of communication has been applied to this study.¹ The theory, one of the initial theories of communication, actually deals with the general impact of the tools of mass communication especially radio and television on the general public especially those prone to it.² The

¹ DeFleur, M. L. and S. Ball Rockeach. *Theories of Mass Communication*. 4th ed. (New York: McKay, 1982)

² Severin, S. J., & Tankard, Jr., J. W. *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media* (3rd ed.). (NY, USA: Longman, 1992).

title of ‘bullet theory’ had, however, not been used by the early thinkers of mass communication.³

The bullet theory has been interpreted that the message aired by a television or a radio is like a bullet fired from a gun at the audience and it affects them tremendously. They don’t use their own knowledge and they don’t believe other voices than the one they have heard on the radio and especially from the broadcaster of their choice.⁴

This theory, though not been considered as appropriate by the modern day communication experts, could be perfectly applied to the use and impact of the FM radio in this part of the world during the past more than one decade. Every FM radio launched in different areas of KP and former FATA had a specific target of audience and they were deeply affected by this tool of communication.

Methodology

This is an empirical research. The observations and experiences have been properly analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Data pertaining to different FM Channels has been collected and analyzed. The content of different radio stations has been examined. The articles, reports and surveys pertaining to FM radios have been accessed. In-depth interviews have been conducted with those directly involved in the operation of the FM radios. Senior analysts, researchers and journalists have also been approached and interviewed.

FM Radios

Radio is the most important and lone accessible media tool in former FATA. It is also the only tool on which the people in some districts of KP rely for getting information and entertainment. Radio is still the most effective media tool in this part of the world. This is the reason international broadcasters like the Voice of America (VoA) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) focused their attention in this region and opened new projects like Deewa and Mashal here besides strengthening their already established stations (Rahmanullah, personal communication, May 13, 2018). Apart from the international broadcasters, the government set up three FM radio centers in former FATA, one each in Khyber, North Waziristan and Bajaur Agencies, under the names of Radio Khyber FM 91, Radio North Waziristan FM 96 and Shamal Radio FM 98 in Bajaur Agency respectively.

³ Chaffee, S.H., and J. L. Hochheimer. The beginning of political communication research in the United States: Origin of the ‘Limited Effect Model.’ In M. Gurevitch and M. R. Levy (eds.), *Mass Communication Review Yearbook*, vol. 5. (Beverly Hills, 1985).

⁴ Lilly, J., and A. Lilly. *The Dyadic Cyclone: The Autobiography of a Couple*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1906).

These channels have their transmissions in Urdu, Pashto and Punjabi languages. Also, some two dozen legal FM radios have been operating in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The number of illegally operated FM stations is higher. This was the most effective tool used by the Taliban for spreading their messages and also collecting donations. Important announcements were also made through these illegal FM radios and some threats and decisions would also be declared through these easily operated radios (FRC, 2012).

The FM radio actually filled the information vacuum in both FATA and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA). These radios could technically not be referred to as illegal radio stations as the PEMRA's law had not been extended to FATA and there was no need of acquiring a formal license for running an FM radio.⁵

The FM radios which operated in KP and former FATA during the period under study were more than two dozen in number. Majority of them were controlled by hardcore militants. Some of them were operated from religious seminaries purely for Quranic and Islamic teachings. Some were even owned and run by political figures. Use of FM radios is not new. However, its trend started gaining momentum from Khyber Agency where a religious scholar Mufti Munir Shakir started giving sermons through an FM radio. After him Mulla Fazullah started using FM radio in Swat in 2005. He became so popular through his speeches on radio that the people started calling him 'Radio Mullah'. Another widely heard FM radio was that of Maulvi Faqir Mohammad, the Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leader in Bajaur Agency. Mangal Bagh, another hardcore militant and head of *Lashkar-e-Islam* in Khyber Agency had his own FM radio. Haji Namdar another militant in Khyber Agency also had a separate FM radio in Khyber Agency. Pir Saifur Rahman and Qari Mahboob, the two other clerics from Barelvi sects ran separate FM radios as well. Commander Tariq Afridi had his own FM in Darra Adamkhel.⁶ In Swat two other FM radio were also operated by militant commanders namely Commander Shahid FM and Commander Janat Gul FM.⁷

Some of the FM radios were owned and operated by non-violent religious scholars and clerics for religious education only. Known among them were the one operated from the *Darul Quran Panjpir* in Sawabi district. It would air the Quran lectures delivered by head of the seminary and chief of a religious party – *Ishaat Tauheed wal Sunnah* – Maulana

⁵ Ali, M. *The Rise of 'Radio Mullah'*. 2013, December 23. Retrieved May 12, 2018, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/23/the-rise-of-radio-mullah/>

⁶ Khan, M. A. The FM Mullahs and the Taliban's Propaganda War in Pakistan. *Terrorism Monitor*, 7(14), 2009, May 26.

⁷ Khan, M., Afridi, M. K., & Yousufy, M. Unauthorized Radio Transmissions and Failure of Regulatory Authorities: Case Study of Pakistan (Malakand Region). *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(4 S 1), 2015: 238-247.

Tayyeb Tahiri. Another prominent religious scholar Maulana Abdullah Shah operates his FM from Charsadda. Maulana Idrees runs FM radio from Nowshera. Qazi Fazullah runs an FM radio from Timergara, Dir Lower. Maulana Hidayatur Rahman operates another FM radio from Darul Uloom Ahya-ul-Uloom, Balambat in Timergara, Dir Lower.

Some political figures and social activists also had FM radios. A few of such radios were Daroo FM from Maidan, Dir Lower which had its focus on health education. Akhundzada Chitan, a Pakistan People's Party leader, had his own FM channel in Bajaur Agency. The Saifullah family, an influential political family in Lakki Marwat district, also operated FM radio (Shams Mohmand, personal communication, May 18, 2018).

FM Radios Run by Militant Commanders

A detailed account of the militant commanders who used FM radios as their main communication tool is given here.

Mullah Fazlullah Alias Radio Mullah

Mullah Fazlullah, a young seminary drop-out, but an impressive orator gained popularity through the speeches which he started giving through his pirated FM radio station based in a mosque in Imamdheri area of Matta subdivision in the scenic Swat valley. He started the FM service in late 2005.⁸ Soon he became a most listened to person in the entire Swat district through his fiery and impressive speeches. Generally the people of Swat like other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are Islam-loving and the religious teachings and addresses attract them easily. Malala Yousafzai describes in her book, "Fazlullah became enormously popular in Swat—people thought of him as a "Robin Hood" figure, restoring power and dignity to good, common Muslims."⁹

Fazllah was young but he had a proper sketch for his activities in his mind. He took the start as a mild reformist, won the hearts and minds of the people gradually through his impressive speeches and popular decisions and then turned towards his actual task that was to gain power. Born in the 1970s, he grew up with the name of Fazle Hayat. He had never been to a school. Most of the time in his childhood, he had spent working in Ski Field on the Malam Jabba Top, one of the most visited tourist spot in the district. He had been admitted to a religious seminary of Deobandi sect, but he could not complete his religious education either. His life changed after his marriage.¹⁰ While he was studying in a religious seminary, he was married

⁸ Khan, M. A. The FM Mullahs and the Taliban's Propaganda War in Pakistan. *Terrorism Monitor*, 7(14), 2009, May 26.

⁹ Yousafzai, M., & Lamb, C. *I am Malala: The girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban*. (UK: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 2013).

¹⁰ McCoy, T. Mullah Radio': The radical broadcaster leading the Taliban's war on

to the daughter of Maulana Sufi Mohammad, the head of Tanzeem Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (Organisation for implementation of Mohammdan Law). This was the turning point in his life. Fazlullah was clever enough to make the poor and impoverished segment of the society as his target audience. He focused his attention on women first. He spoke about their rights in Shariah and the conditions they were passing through in Swat. He would also ask them to stay home and keep listening to his radio. The women regarded him as great savior. They started donating everything to him. Whenever, he would ask for donations, there would be abundance of jewelry, cash and other valuable sent by people mostly women. With the help of these donations, he not only improved his FM station. But he also converted the small mosque in Imamdheri to a two-story seminary complex. Also, he started recruiting people for later use in militant activities. Tens of thousands of people would listen to his sermons on the FM radio.¹¹

His other target audiences were the illiterate and unemployed folks. Maulana Fazlullah would not keep confined to his FM radio only. He would also make public appearance with intervals of a few days, riding his black horse.¹² This would add to his already increasing popularity. His speeches and actions would also inculcate psychological fear among the population of Swat and this was the reason that when he started his militant movement in 2007, he faced no resistance from the masses. By this time his ‘reformist’ campaign had been converted into a completely militant one especially after the military action against Lal Masjid in Islamabad in 2007. He had recruited a good number of militants and given them necessary military training. His views on FM radios had also become harsher. He had started settling disputes of the people. He would announce threats and punishments to people through the FM station. His close comrade Shah Dauran was harsher than him in issuing threats. They had also started awarding punishments to ‘evil doers’ by the time. At that time listening to his radio had become a major compulsion of the people. Nobody could even think to miss Fazlullah’s and Shah Dauran’s transmissions. If they did they would ask

Pakistani schoolchildren. *Washington Post*. 2014, December 17. Retrieved May 18, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/12/17/mullah-radio-the-radical-broadcaster-leading-the-talibans-war-on-pakistani-schoolchildren/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.382f93331083

¹¹ McCoy, T. Mullah Radio’: The radical broadcaster leading the Taliban’s war on Pakistani schoolchildren. *Washington Post*. 2014, December 17. Retrieved May 18, 2018, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/12/17/mullah-radio-the-radical-broadcaster-leading-the-talibans-war-on-pakistani-schoolchildren/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.382f93331083

¹² Ali, M. *The Rise of ‘Radio Mullah’*. 2013, December 23. Retrieved May 12, 2018, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/23/the-rise-of-radio-mullah/>

others about the details and what punishment has been announced to whom.¹³

His actions forced the government to hold peace talks with him at the Chief Minister's house in Peshawar. A nine-point peace deal was reached there between the government and the militant outfit led by Fazlullah. One important point of the deal was that he would continue using his FM station and spread his message through it. This gave a sort of legitimacy to his 'unauthorised radio services', which already could not be deemed as pirated or illegal because of the non-extension of PEMRA's law to the PATA, of which Swat was an integral part.¹⁴

After a brief pause in the militant activities in the wake of the peace deal, the militants led by Fazlullah and Shah Dauran restarted their militant activities. They were specifically against the politicians, government servants especially those serving in the law enforcement agencies. They would simply brand them as 'infidels' and would consider their killing as an obligation. Whenever, they caught any policeman or other official, they would slaughter them in the main Nishat Square in Mingora without even trying them under their own system. They would also speak foul of the anti-polio vaccination. Anti-American rhetoric was also a regular feature of their FM radio. These actions forced the government to launch a full-fledged military operation against them in the name of *Operation Sirat-e-Mustaqeem* (righteous path). The entire population of the Swat valley was evacuated from the district to other safer areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. More than two million people had been internally displaced and accommodated in makeshift camps in Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda and Peshawar districts.¹⁵

The displaced people also included 248 journalists. Fazlullah after staging a stiff resistance for quite longer a time finally escaped from the valley to Kunar province of Afghanistan via Bajaur Agency. (Bahauddin, personal communication, December 10, 2018) He continued his militant activities from across the border. However, his FM service has been silenced since then.

Mufti Munir Shakir

Mufti Munir Shakir was not a militant himself. He was rather a good orator representing the Deobandi sect. He was brought to Bar Qambarkhel in

¹³ Khan, M. A. The FM Mullahs and the Taliban's Propaganda War in Pakistan. *Terrorism Monitor*, 7(14), 2009, May 26.

¹⁴ Ali, M. *The Rise of 'Radio Mullah'*. 2013, December 23. Retrieved May 12, 2018, from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/12/23/the-rise-of-radio-mullah/>

¹⁵ Walsh, D. Swat valley could be worst refugee crisis since Rwanda, UN warns. *The Guardian*. (2009, May 18). Retrieved May 25, 2015, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/may/18/swat-valley-pakistan-refugee-crisis>

Kajori area of Bara sub-division of Khyber Agency in 2003 by a Haji Namdar, head of *Amr bil Ma'arof wa Nahi Anil Munkir*, a conservative hardliner organisation. Before coming to Khyber Agency, he would give sermon in Kurram Agency wherefrom he was expelled after a bomb explosion.¹⁶

Mufti Munir's sermons were focused on Quranic teachings only. He would give his sermon from Haji Namdar's headquarter called *Takia* (seat) in Madrassa area. Haji Namdar had not turned militant by that time. The sermon from the FM radio station became very popular in the whole agency. People irrespective of their age and gender would listen to it very attentively for two obvious reasons. One, his very attractive style and his simple way to make people understand the meaning of holy Quran and second, his opposition to the Mufti Saifur Rahman alias '*Pir Da Barey*', who belonged to the rival Barelvi sect. Mufti Munir would negate the practices of Pir Saifur Rahman and his followers. After getting enough popularity Haji Namdar developed differences with Mufti Munir and asked him to leave his area in 2004. Mufti Munir Shakir shifted to nearby Malikdin Khel (a branch of Afridi tribe that mainly inhabit Khyber Agency) area where a group of volunteers came up to his support. Haji Mangal Bagh, who later became the head of Lashkar-e-Islam, another hardcore militant outfit, was the prominent among these volunteers. Haji Namdar continued using the FM radio that had already been set up there. Mufti Munir established a new FM radio with the support of his new supporters in the Malikdin Khel area and continued delivering his sermons from here. It was here that the new group under the title of Lashkar-e-Islam was founded. (Afridi, personal communication, September 14, 2018).

Most of his sermons were against Pir Saifur Rahman, who already had a good circle of followers and disciples. Pir Saifur Rahman would initially counter his sermons through loud speakers. But in 2005 he too got a FM radio and his followers started delivering speeches through it to counter the campaign launched by Mufti Munir against them. FM Radio being so cheap and of simple technology that Ghafoor Afridi, a local electrician, was the person who set up the FM radios for all these clerics. In an interview with this researcher Ghafoor said that he would make the system with the help of some old gadgets like phones, transistor and radio parts. It is very simple to make. It would cost him Rs 6,000 – 7,000 only and he would charge the clerics with Rs 12,000-13,000 (Ghafoor, personal communication, September 15, 2018).

The verbal clashes through FM radio between the two clerics – Mufti Munir Shakir - later converted into formal fighting. It was March 2006, when a huge number of Mufti Munir's followers gathered under the

¹⁶ Shahid, S. Call for action against gun-toting supporters of Pro-Taleban cleric. *Khaleej Times*. (2006, April 1). Retrieved May 23, 2018, from <https://www.khaleejtimes.com>

leadership of Mangal Bagh and attacked a stronghold of Pir Saifur Rahman at Nala locality in Malikdin Khel area. The attackers were heavily armed. Scores of Pir Saifur Rahman's followers were killed in the attack and their houses were demolished.¹⁷

The fighting invited the intervention by the political administration. Both the clerics went into hiding. However, the political administration managed to expel both the clerics from the agency. Mufti Munir Shakir was arrested by the law enforcement agencies in 2007 and Pir Saifur Rahman shifted to Lahore, where he died in 2010. Upon his release from prison, Mufti Munir Shakir settled down in Sheikh Mohammadi area of Peshawar district where too he set up FM radio and started delivering sermons from it. But this time his speeches made no such difference (Ashfaq, personal communication, September 16, 2018).

Mangal Bagh

Mangal Bagh is an offspring of Sipah tribe in Khyber Agency. However, he was leading the group of volunteers that welcomed Mufti Munir Shakir in Malikdin Khel after he was expelled by Haji Namdar from Bar Qambar Khel (a branch of Afridi Tribe). A bus driver by profession, Mangal Bagh had spent some time in Tableeghi Jamaat. He along with Mufti Munir Shakir founded the hardliner militant group under the name of Lashkar-e-Islam. The group was initially not militant. However, its activities were focused against a rival Ansarul Islam, a group headed by Pir Saifur Rahman. After the arrest of Mufti Munir Shakir, Mangal Bagh became the undisputed head of his organisation and he started using the FM radio station. After the attack on the stronghold of Pir Saifur Rahman followers in 2006, the group became fully militant.¹⁸

Mangal Bagh now started giving sermon on the FM radio. However, his sermon was mostly comprised of threats to the people. Mangal Bagh announced implementation of Shariah laws in Khyber Agency through the FM radio. His activities became more violent forcing the security forces to launch a military operation against them in June 2008 under the name of *Operation Sirat Mustaqeem* (Righteous Path). Another operation was launched in the name of *Operation Daraghlam* – a threatening Pashto term meaning here I come. Another operation in the name of *Bia Daraghlam* - here I come again. The last of the series of first four operations was launched in November 2009 in the name of *Operation Khwakh ba de sham* – you will like me.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ali, I. Khyber Tribal Agency: A New Hub of Islamist Militancy in Pakistan. *Terrorism Monitor*, 6(11), 2008, May 29

¹⁸ Abbas, S. M., Zaidi. A Profile of Mangal Bagh. *Long War Journal*, 2008: 1-13.

¹⁹ Ali, M. Unrest in Khyber Agency: Fifth operation in Bara on the cards. *The Express Tribune*, 2011, October 22. Retrieved August 14, 2018, from

Very strange names had been given to the operations in Khyber Agency. All of the names were given in typically threatening Pashto language. Perhaps the reason behind such threatening names was to respond to Mangal Bagh in an equally threatening language.

During the operation, Mangal Bagh shifted to the inaccessible scenic Tirah valley where his rivals – the followers of Pir Saifur Rahman – had already reached after the deadly attack on them in Malakdin Nala in 2006. Qari Mehboob, a follower of Pir Saifur Rahman, had already settled in Tirah valley. He had constructed a spiraling mosque in Bagh, the main town in the valley. According to Munir Khan Afridi, correspondent for The News from Khyber Agency, he had welcomed the fleeing fellow supporters of Pir Saifur Rahman in Tirah and had given them shelter. Thus the fighting reached to the erstwhile peaceful Tirah valley. Qari Mehboob was equally powerful. He also had set up an FM station (Afridi, personal communication, August 14, 2018).

Shams Mohmand, a senior journalist based in Peshawar, recalls one of his meetings with Mangal Bagh in Tirah. Shams Mohmand was part of a group of journalists called by Mangal Bagh for interview to Tirah in 2010. They went until Dabori in Orakzai agency on their own and from there fighters of Mangal Bagh took them to the place where he was staying. Traditional hospitality had been arranged for them. They had a long chat with Mangal Bagh and his fellow fighters and spent one night with them. Shams says at a moment during their meeting, Mangal Bagh sought permission from them for giving a speech on FM. Some young boys brought a few devices not bigger than a laptop and placed them in a corner of the building where they were staying. Mangal Bagh went there and started speaking. His speech was full of threats to different people. It also included death threats to a Tribal journalist Nasrullah Afridi, who was later killed in a targeted suicide bombing in Peshawar in 2011. After 40 minutes or so of speech Mangal Bagh went back to them and got busy in the chat. Shams says that when he heard of the threats to Nasrullah, he was shocked and when he [Mangal Bagh] rejoined them, he took up the matter with him. He told Mangal Bagh to stop giving threats to journalists. But he was too angry at Nasrullah claiming that he had inflicted huge losses on their organisation. Though he accepted the journalists demand not to harm Nasrullah for time being but he fixed the condition that Nasrullah would go to him and tender formal apology for what he termed his activities against Lashkar-e-Islam.

Later, during another operation under the name of Khyber 1 which was launched in 2014, Mangal Bagh was pushed out of Tirah Valley and he escaped to the adjoining Nazian districts of Nangarhar Province of Afghanistan, he managed to run his FM radio from there (*Khan, 2015*).

Haji Namdar

It would not be wrong to refer to Haji Namdar as the pioneer of using FM radio among the militants. He was the first to start using the technology from his seat in Bar Qambar Khel area in Bara tehsil of Khyber Agency. He started the transmissions in December 2003. Himself not a very good orator, he brought Mufti Munir Shakir to give sermons on the radio. Later, when he got enough influence on the local populace, he expelled Munir Shakir and took the control of the radio himself, which he ran till his killing in a suicide attack in August 2008 (Khan, 2009). Haji Namdar had launched his own militant organisation *Tanzim Amr bil Maroof wa Nahi Anil Munkar*. He was a bit more radical in his views and harsh in getting them implemented on the local people. Before, launching the organisation, he was doing some job in Saudi Arabia. Through his FM radio he would repeatedly tell the people that he had left a job worth Rs 40,000 a month in Saudi Arabia for their sake. He had implemented his own codes in the area, like nobody can go to the area under his control without wearing a cap. No one could shave his beard in his area. He would give punishment to the people, if they violate the codes. Later he developed differences with TTP. He was killed in a suicide attack on his mosque. TTP had claimed responsibility for his killing. With his death, his FM radio silenced automatically (BBC, 2008).

Commander Tariq Afridi of Darra Adamkhel

Commander Tariq Afridi, an important TTP commander, also had a short-range FM radio. Though the range of this radio was not more than two kilometer radius, but its influence was huge. Tariq was known as one of the powerful militant commanders. He would issue threats and spread his messages through this radio besides issuances of pamphlets and letters. Tariq was known for kidnapping high value target. He was involved in the kidnapping of a late Polish engineer, two vice-chancellors Prof Lutfullah Kakakhel of Kohat University of Science and Technology and Ajmal Khan of Islamia College University. Tariq Afridi was killed by but his own brother in law in Khyber Agency in August 2012. With his death the influence of TTP in the semi-tribal region of Darra Adamkhel and his FM radio also came to end (News, 2012).

Maulvi Faqir Mohammad

Maulvi Faqir Mohammad is another leading TTP commander whose prime source of gaining popularity among common folks was his FM radio service. Maulvi Faqir, who was having very close ties with Maulana Fazlullah of Swat, ran his FM service simultaneously with the FM radio in Swat. Faqir Mohammad was the leading militant commander in Bajaur. He was among the pioneers of TTP which came into existence in December 2007. But Maulvi Faqir had worked in different militant groups. He had

taken his start by joining the Maulana Sufi Mohammad-led TNSM (Tehrik e Nifaz e Shariat e Mohammadi of Swat) in 1993 after completion of his religious education.²⁰ His FM radio was, however, the most effective tool that earned him huge popularity. It was through this radio that he would give religious sermons and announce decisions about various tribal disputes. Faqir Mohammad, who had also set up a parallel judicial system in Bajaur Agency, would listen to the complaints of the people and resolve them. The decisions would be declared there and then. But sometime the decisions would also be declared on the FM radio to make them public. Threats were also being issued through the FM service. Even very important decisions like ceasefire would also be announced through the FM radio. In February 2009, he announced unilateral ceasefire after eight months of fierce fighting during which the population from Bajaur Agency had been displaced (*BBC, 2009*). The operation had been launched in August 2008. The FM station used to be operated from the headquarters of Taliban in Sewai area of Mamund tehsil in Bajaur Agency. It never stopped transmission even during the operation. After the military operation, Maulvi Faqir crossed the border towards Kunar province of Afghanistan. He, however, continued his activities from the other side of the border. In 2013, he was arrested by the Afghan forces. His FM radio stopped working after he went across the border (*FRC, 2012*).

Findings

This study finds out that FM radio is the cheapest and most easily operated and accessible tool of mass communication. It can be operated from small portable devices. It can be managed from anywhere even from a driving car and from the top of a mountain. Local electricians were found to make and install FM radios by using second hand mobile sets, used transistors and other electronic devices. The total cost on installation of a normal FM radio was between Rs 5000 and Rs 13000. Also, it could be easily accessed on mobile sets, radios. Most of the FM radios were unlicensed and thus illegal. The authorities remained unable to regulate them properly.

Some non-controversial religious clerics are still in use of the FM radios in different parts of the province especially Charsdda, Mardan, Nowshera and Sawabi districts. Many people mostly women listen to the sermons and Quranic translations aired through the FM radios. The listeners of such radios believe they have gained a lot of Islamic knowledge using the FM radio.

²⁰ Sohail, A. N. Al-Zawahiri's Pakistani Ally: Profile of Maulana Faqir Mohammed. *Terrorism Monitor*, 4(3), (2006, February 9): 4-7.

The state-run FM radio, though were aimed at education, entertainment and information, but it was found that their primary focus was to counter the propaganda disseminated by the pirated radios.

The FM radio was also the most important tool to sending and getting messages at the militancy affected agencies and districts of KP and former FATA. The militant commanders in Swat, Bajaur, Khyber Agency and other areas initially attracted the audience through their impressive speeches and sermons and later when they formally announced their militant activities the people were forced to listen to the messages and threats given through the FM radio. No one could afford to miss the messages aired through the FM radios. If anyone failed to find time to listen to the radio, he would have to ask others, who had listened to it as what threats and messages had been given and to whom.

Conclusion

This study shows that FM radio was used as one of the premium source of information during the past one and a half decade by the militant commanders and some other entities. It also served as a leading propaganda tool during this period. All the stakeholders of the prolonged conflict in the region made effective use of this tool of information for their respective purposes. It can rightly be concluded that the FM radios were made into proper use and it was equally misused at the same time. The state-owned and some privately run radio stations made an effort to follow the objectives of mass communication – information, education and entertainment. However, in some cases even the state established FM radios were used for propaganda and counter-propaganda purposes. The FM radios set up by some non-controversial religious scholars served the cause of promoting Quranic teachings. Those set up by the militant commanders were thoroughly used for propaganda purposes and threatening people, which caused contributed to promoting a distorted picture of the religion. The FM radios deeply affected their respective target audience. The bullet theory of communication comes exactly fit on the use of FM radios by non-controversial scholars in the central districts of KP and the militant leaders in the conflict parts of KP and former FATA.

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