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Guide to Karachi-Based Pakistani TV Channel Aaj News Television

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Logo of Aaj
News Television
(aaj.tv, 5 May)

Aaj News Television (Aaj) is one of Pakistan's major 24/7 cable news stations. It covers national events and issues as well as international developments through straight reporting and news and current affairs programs.

- **Aaj** offers extensive coverage of the US-led war on terrorism, including criticism of it as well as of other US policies.
- **Aaj** also carries a unique program, "Washington Report," which seems aimed at building a positive image of the United States, especially with respect to US foreign policy.
- Like other major channels, **Aaj** provides broad coverage of the statements and activities of opposition leaders and parties.
- In its religious programming, **Aaj** allows room for enlightened and mainstream ideas, but also extremist ideas that were put forward, for example, by the late hard-line scholar Israr Ahmed who used Islamic eschatology to criticize the United States.
- **Aaj's** coverage of India-related issues offers harsh criticism of Indian policies toward Pakistan both in reporting and comment.

Background

Former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz formally launched **Aaj News** Television in Karachi on 21 May 2005 (www.dawn.com/2005/05/22/top3.htm, website of leading mainstream English daily Karachi **Dawn**, 22 May 2005). According to its website (www.aaj.tv), it has fully equipped bureaus in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, making **Aaj** the first private channel to broadcast from inside Pakistan. **Aaj** also has "an Earth Station in Pakistan that broadcasts directly to the AsiaSat satellite with a footprint of over 60 countries." **Aaj** offers "well defined programming blocks" of news, current affairs, infotainment, and entertainment. It has collaboration agreements with "partner news sources in more than 100 countries."

Broadcasting Controversies

Like other major private TV channels, **Aaj** faces official restrictions. Past examples have included a ban on broadcasts and talk shows that criticized the incumbent government -- led by the Pakistan People's Party -- or that advocated an independent judiciary during the lawyers' movement against former President Musharraf, who had ordered the channel's cable transmission blocked after he imposed emergency rule on 3 November 2007. The channel came back on the air two weeks later after it signed an official Code of Conduct and closed down two popular political talk shows hosted by leading journalists Talat Hussain and the duo of Nusrat Javed and Mushtaq Minhas. The talk shows were restored in early 2008.

Since the second half of 2008, **Aaj**, like other major television channels, also has stopped airing statements by Taliban leaders. In November 2009, in fact, **Aaj** joined the country's other leading TV channels and agreed on a "voluntary framework" to standardize [professional guidelines regarding terrorism coverage](#) ... The news managers decided that they will desist from showing graphic and disturbing images on the screen, and as and when required, utilize a delay mechanism in their transmissions" (<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print3.asp?id=25416>, website of influential mainstream English daily Islamabad **The News Online**, 6 Nov 2009). **Aaj** has mostly followed this policy, with a few exceptions, since the agreement was reached.

Aaj has been severely criticized for its programming by the Pakistani public on a number of occasions the past several years. The criticism has led to several violent attacks on **Aaj** facilities.

- The channel's Karachi offices were attacked on 12 May 2007 when workers of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement -- a Sindh-based ethnic political party -- fired at the **Aaj** offices in Karachi for airing live shots of its members engaging in violent activities in the vicinity that day. Leading English daily Karachi **Dawn** reported on 13 May 2007 that "armed men attacked the office of a private television channel and set on fire more than a dozen vehicles in its parking lot here on Saturday [12 May]. The **Aaj** TV was telecasting live footage of youths brandishing guns in front of its offices on the Business Recorder Road ... As the telecast continued, the youths turned their guns on the **Aaj** TV building ... The **Aaj** TV building came under fire from MQM supporters who wanted the airing of live footage of the unrest in the city stopped," the network's chief executive Arshad Zubairi was quoted as saying."
- On 6 November 2008, members of religious group Minhaj-ul-Quran International [MQI] took to the streets and threatened **Aaj** after Nusrat Javed -- host of

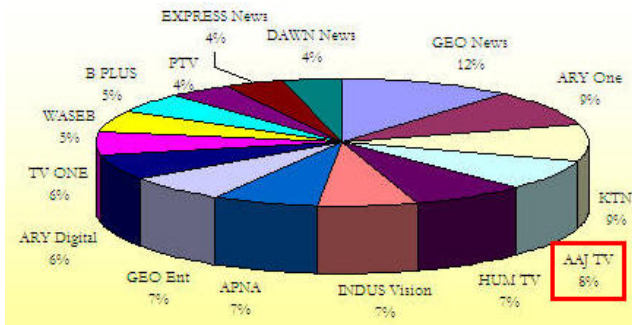
popular talk show "Speaking Pakistan" -- said that Tahirul Qadri, the leader of MQI, was a "showbiz" personality. On 7 November 2008, **Aaj's** website http://www.aajtv.com/urdu/national/2008/11/07/27932_2_story.html carried a report in Urdu saying "workers of Tehrik-e-Minhajul Quran besieged the **Aaj News** offices in Islamabad ... The protesters were carrying placards against the Speaking Pakistan program. Speaking Pakistan anchors Nusrat Javed and Mushtaq Minhas received threats. The **Aaj News** team kept receiving threats throughout the day Friday ... Meanwhile, the **Aaj News** offices in Lahore also received threats."

Ownership

Aaj is owned by **Business Recorder Group**, a prominent media conglomerate in Pakistan that also owns the leading business daily Karachi **Business Recorder** in English. Wamiq Zubairi is the director of **Aaj**. (See Appendix B for contact information on **Aaj**).

Viewership

Aaj is generally considered the third leading channel in Pakistan, behind Karachi **Geo News** TV in Urdu and Karachi **Express News** TV in Urdu. The international media survey company **Intermedia** (www.intermedia.org) stated in a report released in January 2009 that "[from a 'yesterday' audience of less than 1 percent in 2007, it now stands at 8 percent.](http://www.travel-culture.com/pakistan/media)" A pie chart on *Travel and Culture* (<http://www.travel-culture.com/pakistan/media>), which claims to be "Pakistan's most comprehensive travel and tourism site," also shows an 8 percent "Channel Share" for **Aaj** as of April 2008.



OSC-annotated pie chart shows "8%" channel share for "Aaj TV" (travel-culture.com, 5 May)

Coverage of US, War on Terrorism Broad and Often Critical

Aaj offers extensive, sometimes critical, coverage of the US-led war on terrorism. It reports on military operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as on the whereabouts and arrests of Al-Qa'ida and Taliban leaders. Based on OSC's review of these reports, **Aaj** apparently does not provide the government's official point of view in its reporting or comments on major terrorist events. Some examples of **Aaj's** reports on terrorism-related incidents in Pakistan and Afghanistan follow.

- On 18 February, **Aaj** reported that "[Abu-Musa, a close associate of Osama Bin Ladin, has been arrested](#) ... in Karachi."
- Also on 18 February, **Aaj** reported that "[Pakistani security agencies have arrested Taliban governors of \[the\] Afghan provinces of Kunduz and Baghlan](#)" -- Mullah Abdul Salam and Mullah Mir Muhammad -- from Baluchistan.
- On 4 March, **Aaj** reported [the arrest, in Karachi, of Syed Mohtasim Agha Jan, Mullah Omar's "son-in-law" who had served as "prime minister in the Afghan Taliban government and \[was\] on the US list of the most wanted since 9/11.](#)"
- On 7 March, **Aaj** reported the arrest of Abu-Yahya, "[Al-Qa'ida commander and close associate of Osama Bin Ladin.](#)" Another report on the same day said [Abu-Yahya had US citizenship and that he was one of Al-Qa'ida's 10 most wanted men on the CIA list.](#)
- On 15 February 2010, **Aaj** reported on NATO military operations in Helmand, saying NATO has "shifted the burden of stopping the Taliban to Pakistan," while "the NATO and coalition forces are absent from the Pakistan-Afghan border." [The report further stated that "the Afghan forces have established hardly two check posts in the entire area" along the Pakistan border and "no significant deployment is visible" at those check posts. The report went on to quote Pakistani locals as saying that "you do not see any NATO troops or Afghan forces far and wide in this area."](#)
- On 9 November 2009, **Aaj** carried a "breaking news" report quoting Golboddin Hekmatyar, chief of Hezb-e Eslami of Afghanistan, as saying that "[Usama Bin Ladin is alive.](#)"

Portrayal of US in "Washington Report" Program More Positive



Video slide from the "Washington Report" program shows close-up of Congressman Keith Ellison's hand placed on the two-volume Koran during his oath ceremony (Aaj News TV, 27 Feb)

Aaj carries a high-profile program, "Washington Report," at 2200 (1700 GMT) every Saturday. It provides a positive portrayal of the United States in its discussions of US foreign policy, its documentaries on interfaith dialogue, its interviews with prominent Americans such as Muslim convert Congressman Keith Ellison, and its success stories of Pakistani Americans. By examining the sociopolitical landscape of the United States and the issues that ordinary people face there, the program endeavors to balance common anti-US perceptions propagated by anti-US extremist and Islamist groups.

- On 20 February, "[Washington Report](#)" featured "[Journey Into America](#)," a full-length documentary in the English language. [The documentary was based on extensive field work by Ambassador Akbar Ahmed, who is currently teaching at the American University in Washington DC. It appears to have dealt candidly with the religious and cultural challenges the Muslim community faces in the United States.](#)
- On 27 February 2010, "Washington Report" presented an interview with US Congressman Keith Ellison -- a Muslim convert who took his oath of office on a copy of the Koran that was owned by the third US President, Thomas Jefferson. Congressman Ellison spoke in English with a superimposed translation in

Urdu and also with a passage by passage translation in Urdu. In his introductory remarks, Congressman Ellison said he had great love for the people of Pakistan. Regarding US policies toward the Muslim world, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan, Congressman Ellison said "those who consider the United States a serious threat need to understand that ... support for military solutions to problems is on the decline," and that "the US is not an anti-Muslim state."

Coverage of Taliban Leaders no Longer Broadcast

Over the past several years **Aaj** has aired interviews with Taliban members from Pakistan's tribal region. It also reported on the presence of "suspected" Afghan Taliban forces in Baluchistan as early as January 2007 at a time when the government of Pakistan officially denied their presence in the area. As discussed earlier, **Aaj** no longer airs statements by militants. However, some examples of its past reporting follow.

- On 7 January 2007, **Aaj** quoted "government officials" as saying that "[16 suspected Taliban were arrested](#) ... some 33 km from Quetta ... The arrested men allegedly belong to the Taliban movement."
- In July 2007, the government used force to flush out militants holed up in Islamabad's Red Mosque -- action that led to the death of several dozen women and children inside the mosque. Soon thereafter, tribal militants captured a mosque in Mohmand Agency and renamed it Red Mosque. On 31 July, **Aaj** aired an interview with Umar Khalid, chief of the local Taliban in the area, who said that they were "[prepared to fight](#)" against the United States, because "[death by martyrdom](#)" was "[much better than dying at home.](#)"
- In June 2008, prominent journalist and host Syed Talat Hussain interviewed top Taliban leaders -- including Maulvi Umar, Maulvi Faqir Muhammad, and Muslim Khan -- in a special series of his regularly scheduled "Live With Talat" program. The program provided insights into the culture and history of the tribes that inhabit Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Speaking on one of the programs, top Taliban commander Maulvi Omar said "America is a big oppressor and terrorist." Praising Al-Qa'ida, Omar further said "[Al-Qa'ida confronts the enemy, America, emphasizing that the objective of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan was also defense against the United States.](#)"

Leading Programs, Talk Shows Carry Anti-US, Antigovernment Comments

Live With Talat



Video slide shows Talat Hussain hosting "Live With Talat" (Aaj News Television, 12 Apr 2010)

"Live With Talat" is **Aaj**'s flagship political talk show broadcast at 2200 (1700 GMT) Monday through Friday. Senior journalist Talat Hussain, who probably has some military connections, hosts the program. Apart from holding in-studio discussions with senior political leaders and prominent political and social analysts, Hussain occasionally travels to places of high interest and provides professional investigative reporting and analysis. He asks guests questions that appear to elicit desired responses. Despite his apparent liberal leanings, Hussain appears to accept the Taliban as a religious-political reality, and he espouses an anti-India philosophy.

- In the 10 February 2010 edition of "Live with Talat," Hussain held an in-studio discussion with Prof Richard Bonney of the Royal United Services Institute, United Kingdom; Asif Durrani, Pakistan deputy high commissioner to the United Kingdom; and Prof Anatol Lievin of King's College, London. During the program, Professor Bonney said "neglecting" the Taliban "was a mistake leading to serious consequences" in Afghanistan, that "the Taliban are not an international conspiracy like Al-Qa'ida," and "their localized movement is against the occupying forces." Durrani added that "[the international community accepts that the Taliban are one of the stakeholders in the Afghanistan issue.](#)" Professor Lievin opined that "[the Taliban movement is deeply rooted.](#)"
- The 19 January 2010 "Live With Talat" program focused on the "unprovoked" cross-border firing by Indian troops that left two Pakistani soldiers dead in Sialkot Sector on the same day that US Defense Secretary Robert Gates was on a visit to India. The show's guests included retired Gen Hamid Nawaz and former Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed Khan. During the program, Nawaz said India wanted to use its "strategic relationship" with the United States to "replace" its mostly "obsolete" military hardware, and that the more tension there is on the border between the two countries, "the easier it will be for India to purchase modern military equipment from the United States." Khan said "[India has tried to provoke Pakistan ... in the presence of Gates, making an impression that tension is again on the rise.](#)"
- On 14 January 2010, Hussain discussed Prime Minister Gilani's statement to Parliament on reported US UAV attacks and argued that "we cannot rule out that the Afghanistan based anti-Pakistan activities are enjoying the support at state level; although, it may not necessarily be the Afghan Government itself that is providing that support; may be it is the US-India axis." Hussain further said: "[Why is the United States not willing to listen to the objections raised by Pakistan on drone attacks ... The answer is simple: We depend on the financial aid given by the United States.](#)"

Biographical Information: Talat Hussain is executive director of **Aaj**. He also writes articles for the monthly Karachi **Newsline** (in English), **Time** magazine, moderate Pakistani newspaper Lahore **Daily Times** (in English), and Pakistan's second largest Urdu newspaper **Daily Express**, which he joined as a contributing writer in July 2008. He has worked as an editor for the influential mainstream English daily Islamabad **The News**, and with **CNN** and **American Broadcasting** as a producer. He has worked as a reporter for the **Los Angeles Times** and the **New York Times**. Hussain headed the group that launched **PTV World News** and served as its director of news and current affairs. He established an Islamabad office of the major Urdu TV channel Karachi **ARY**.

Hussain is frequently invited to deliver lectures at prestigious forums, such as the National Defence University, PAF Air War College, Pakistan Navy War College, Foreign Services Academy, Information Services Training Academy of Pakistan, and Quaid-i-Azam University. He appears to have excellent connections with Pakistani military officials.

Hussain obtained his Master's degree from the prestigious Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Born in 1966, he is married with two children and lives in Islamabad. He fluently speaks English, Urdu, and Punjabi.

Islamabad Tonight



Nadeem Malik (facebook.com, global social networking site, 12 Apr)

"Islamabad Tonight" also is a leading talk show on **Aaj**. It is aired at 2000 (1500 GMT) Monday through Thursday and anchored by noted journalist Nadeem Malik. "Islamabad Tonight" hosts decision makers and other prominent personalities. Malik discusses a wide range of issues -- from mainstream politics to Islamic eschatology -- with his guests on the program. Many of the guests frequently voice harsh criticism of the United States and the Pakistani government. At times they have even advocated popular pro-jihad ideas.

- On 28 January 2010, Malik discussed the London Conference on Afghanistan with Imran Khan, chief of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf who is known to support talks with the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban. Khan described Pakistani "liberals" and "moderates" as "slaves," insisting that "anyone who supports US policies becomes a liberal." Khan went on to say that he was asking the United States "not to bomb the villages and kill their women and children." He went on to say that he is "being labeled a hard-liner, while the liberals were asking for the continuation of the killings." In Khan's view, [the supporters of US military action in Afghanistan are "fascists,"](#) whom he feels "ashamed in calling ... liberals. There is no one who is a greater fascist" than they are.
- On 8 February 2010, Nadeem Malik discussed the US-led war on terror with Dr Israr Ahmed, chief of Tanzeem-e-Islami (www.tanzeem.org) and an adamant proponent of the view that in his Second Coming Jesus Christ would kill all Jews to eliminate "greater Israel." Ahmed said the editor of the US evangelical magazine "*The Philadelphia Trumpet*" wrote a month before 9/11 that "preparations were being made for the last Crusade, which would be the bloodiest of all." Ahmed went on to assert that former US President George W. Bush had launched that "crusade." Ahmed voiced the common jihadi claim that the Americans "themselves brought down the Twin Towers and put all the rubble on the Taliban and on Osama," insisting that the jihadi movements in Pakistan were "a reaction to that." Ahmed asserted that the "freedom struggle" of the Afghan Taliban was for the revival of the Islamic emirate and "could be accepted as jihad," stressing at the same time that ["Mossad, NATO, the United States, and India wanted to destabilize Pakistan."](#) Ahmed died in Lahore on 13 April 2010.
- On 8 Mar 2010, Nadeem Malik discussed the issue of body scans of travelers arriving from Pakistan at US airports with Syed Akhunzada Chatan -- a tribal-area lawmaker who was in the delegation that refused to go through the body scan in the United States -- and Mushahid Hussain Syed -- a leader of the opposition party Pakistan Muslim League-Qaid-e-Azam. During the program, Malik asked the question: "Have we ever had Holbrooke take off his boots at the airport so that we could check what was hidden in them?" Malik went on to say that "some visitor from them [United States] should be treated similarly at the Islamabad International Airport." Syed Akhunzada Chatan said that "this is nothing but extremism. The United States is the world's greatest extremist." Mushahid Hussain Syed added that "this is discrimination on the basis of religion."
- On 22 March 2010, Malik discussed the US-Pakistan strategic dialogue in Washington with former Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed Khan and several other guests. Shamshad Ahmed Khan criticized earlier rounds of high-level US-Pakistan talks and, when questioned about "India's growing nuisance potential in Afghanistan with respect to Pakistan's interests," he warned that "we need to tell our American interlocutors in an effective way that if this does not end, then Afghanistan is going to become a theatre for a proxy war." Khan also emphasized that ["the preferential treatment" the United States had given to India was "in violation of" the "global nonproliferation regime."](#)

Malik usually posts the video clips of "Islamabad Tonight" on his personal website (<http://nadeemmalik.wordpress.com>). There is little biographical information available on Malik.

"D-Bate With Mehreen Khan"



Mehreen Khan hosting the show (Aaj News TV, 25 Apr)

"D-Bate With Mehreen Khan" is a student and youth show that is aired at 2200 (1700 GMT) every Sunday. Barrister Mehreen Khan is the host. Each episode of the program presents a debate over a major domestic or international issue facing Pakistan. At the outset, Khan puts forward a "resolution" and asks for a "yes" and "no" opinion from the student in-studio audience using a green (yes) or red (no) card. During the program, Khan also solicits opinions of voters not in the studio using SMS text messages. Next she asks two debating teams invited to the program to debate the issue behind the "resolution." Each debating team is made up of a prominent personality and usually a young activist. The in-studio audiences are also given an opportunity to question the two teams. At the end of the program, Khan again asks the in-studio audience's opinion on the issue. OSC's assessment is that

the results of the voting are not likely to necessarily reflect the views of Pakistani society as a whole since the voting sample consists mainly of educated urbanites. **Aaj** plays a "disclaimer" at the opening of the program which says that "The views expressed by the participants in this program do not necessarily represent that of the channel either in part or in whole." The program has a site on Youtube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/MKDBATE>) where archived episodes are available.

- In mid-2009, Khan hosted a debate on whether "Isolation from the West could alone eliminate extremism." Well-known TV personality Amir Liaquat Hussain and Maajid Nawaz -- a Pakistani Briton who is former member of extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir and currently the director of counterextremism think tank Quilliam Foundation -- led their respective teams. Hussain and his team spoke in favor of isolation from the West, while Nawaz and his team opposed the resolution. After listening to their arguments, 75 percent of the audiences voted for the resolution, while only 25 percent opposed it.
- Demonstrating a diametrically opposed outcome (although on a social, not political issue), on 25 April 2010, the program hosted a debate on the contentious social issue "Love marriage is better than arranged marriage." Two celebrity couples debated the issue. At the end of the program, 65 percent of the audience voted in favor of the resolution, while only 35 percent voted against it. In the highly religious, conservative Pakistani society, love marriages often lead to crimes -- such as when aggrieved families kill either the husband, the wife, or both.

Biographical Information: Barrister Mehreen Khan is a graduate of Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. She lived in the UK until her mid-20s and then moved to Pakistan. She has worked at the United Nations and as a TV presenter with Pakistani private channel **Indus TV**. She also has hosted "Question Time

Pakistan" and "Hard Talk Pakistan" on **BBC** (monthly Karachi **Newsline** in English, Mar 2005 -- www.newsline.com.pk; moderate Lahore **Daily Times** in English 30 Apr 2002 -- www.dailytimes.com.pk).

"Sawal Uthta Hai [The Question Arises]"



Screen shot shows Zubair Ahmed, left, and Moiz Amjad, right, hosting "The Question Arises" program (Aaj News TV, 11 Apr)

"Sawal Uthta Hai," a religious program that is aired at 1300 (0800 GMT) every Sunday, offers a modernistic version of Islam as it relates to the contemporary world and the issues facing it. Moiz Amjad and Zubair Ahmed host the program usually along with an Islamic scholar who represents a particular school of thought or sect. The two hosts, with their modern attire and easygoing demeanor, discuss various issues with a flexibility that is atypical of traditional clerics. They ask specific questions, patiently listen to the answers, and cleverly avoid controversy. They avoid asking too many leading questions to seek favorable answers, and they allow guests to voice opposing views. However, OSC observes that while appearing to obscure their sectarian affiliations, they move from open-ended questioning to more narrow questions, so that in the end their guests are left with no option but to say either yes or no to their final question and take a clear stance on a given issue. In their program, they espouse the view that the Koran, "Sunnah [traditions of Prophet Muhammad]," and "Hadith [Sayings of Prophet Muhammad]" have preference over "fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence]," which, they say, is based on human deduction.

Zubair Ahmed previously hosted the "[Safar-e-Hidayat \[Journey Toward Guidance\]](#)" program; Moiz Amjad previously hosted "Aaj Islam [Islam Today]." Following the closure of both programs, Ahmed and Amjad began hosting "The Question Arises," late in 2009.

- On 11 April 2010, a Deobandi scholar, Muhammad Asad Thanvi -- administrator of Jamia Ashrafia, a seminary in Sukkur in Sindh Province -- appeared on the program. Thanvi said that, as Hanafi* Muslims, Deobandis consider "Taqlid [adherence]" obligatory, which means adhering to one of the four fiqh. Thanvi emphasized that Taqlid is obligatory, because everyone is not an expert on religion and, therefore, needs to follow the fiqh. However, using ingenious closed-ended questioning, the two hosts got Thanvi to agree that after all fiqh "is not Koran and Hadith." Also Thanvi opined that suicide is "forbidden" in Islam, saying that "as far as suicide bombing is concerned, a person is not permitted to kill even himself [or herself]. How could he [or she] kill others?" Thanvi conceded that following Islam is a matter of personal will and not inheritance. However, he supports a "ban" on preaching other religions in Pakistan and the traditional view that apostasy should be punishable by death.
- Muhammad Shakeel Auj, a senior professor on the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Karachi University (msauj@uok.edu.pk), was a guest on the program on 23 April 2010. Citing the Koran, Auj argued that Islam permits "defensive," not "offensive," jihad. Describing the first holy battle of Badr as a "battle in defense" -- in which Prophet Muhammad led 313 Muslims against 1,000 pagans of Mecca in the battleground of Badr near Medina -- Auj said he rejects the impression created by some historians that the Prophet acted as a "king" trying to "establish his rule." In his view, this view contradicts the "global," "spiritual" mission that God assigned to the Prophet. Rejecting the doctrine of offensive jihad, Auj stressed that Islam is not "a religion of bloodshed." Auj said that Muslims should head Islamic states, with the followers of all religions living in harmony. Auj further opined that the term "secular" should be interpreted as "worldly," not as "following no belief system," which allows an Islamic state to be secular and a "welfare state." Auj was asked whether any legislation is permissible in an Islamic country that is in conflict with the Koran. Auj responded "not at all..." the basic legislation outlined in the Koran, like death penalty for murder, is unchallengeable."

Four-Man Show



Video slide shows the actor playing Zardari saying "Blackwater everywhere." The background shows engineers at work at construction site (Aaj News TV, 18 Apr)

"Four-Man Show" is a popular infotainment program that comments on domestic and international events and pokes fun at Pakistani and foreign politicians as well as other prominent personalities. The show is aired at 2000 (1500 GMT) every Sunday. The cast includes Mustafa Chaudhry, Murtaza Chaudhry, Faisal, Fahim, and Khalid Butt.

In the past, [the "Four Man Show" has openly criticized the government on various issues.](#) During Musharraf's referendum for reelection in 2007, for instance, the "Four Man Show" ran a series of mock ads titled "Electionary or the ABCD of Pakistan Elections." [The ads featured Uncle Sam telling the Pakistani public that dictatorship "comes from the United States" and that "we have replaced election with selection; that is, whosoever dances to our tune, will win the selection."](#)

More recent instances of government criticism on the show include the following:

- On 25 March 2010, the "Four Man Show" carried a mock telephonic interview with "Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi" about the new screening process implemented at US airports for Pakistani travelers. The "foreign minister" said: "We are going to take tough action against it. We have convened both Houses of the Parliament. Together, we will join hands to curse the United States." The anchor told "Qureshi:" "Cursing the United States will not work; we need to take practical measures." In response, "Qureshi" said: "We are taking practical measures and very soon we will talk to President Bush in this connection." The anchor corrected "Qureshi" by saying that it was Obama, not Bush, who happened to be the current President of the United States. "Qureshi" said: "He is the US President, whosoever he may be. And the US President is just the US President ... Changing names makes no difference."
- On 18 April 2010, the show aired a skit criticizing President Asif Ali Zardari and the government for its alleged reticence about the purported presence of the US security firm Blackwater in the country. The skit featured "President Asif Ali Zardari" marketing his new housing scheme, "Asif Residency," and saying that

there would be supply of "water 24 hours a day" for the inhabitants. (Water supply is a big issue in most parts of the country). Then, as if it were a slip of the tongue, "Zardari" stresses that there will be "Blackwater everywhere. I mean water everywhere." The skit also appeared to contain muted references to two housing projects -- Islamabad New City and Zulfikarabad. As the incumbent president, Zardari has launched Zulfikarabad city project in Thatta District in Sindh Province. In the past, Zardari allegedly made money in the multibillion Islamabad New City project, which the Bhutto government had launched in 1995. Media reporting at the time implicated him in the scandal, but a formal case was never opened against him.

Live With Khalid Butt



Video slide shows Foreign Minister Qureshi, left, and Secretary Clinton, right, sharing a laugh. The Aaj News logo appears in the top-right corner of the picture, while the logo of "Live With Khalid Butt" appears in the bottom-left corner (Aaj News Television, 22 Apr)

"Live With Khalid Butt" is a parody of the flagship program, "Live With Talat." Aired at 1930 (1430 GMT) every Thursday, this infotainment program focuses on domestic issues and sometimes on international events. It uses caught-on-camera type of footage to ridicule political leaders and celebrities. The host, Murtaza Chaudhry, as Khalid Butt, also is a member of the cast of the "Four Man Show."

- On 15 April 2010, Butt ridiculed Pakistani private TV channels for giving excessive coverage to Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Malik's and Indian tennis star Sania Mirza's wedding. On the show he sarcastically remarked: "Viewers, if you want to know how many people were killed in the Peshawar blast, you will have to watch [some] international news channel, because ... our news channels are only reporting on Sania Mirza and Shoaib Malik ... When this marriage takes place, it will bring happiness. We will get enough to eat. Power supply will be restored automatically. Bomb blasts will also stop [occurring] ... God willing, the president [Zardari] will be dancing at the wedding ... because this marriage is the solution to all issues. Therefore, it must take place." It should be pointed out that **Aaj** also provided minute-by-minute coverage of the Shoaib-Sania marriage ceremony from its beginning to the final ceremony on 27 April.
- On 22 April, Butt ridiculed Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who had shared a laugh with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during a recent Pakistan-US Strategic Dialogue. The footage showed Qureshi asleep on the National Assembly floor. Butt said in a voice-over: "Now, look at it, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, God knows who he is dreaming about." The next video slide showed Qureshi and Secretary Clinton sharing a laugh, with Butt saying "I think he has not forgotten that he had hit his head with Hillary Clinton" and he is dreaming about that same moment.

"Bolta Pakistan [Speaking Pakistan]"

"Speaking Pakistan" was a top-rated political talk show that was closed down in April 2010 when the anchors of the show, Nusrat Javed and Mushtaq Minhas, left **Aaj**. The talk show played an important role in enhancing the reputation of **Aaj** as a public media outlet. During emergency rule, President Musharraf had banned the program, but it subsequently was restored. Speaking on **Dunya News TV** on 23 April 2010 -- a private Urdu channel that Javed and Minhas have joined -- Javed hinted that low ratings were the reason for the closure of the Speaking Pakistan program. However, an English-language posting on the Pakistani discussion forum "Siasat.pk" (<http://www.siasat.pk/forum/showthread.php?0&p=168747>) rebutted the claim, saying: "Nusrat Javed and Mushtaq Minhas had some clashes with the management of **Aaj TV** and they both resigned. Nusrat Javed joined **Dunya TV** and Mushtaq Minhas will soon join **Dunya TV** ... there was no issue of ratings."

'Peace With Equality' Opposes 'Hope for Peace' With India

Aaj has vigorously opposed "Aman Ki Asha [Hope for Peace]," a joint peace initiative launched on 1 January 2010 by Pakistan's **Jang Group of Publications**, which owns **Geo News TV**, and the leading Indian daily, **The Times of India**. The **Jang Group** joint peace initiative brings together thinkers, intellectuals, and policymakers to suggest ways for the resolution of issues and the establishment of peace between the nuclear-capable neighbors, Pakistan and India. **Aaj** launched a counter campaign, named "Aman Barabari Ke Sath [Peace With Equality]," emphasizing that Pakistan-India peace was impossible unless India treated Pakistan with sovereign equality and agreed to the resolution of key issues. The **Aaj** campaign further maintained that there was little possibility of such a positive change in India's posture. However, OSC observes that **Aaj** undermined its own campaign by joining other media in offering excessive coverage of the wedding of Pakistani cricket player Shoaib Malik and Indian tennis star Sania Mirza in April 2010; this event appeared to temporarily cause a state of jubilation in Pakistan for no apparent reason. OSC also observes that the **Aaj** campaign appeared to have waned by the end of April without having made a visible adverse effect on the "Hope for Peace" initiative.



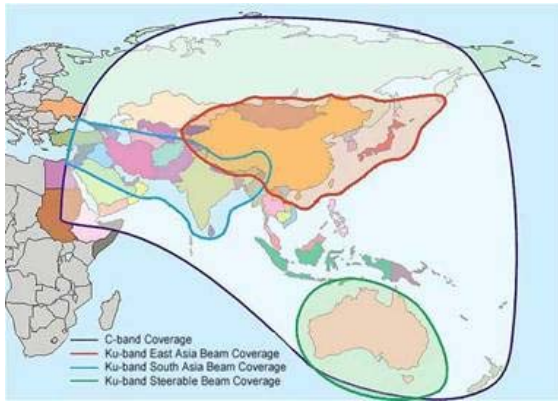
Graphic shows "image of the AsiaSat3S footprint" (aaj.tv, 5 May)

"Aaj Exclusive" video slide shows Mirza, left, talking to Aaj, with Malik seated on her right (Aaj News Television, 27 Apr 2010).

Appendix A: Technical Information (<http://aaj.tv/distribution.html>)

Downlink Information

"AAJ TV uses the C-Band capacity on AsiaSat3S satellite. It broadcasts to over 60 countries from Australia to Eastern Europe. An image of the AsiaSat3S footprint is shown below.



"Downlink Information Satellite: AsiaSat 3S; Frequency: 3750 Vertical; Symbol Rate: 28212 or 2821; FEC: 3/4

"Aaj TV is available in USA through Time Warner Cable. To subscribe, call 718 358 0900 and ask for Channel 572.

"Aaj TV is available in the Middle East through Pehla. For more information, visit www.pehlatv.net."

Appendix B: Contact Information

Sales Team

Email: salesinfo@aaj.tv

111-010-010 Ext: 1107

Marketing Team

Email: marketing@aaj.tv

111-010-010 Ext: 1112

Head Office:

Karachi

531, Recorder House,

Business Recorder Road, Karachi - 74550

UAN: 111-010-010

Fax: (021) 223 7067

Email: aajcomments@aaj.tv

Lahore

56, Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam, Lahore

UAN: 111-010-010

Fax: (042) 636 8749

Islamabad

3rd Floor, Block 13 E,

Mehria Plaza, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad

UAN: 111-010-010

Fax: (051) 287 1658

* There are four major schools of fiqh, or jurisprudence, in Islam -- Hanafi, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Maliki.

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