# When the Fourth Estate Becomes a Fifth Column:
## The Effect of Media Freedom and Social Intolerance on Civil Conflict

### Supplementary Online Appendix

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## INTRODUCTION

This online appendix presents more detailed information about the variables used in our analysis, additional analyses that serve as robustness checks on our main findings, and our expanded case illustration on India. The appendix is divided into several sections that are cross-referenced in the manuscript.

- SECTION 1. Variable Specification and Expectations
- SECTION 2. Additional Figures and Analyses (Figure A1 & Table A1)
- SECTION 3. Expanded Case Illustration: India (Table A2)

## SECTION 1. Variable Specification and Expectations

To better isolate the independent effects of our key independent variables and avoid omitted variable bias, we control for the effects of other key predictors on the likelihood of civil conflict identified throughout the previous literature. Below we provide descriptions of each of these control variables as well as our general expectations on how they affect the likelihood of civil conflict.

***Ethnic Fractionalization***. Ethnic diversity is an important factor influencing the likelihood of civil conflict within a country and should be accounted for within conflict models. Previous research strongly suggests that the relationship between ethnic fractionalization and civil conflict is nonmonotonic. That is, we expect the likelihood of civil conflict to be lower in states with high ethnic homogeneity or high ethnic heterogeneity (see Horowitz 1985; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2002; Esteban and Ray 2008). To measure ethnic fractionalizaton within countries, we use the Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalization (ELF) index found in the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Cederman et al. 2010). This indicator measures the level of ethnic fractionalization by calculating the probability that any two individuals randomly selected will be members of different ethnic groups. In theory, this indicator can range from 0 (complete ethnic homogeneity) to 1 (complete ethnic heterogeneity). In our sample, it ranges from 0 to 0.93 with a mean of 0.33. To estimate this nonmonotonic relationship, we also include a quadratic term consisting of the ethnic fractionalization variable squared in our models.

***GDP – PPP***. One critical factor linked to civil conflict is wealth, or more accurately, a relative lack of wealth (Collier et al. 2003; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Sambanis 2004; Miguel et al. 2004; Braithwaite et al. 2016). A country's general level of economic development can affect the likelihood of conflict through different mechanisms. Wealthier countries tend to have more state capacity to effectively counter insurgencies (Fearon and Laitin 2003) while poverty can provide greater incentive to rebel by reducing opportunity costs (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Here we use average income as measured by GDP per capita using purchasing power parities (2005 U.S. dollars) for each country lagged to their survey year as our indicator of economic development (World Bank 2012).[1] We expect that high levels of average income will be negatively associated with the onset of civil conflict. In our sample, the mean average income is $14,499 and ranges from $720 to $50,959. To reduce the influence of outliers in our parameter estimates, we use the natural logarithm of this variable in the models below.

***GINI***. Income inequality is often associated with civil conflict onset. Theoretically, the general expectation is that greater income inequality increases the likelihood of civil conflict because either the inequality highlights differences between groups within society potentially leading to political grievances (Cederman et al. 2011; Ostby et al. 2009) or potential insurgents anticipate greater economic gains from taking resources from the wealthy (Fearon 2008). Empirically, however, evidence supporting this linkage is decidedly mixed (see Ostby 2008). To account for the effects of income inequality across countries and over time, we use the Gini index based on net income from the Standardized World Income Inequality Database (SWIID) lagged to the survey year (Solt 2009). In our sample, the average GINI score is 35.7 and ranges from 19.8 to 69.1. To reduce the influence of outliers in our parameter estimates, we use the natural logarithm of this variable in the models below.

***Change in Unemployment***. Related to poverty and income inequality, indicators of economic distress have also been linked to civil conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Miguel et al.2004; Braithwaite et al. 2016). In particular, unemployment is viewed as a strong indicator of economic distress which is linked to higher rates of civil conflict (Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Caruso and Gavrilova 2012). An alternative causal argument posits that high unemployment fosters grievances and support for rebellion

[1] Purchasing power parities is an adjustment that accounts for differences in the purchasing power of currency across countries.

(Berman et al. 2011). To control for the effect of short-term economic distress, we rely on a measure of unemployment change from the previous year. We generate this indicator using data drawn from component indicators in the relative political capacity dataset (Arbetman-Rabinowitz et al. 2011). This variable is lagged to the survey year so, for example, if the survey was administered in 2007, it would indicate the change in unemployment from 2005 to 2006. In our sample, the mean change in unemployment is 0.63% and ranges from -42.9% to 66.7%.

***Youth (%)***. Previous research has found that a high level of youth in a country - the so-called "youth bulge" - is associated with increased civil unrest and conflict (Moller 1968; Mesquida and Weiner 1999; Urdal 2006; Yair and Miodownik 2016). To account for the effect of high youth populations, we calculate the percentage of the population aged 16 and younger for each country in the year prior to the survey. These data are also drawn from component indicators in the relative political capacity dataset (Arbetman-Rabinowitz et al. 2011). We expect that populations with higher proportions of youth are more likely to experience civil conflict. In our sample, the mean percentage of the population aged 16 and younger is 25.2% and ranges from 13.7% to 48.7%.

***Continuous Democracy***. The democratic learning hypothesis asserts that individuals' overall exposure to democracy and its practices strengthens democratic norms and socialization over time (see Rohrschneider 1996, 1999; Peffley and Rohrschneider 2003; Hutchison and Gibler 2007; Hutchison 2014; Peffley et al. 2015). To control for both regime type and the level of democratic socialization within a society, we rely on a measure of democratic longevity that indicates the number of years a state has experienced continuous democracy.[2] We expect that greater democratic longevity will reduce the likelihood of civil conflict through two potential pathways. First, deepening democratic norms throughout society over time should reduce overall grievances against the state. Second, democratic socialization will reinforce the notion that democratic institutions are the appropriate venues to address grievances of dissatisfied groups and individuals. Here we use Marshall and Jaggers' (2012) Polity IV index to generate this measure by totaling the number of years that country has consecutively scored a 6 or above on the democracy/autocracy indicator leading up to the year of the survey (see Hutchison and Gibler 2007; Hutchison 2014). In our sample, the average value for years of continuous democracy is 30.6 with a range of 0 years (non-democracies) to 197 years. To reduce the influence of outliers in our parameter estimates, we use the natural logarithm of this variable in the models below.

***Executive Constraints***. In order to test the effect of media freedom, we need a measure of institutional regime characteristics that does not incorporate civil rights, especially freedom of speech. Thus, as an additional indicator of regime type, we use the executive constraints variable for the Polity IV data for each country at the year of survey (Marshall and Jaggers 2012). While all democracies have high levels of executive constraints there are also some non-democracies that also have high levels of executive constraints. In general, we expect that higher executive constraints will be associated with lower levels of civil conflict. In this sample, the mean executive constraints score is 5.9 and ranges from 1 to 7.

***Rugged Terrain***. One of the strongest predictors of civil conflict within the empirical literature is a country's geography, particularly its amount of rough terrain (Buhaug and Gates 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Fearon 2004; Hendrix 2011). Rough terrain allows insurgents to better hide from government forces and develop their capabilities, particularly in the early stages of rebellion. As Hendrix (2011: 345) notes, this terrain reduces the "asymmetry of forces between states and insurgents and thereby diminishing the start-up costs – and increasing the probability – of rebellion."[3] We expect that rugged terrain will be strongly associated with the onset of civil conflict. To indicate rugged terrain, we use Fearon and Laitin's (2003)

[2] Because all non-democratic countries in our sample receive a value of 0 for years of continuous democracy, this variable also effectively controls for basic regime type in our analyses.

[3] Hendrix (2011) also demonstrates that rough terrain indirectly increases the likelihood of civil conflict by effectively reducing state capacity to combat insurgency due to reductions in tax capacity.

measure of rugged terrain, which is simply a country's percentage of mountainous terrain.[4] In our sample, the average percentage of rugged terrain is 16.5% and ranges from 0 to 73.4%.

***Oil Rents***. Scholars have long examined the 'resource curse' which links relationship natural resource abundance to higher likelihood of political violence and civil unrest (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Ross 2004). In particular, oil wealth has been strongly associated with the onset of civil conflict for several different reasons, including greater opportunity for rebel activity and grievances over unequal distribution of resource revenue (see Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Ross 2004, 2012; Le Billon 2012; Basedau and Pierskalla 2014; Bell and Wolford 2015). To account for the effect of oil wealth on the likelihood of civil conflict, we include a measure of oil rents as a percentage of the country's GDP during the year prior to the survey (World Bank 2012). We expect that countries with a higher percentage of oil rents are more likely to experience civil conflict. In our sample, the average percentage of oil rents is 2.6% and ranges from 0 to 40.3%.

***Prior Conflict***. The likelihood of civil conflict is most likely to be shaped whether the country previously experienced conflict. This phenomenon is commonly known as the "conflict trap" (see Collier et al. 2003; Collier et al. 2008; Elbadawi et al. 2008). We control for this possibility by including an indicator of whether the country experienced an internal armed conflict (as described above) in the year prior to the conflict for some of our models below.

[4] In those few instances where this data was unavailable in the original Fearon and Laitin (2003) dataset, we consulted with updated rugged terrain data found in Gibler and Miller (2014).

## SECTION 2. Additional Figures and Analyses

In this section, we include the figures and tables referenced in the manuscript that either offer further clarification of the relationships observed in the main models or represent an important robustness check.

**FIGURE A1:** Curvilinear Effect of Ethnic Fractionalization on Civil Conflict

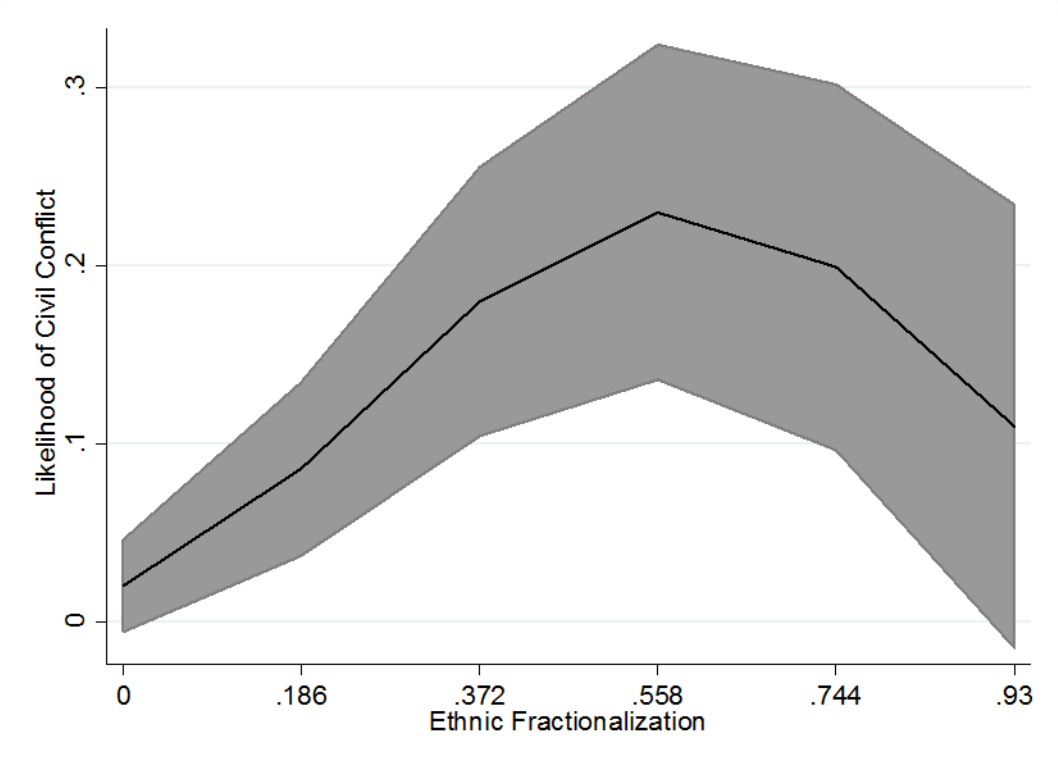

**Table A1:** The Likelihood of Civil Conflict One Year After Survey

| ***Variable*** | **Model 1a** | **Model 2a** | **Model 3a** | **Model 4a** | **Model 5a** | **Model 6a** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnic Fractionalization | 10.763*** | 9.587** | 10.581*** | 9.961** | 13.010* | 26.786** |
| | (3.302) | (3.440) | (3.309) | (3.543) | (5.800) | (10.322) |
| Ethnic Fractionalization$^2$ | -8.849* | -7.777* | -8.670* | -8.163* | -12.111* | -26.476** |
| | (3.600) | (3.851) | (3.615) | (3.879) | (5.674) | (9.599) |
| GDP - PPP (log) | -0.255 | -0.163 | -0.247 | -0.157 | -0.220 | 0.433 |
| | (0.312) | (0.318) | (0.309) | (0.325) | (0.518) | (0.612) |
| GINI | 0.025 | 0.012 | 0.027 | 0.008 | -0.083 | -0.140 |
| | (0.036) | (0.039) | (0.038) | (0.041) | (0.072) | (0.085) |
| Change in Unemployment | -0.021 | -0.032* | -0.021 | -0.031* | -0.036 | -0.048** |
| | (0.012) | (0.015) | (0.012) | (0.015) | (0.019) | (0.019) |
| Youth (%) | 7.322 | 6.762 | 7.110 | 7.159 | 11.687 | 24.788** |
| | (5.497) | (5.412) | (5.695) | (5.951) | (7.808) | (9.638) |
| Democracy-Autocracy | 0.095 | 0.099 | 0.108 | 0.086 | 0.070 | 0.104 |
| | (0.059) | (0.062) | (0.072) | (0.075) | (0.064) | (0.079) |
| Rugged Terrain | 0.025* | 0.026* | 0.025* | 0.027* | 0.008 | 0.023 |
| | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.011) | (0.016) | (0.017) |
| Oil Rents | 0.027 | 0.023 | 0.025 | 0.026 | 0.023 | 0.077* |
| | (0.035) | (0.034) | (0.034) | (0.031) | (0.028) | (0.037) |
| Prior Conflict | | | | | 5.423*** | 5.747*** |
| | | | | | (0.842) | (1.150) |
| Social Intolerance | | 2.437* | | 2.642* | 1.222 | -5.582 |
| | | (0.998) | | (1.245) | (1.748) | (3.721) |
| Media Freedom | | | -0.272 | 0.330 | -0.672 | -6.561** |
| | | | (0.748) | (1.024) | (1.282) | (2.479) |
| *Social Intolerance X Media Freedom* | | | | | | 14.243** |
| | | | | | | (5.340) |
| Constant | -6.203 | -7.149* | -6.104 | -7.511 | -5.232 | -12.620 |
| | (3.478) | (3.620) | (3.477) | (4.070) | (5.351) | (6.951) |
| N | 212 | 198 | 212 | 198 | 198 | 198 |

Logistic regression predicting whether civil conflict will occur in the year following the survey.
Robust standard errors are listed in parantheses.
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

## SECTION 3. Expanded Case Illustration: India

### MEDIA FREEDOM AND SOCIAL INTOLERANCE IN INDIA

To put our statistical findings in context and to demonstrate the possible causal mechanisms, we provide a case illustration of India. Following the process suggested by George and Bennett (2004), we identified India as a most likely case for our theory about the effects of the interaction of media freedom and social intolerance on civil conflict, and a least-likely case for the hypotheses for most of the other statistically significant independent variables in our analysis (George and Bennett 2004). As depicted in Table A2 compared to the rest of our sample, India's values for ethnic fractionalization, continuous democracy, executive constraints, rugged terrain and oil rents suggest that civil conflict is unlikely. In contrast, India's combination of media freedom and relatively high social intolerance predict a higher likelihood of civil conflict. Though India's previous civil conflict is a strong predictor of future civil conflict, we argue that it could well be that the same underlying conditions that led to the previous conflict are the cause of the current or future conflict (Achen 2000). It is true that the findings of our model indicate India's values for a change in unemployment and it's higher than average percentage of young people should increase its chances of civil conflict, but overall-——with the exception of its combination of media freedom and social intolerance—there are more factors that should decrease India's chances of civil conflict. Thus, to explore how the interaction between social intolerance and media freedom can promote political violence and civil conflict, we provide a case illustration of India, a democracy with functionally free media and relatively high social intolerance.

**Table A2:** Values of Predictors of Civil Conflict in India

| ***Variable*** | **Minimum (Year)** | **Maximum (Year)** | **Overall Sample Average** | **Variable's Predicted Effect on Civil Conflict** | **Variable's Prediction for Civil Conflict for India*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnic Fractionalization | 0.87 | 0.87 | 0.34 | Negative (if at either extreme) | Least Likely |
| Change in Unemployment | -17% (2006) | 0% (1990) | 0.8% | Negative | Most Likely |
| % of Youth | 32% (2006) | 38% (1990) | 25% | Positive | Most Likely |
| Continuous Democracy | 40 years (1990) | 56 years (2006) | 28 years | Negative | Least Likely |
| Executive Constraints | 7 | 7 | 5.9 | Negative | Least Likely |
| Rugged Terrain | 12.9% | 12.9% | 16.8% | Positive | Least Likely |
| Oil Rents | 0.85% (1990) | 1.3% (2006) | 3% | Positive | Least Likely |
| Prior Conflict | 1 | 1 | 0.14 | Positive | Most Likely |
| Social Intolerance | 0.71 (1990) | 0.79 (2001 & 2006) | 0.33 | Positive | Most Likely |
| Media Freedom | 1 | 1 | 0.72 | Conditional | --- |

*Note: These predictions indicate whether India is a "most likely" or "least likely" case for civil conflict based on the predictions from our statistical analysis and the comparison of the values of these variables for India compared to the average values for our sample.

Overall, we find compelling evidence that in seeking to attract audiences, the Indian news media have at times appealed to intolerant groups, often catering to ethnic prejudice. Although arguably the most robust free media in South-Asia, Indian news media, especially at the regional level, are not particularly balanced and have typically appealed to the elite class by providing news and commentary that amplifies their prejudices. Though India's history of ethnic prejudice and societal intolerance precedes independence and the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan, since 1950 more than 10,000 people have perished in the Hindu-Muslim communal violence (Dhattiwala and Biggs 2012). The roots of this communal violence can be traced back to the decision of British government to divide into two states, India and Pakistan, in response to Muslim leaders who expressed fears regarding the prospect of Hindu rule and a desire to form their own Islamic state. However, the newly established borders did not respect settled communities and the partition led to an immediate mass migration of approximately ten million people as Muslims and Hindus fled in opposite directions. Approximately one million people were killed in large-scale communal violence and countless others were displaced. Thus, tension arose between India and Pakistan and between Muslims and Hindus within India.

From the time of independence, three major wars have been fought between India and Pakistan; 1948, 1965 and 1971 (Indurthy and Haque 2010). As a result of the 1971 war and ceasefire, the Line of Control agreement was established. This divided the disputed region of Kashmir and Jammu in an attempt to reduce conflict (Indurthy and Haque 2010). Insurgent groups in Kashmir have stirred up the situation between India and Pakistan. Although there are some government restrictions on media freedom, especially radio where the Indian government has a monopoly on stations that broadcast news, the low cost of newspapers allows independent media to reach low-income provinces (Freedom House 2013).[5] In order to recruit members, militants in Kashmir and Punjab adopted the tactic of forcing local newspapers to publish propaganda as advertisements without payment (International Press Institute 1991: 13).

In addition to the Muslim-Hindu divide within India, there is the communist-led rebel movement that can be traced back to 1946 in Andhra Pradesh. Today, these groups advocate for an anti-capitalist agenda and take the form of the Communist Party of India. "Indian Maoists have been able to mobilize large sections of alienated populations in certain parts of the country, and empowered them with both moral and military strength to recover their land, assert their rights and reinvent themselves as dignified human beings in their quotidian existence," (Banerjee 2009: 1). The group has used propaganda to recruit members from posters to social media. Militants have also pressured independent news media in India to publish their propaganda and instigate conflict (International Press Institute 1991).

Yet militants are not alone when it comes to media manipulation. There is some evidence that, in order to gain public support, Indian politicians have used the media to spread fear of the Muslim insurgent groups (Freedom House 2013). In fact, the communal violence that persists today has much to do with the news media's relentless focus on the Hindu-Muslim divide, enhancing anti-Muslim prejudice through the pursuit of developing a primordial aggression towards Muslims and promoting Hindutva (an ideology that equates Hindu values with Indian culture).[6] There are indications that this focus is driven by political elites.

A case in point occurred in February 2002 in Godhra, Gujarat[7], when a train returning from Ayodha carrying 1,200 Hindu Ram sevaks (devotees of Ram) was attacked by a Muslim mob and caught fire, killing of 59 Hindus (Kausar 2006). There is some debate as to whether the fire was deliberate or accidental (Nussbaum 2008), but the incident sparked three months of violence in Gujarat that led to the deaths of more than 1000 Muslims (Jaffrelot 2003). In the wake of the train attack, both local politicians and some news organizations

[5] The only radio stations allowed to broadcast news are the state-owned AM stations.
[6] A 1995 Supreme Court decision ruled Hinduism a way of life, rather than a religion, thus permitting the use of Hindutva in the public domain (Jaffrelot 2003).
[7] Godhra has a population that is 40 percent Muslim and has the highest per capita rate of deaths in communal violence in India (Varshney 2002).

were complicit in inciting the violence against the Muslim population. In particular, allegations have been made that Narendra Modi, of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), instigated retaliatory violence in compliance with a couple of Gujarati newspapers and cable television stations. Varshney (2002) found that Modi's references to the 1992 demolition of the Babri Mosque (one of the worst acts of Hindu-Muslim violence in which the BJP helped mobilize Hindu extremists to Ayodha to destroy the Babri Mosque) instigated Hindus to take up arms in Gujarat. After the Godhra train killings were confirmed to be the work of Muslim extremists, Modi used specific references to the Babri incident in his public speeches as a way to mobilize Hindus against Muslims and these speeches were covered by the news media (Jaffrelot 2003).[8] Additionally, the Gujarati newspaper, Sandesh employed inflammatory frames in its coverage of the attack on the train:

> On 28 February 2002, the main headline said: '70 Hindus Burnt Alive in Godhra'. Another report on the front page says: 'Avenge Blood with Blood.' This is a quote from a statement issued by a VHP leader. Sadesh simply used his words as a headline. The Godhra attackers are consistently referred to as 'Muslim Junooni'. On 6 March 2002, the headlines screamed, 'Hindus Beware: Haj Pilgrims Return with a Deadly Conspiracy'. In reality, hundreds of terrified and anxious Haj pilgrims returned accompanied with heavy police escorts to homes that could have been razed to the ground. (Varadarajan 2002: 280)

Gujarat's top-selling newspapers, *Sandesh* and *Gujarat Samachar*, published rumors and biased reports, some of which were false (Bunsha 2006). For example, Sandesh published a story that claimed 'religious fanatics' pulled women and girls off of the train and kidnapped them (Bunsha 2006). The paper claimed two of the Hindu women were attacked, raped, mutilated and murdered, but the story was later found to be fabricated (Jafferlot 2003). The use of these sensationalist headlines, graphic photographs and derogatory labels such as "Muslim Junooni" (Junoon is an Urdu word meaning "crazed") and "religious fanatics" to describe the Muslims served to widen the societal divisions along communal lines, desensitized the newspaper's readers and inciting anger, fear and further violence.

Local television stations echoed the inflammatory news coverage and aired speeches of local politicians that incited violence against the Muslim community (Varadarajan 2002). Though the television networks, especially STAR News, covered the attacks on the Muslims, this coverage was for the most part blacked out in Gujarat:

> Cable operators received calls from local officials in Ahmedabad and other cities to completely blackout STAR News, Zee News, CNN and Aaj Tak. Dossiers and "hitlists" on journalists were reportedly prepared while the channels which dared to reveal the truth and were critical of the Chief Minister and his plan of actions were not invited to the press conferences and hence were denied the basic right to information (Ahmed 2010: 106)

Thus, there was for the most part an echo chamber in effect throughout much of Gujarat following the train attack that was sustained in the months that followed. Beyond Gujarat, the national news media, in particular *The Times of India* and the *Indian Express*, covered and were critical of the attacks on the Muslims, but within Gujarat, even the regional editions of these publications were less critical. In general, the English newspapers were seen as pro-Muslim, while the Gujarat press "stuck to its traditional anti-Muslim and pro-Hindu policy" (Narayana and Kapur 2011).[9] In fact, the close ties between the Gujarat press and the local politicians were quite evident:

[8] Interestingly, Modi has enjoyed a dramatic rise in power among the Hindu since the attacks against the Muslims and was elected prime minister in 2014.

[9] One important exception to the anti-Muslim coverage in Gujarat was *Gujarat Today*, a regional newspaper that was started by Muslims (Ahmed 2010).

> While Narendra Modi hailed those Gujarati newspapers like Sandesh and Gujarat Samachar—which vitiated the atmosphere by spreading false and dangerous rumours—the central and Gujarat governments repeatedly charged 'sections' of the national media with bias. What seems to have irked the BJP is the fact that the national media did not flinch from bearing witness to the complicity of the ruling party and state administration in the violence, (Varandarajan 2002: 271).

Thus, politicians and journalists have used India's free media environment to spread hate and provoke violence, catering to intolerant groups with cultural and historical appeals, including past conflict. In particular, the Muslim-Hindu divide has led to high level of social intolerance, and the combination of media freedom and intolerance has at times led to civil conflict. Political elites, both mainstream and opposition, have used the combination of social intolerance and free media to mobilize intolerant groups and instigate political violence.

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