

PRESS FREEDOM IN DICTATORIAL AND DEMOCRATIC ERAS IN PAKISTAN: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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*Abstract-*This study investigates to locate the status of press freedom in a comparative manner in democratic and dictatorial governing forms. It empirically demarcates the form of government in Pakistan spanning a difficult history for the freedom of press. A generally held perception is that press enjoys more freedom in democracies as compare to dictatorial rules due to their approaches to individual rights of which the most important is right to expressions and press is the eloquent mean of its implication. In this contexture, this study attempts to explore the media history of Pakistan to locate the form of government which more bitterly treated the freedom of press as both equally contributed the political makeup of the state for last seventy years. For the purpose to empirically analyze the comparative situation of press freedom during democratic and dictatorial eras, content analysis method for exploring the media history in connection with political arrangements is employed. The results reveal that the study of political history in connection to actions against press and journalists aimed at confining the freedom of press makes it fair to conclude that press in Pakistan has never enjoyed freedom as it has suffered atrocities in every regime either that is in democratic form or is a dictatorial rule. It is also proved that press and journalists has suffered more in democratic era than in the dictatorial period.

Key words: Democracy, press freedom, media professionalism, dictatorship, ideology, media economy, political communication

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan appeared on the map of the world as a democratic country but couldn't sustain its's values due to lesser tolerance for criticism, borders crisis with neighboring countries, Afghanistan and India, the colonially trained bureaucracy and diverse society divided vividly in religious sectarianism and ideological difference along with political agonies in general. In such a complex situation of the newly created on 14th August 1947, the press (Media) as the major organ of criticism had to play its function as the Watch Dog and Mirror of the Society which created more explicit hurdles for its professional job to do and unfortunately, throughout the history of media in the country, the media environment couldn't saw hey days (Hussain, 2021).

Although Pakistan was declared as Islamic Republic of Pakistan in all its three Constitutions, 1956, 1962 and 1973 (Wynbrandt, 2009) but democracy as a government of the people, for the people and by the people, couldn't developed in the country due to frequent regime change in the first decade (1947-1958) and tarnished military coups of Ayub Khan (1958),Yahya Khan (1969) Ziaul Haq (1977)and Pervez Musharraf (1999). Pakistan couldn't attained political stability in spite of experimenting different systems like Parliamentary, Presidential and military rule (Aziz, 1993). It's very clear here that due to such instability in the state affairs reflects the heterogenies and pathetic intolerance among different entities in the power corridor and in the segments of society which inevitably deteriorate the flourishing of a professional and free of interference Press.



This persistence of hostility and instability gave way to the ruling and the ruled dilemma which perplexed all the sections of society and the government which paved to palace intrigues that developed dictatorial fashion in the country and that sort of the subject matter is still prevailing in Pakistan. This state of affairs thwarted democratic values to be developed and be implemented in the better interests of the citizens.

It is very clear from the first day that the ruling and ruled interests are in clash due to imbalance distribution of wealth and resources as a legacy of colonial era which has never been tried to be rationalized or even to be recognized and this quandary of socio-political and socio-economical behavior barricaded the way government and citizen to come on one page.

This scenario entangled the conventional and legacy press to play its professional role for nourishing democratic values and norms and as a result either it suffered rigorously or toed the prevailing circumstances which is reflected in the political and media history of the country at each point and moment. The broaden picture of media environment of Pakistan, from each of the 360 degrees depicts the same perplexed scenario.

It is very important to state that press as its basic trait reflects the ongoing situation in its content, but some time its exposition goes contradictory to some sections of the government or the society which earn reaction in some sort of confining actions against its freedom. The media history in this context reveals that actions like arrests, killings and attacks on journalists and confining tactics like attacks on media houses, bans on publications and stoppage of official advertisements are frequently used to curtail the freedom of press in Pakistan.

This study attempts to dig out the fact that which of the form of government, Dictatorial or Democratic is responsible for confining the press and forcing journalists for following narratives of the governing class. The study will answer the following questions:

1. How did the media-state relation affect the freedom of press?
2. What techniques were used by different regimes to curtail the freedom of press?
3. Whether dictatorial or democratic governments were critical about the freedom of press?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Liberal Democracy, as Fukuyama (1989) found “*a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerge throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism*” doesn’t covers the variants of democracy in different state of the world like Pakistan when it came into being after a long consistent and untiring struggle for independence from the British rule and Muslim press and freedom fighters equally bestowed their capabilities for this great achievement as a common goal in the name of Islamic Republic of Pakistan under democratic form of government but the true spirit was never seen here on the ground (Long, 2017).

The Kaleidoscopic politics in Pakistan in 1950s was a product of instant realignments of political loyalties creating instability in the realm of political landscape (Kamran, 2008). Tahir Kamran in research paper “Democracy and Governance in Pakistan”, observes that when Quaid-e-Azam in April 1948, the rulers tightened their hold on

the official machinery and tried the opposition to be packed down with iron hands. Although vexatious palace intrigues, internal and external changes in political and economic spheres jolted the processes of constitutionalizing and nation building in the newly created state but journey to democratic setup of government continued from the very first day (Aug. 14, 1947) till the first coup by General Ayub Khan on Oct. 8, 1958. During the so-called democratic era the government-press relation remained twanged (Iqbal, 2010) and the power thirsty politician and toed journalists played havoc with the press in the country (Niazi, 2004).

The major issue in these 10 years after independence, was the clash in interests among different segments of the society, rifts in the ideology, colonial distribution of resources and the diversity of plans for future. The reason was that before the independence, press was fully engaged in politics and was playing crusading role in the movement for freedom of the nation from foreign yoke (Iqbal, 2010). Media entered the newly created country of Pakistan carrying with it the same nature and



political affiliation, and for a long time could not adopted the new realities and responsibilities to boast popular democracy and its values (Hussain,2021).

Democracy, any how is generally accepted to be the best form of government with more freedom of expression and it also provides a favorable environment for a peacefully-coexisted inclusive social system. No doubt, press is the mirror of society and play its role in strengthening the democracy. But the political history of Pakistan reflects not a very good picture of the healthy role in this respect. The existed literature high lights the events and the regulatory regime that confine the press but still the basic question that which of the government in either the dictatorial or democratic regimes is more drastic regarding the actual freedom of expression and the press.

A lens that Edward Herman & Noam Chomsky (1988) depict as Propaganda Model asserts that *“the mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda”*. But here in Pakistan, media economy and its involvement in state politics are also make way to for regulations which later then are used for suppression of this expected guardian of the citizens.

By law, all the three constitutions (1956; 1962, 1973 and the road map The Objective Resolution (1948) guarantee the freedom of expression but in reality, citizens and the institutions, especially, the press (Media) has never enjoyed the freedom. The press, during the democratic eras which makes half of the history of Pakistan and the other half occupied of the dictatorial regime, under different motives had tried to silent the press using different techniques (Hussain, 2021).

In the twentieth century, a generally established agreement was found that media and mass communication as an institution and the fourth pillar of government was central to the dynamics of relations between governed and governing parts of society in all types of regimes (Mugan, 2000) but the history of regimes-media relations in Pakistan doesn't support this notion.

On the other hand, Dictatorship is a government in which one person or a small group possesses absolute power without effective constitutional limitations. Such a person or group of persons gain the status of absolutist and in the aftermath try to subjugate the mass as subjects. In such a form of governments civil liberties are limited under the sole interests of the ruling segment in the name of state interests which is totally against the rule of democracy (Schmitt, 2014). In the case of Pakistan all the dictator gained the reign of governments in coups and later tried to legitimize their rule by tricky tactics.

Ayub's rule kick-started with the forced resigns from the then president Sikandar Mirza (Ahmed, 2017). S.H Ansari (2011) declares Ayub's era as authoritarian in the first phase (from 1958 to 1965) and in the second phase as quasi-authoritarian from 1965 to the end in 1969. Mazhar Ali Khan (2017) denoted that Ayub Khan deliberately destroyed the freedom of press when he attacked the Progressive Papers and more onward. He terms Ayub's era as *“usurper's regime”*. Syed Akbar Zaidi (2017) proclaims Ayub Khan as the founder of the military model of dictatorship which was replicated in 1977 by Zia Ul Haq and in 1999 by Pervez Musharraf with different ideologies and over centralized moods of governments with an unrealistic dependence on the United States of America. The commonly believed Black Laws of 1960 and 1963 as the Press and Publication Ordinances are the creations of Ayub's regime (Niazi, 1986).

General Yahya Khan took the reins of the government after Ayub Khan handed them violating his own branded constitution of 1962 on Mar. 25, 1969. Political uprisings were at the peak that led to the loss of east wing of the state. Yahya khan ruled the country for two years embodied in chaos. During Yahya rule the government-press relation remained tense due to overwrought diversities among different political sections busy in wrestling for powers. The government-press relations during Yahya khan regime were not better as she continued pressurizing the press for military's narrative (Khan, p 278). Yahya khan, imposed press censor and also on pamphlets and poster and other publishing materials (p, 279). Sajjad Ahmad Paracha (2007) in his PhD thesis demonstrates that after a strict stance for media, Yahya Khan released the clutches and the press enjoyed full



freedom till the war erupt in the eastern wing of the state. Zaffar Abbas (2017) estimates Yahya's era equal dark chapter for the national press argues the papers published on the day after we have lost the eastern wing of the state which were white for the related reports and he terms the situation as the sad reminder of curbs on the press. Hussain Naqi (2017) denotes that Yahya was as cruel to press as his predecessor Ayub. He says that during his rule a building was crushed by tank and many journalists were sent behind the bars.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto as civil martial law administrator took the oath on Dec. 20, 1971 and promised democracy and the restoration of all rights including the freedom of press but soon, he forgot all his promises (Niazi, 1986). Z.A Bhutto had little tolerance for the criticism of press (Abbas, 2017). Paracha (2007) also affirms that Z.A Bhutto used publications of National Press Trust, allocation of official advertisements, newsprint quota, state machinery and institutions to suppress political opponents and he brutally confined the freedom of press. Zohra Yusuf (2017) declares that Z.A. Bhutto showed no less intolerance for free press than any dictator before or later.

General Zia ul Haq arrested zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and imposed Martial law in the state on Jul. 05, 1977 and next on Jul 07 issued directive restricting the freedom of press with iron hands. The state was facing with the third dictatorial era which proved the most atrocious period for all freedoms including the freedom of press. Direct and bare control in the form of pre-censorship on press was witnessed although like Z.A. Bhutto he had pronounced publicly that there will be no restrictions on press (Iqba&Shabir, 2010). The blank columns in newspapers of the era are the eloquent depictions of Zia's atrocities against the press (Abbas, 2017). A glimpse of toed press is depicted by Katherine M. Doherty and Craig A. Doherty (n.d) in their book "Benazir Bhutto" saying that on the trial's proceedings of Z.A Bhutto Pakistani newspapers were always publishing only the charges but no details of evidences that Benazir was providing. Similarly in his article Ghazi Salahuddin (2018) published in Dawn, confesses that when he met Benazir at the condolence ceremony of her father, she responded dejectedly showing that she was not happy with the patronized editorial policies of the press. This state of affairs portrays the curbed freedom of press during Zia's dictatorial era.

Benazir Bhutto took the reins of government as the first woman prime minister of Pakistan after her Party won the general election in held on Nov. 16, 1988. The first attack on national press was witnessed in the brand of reducing official advertisements for NPT's papers as punishment for their partisanship in Zia's favor. Taimur ul Hassan (2009) in his PhD thesis finds that during the first tenure of Benazir, Mutaheda Qaumi Movement (MQM) (Pakistan, 2023) in Sindh and Muslim League under Nawaz Sharif in Punjab did havoc with press. Nawaz used indirect and MQM direct highhandedness to subjugate national press in accordance to their personal goals and the federal government did nothing to retaliate to the commitments of Benazir regarding the freedom of press. Nawaz Sharif won election on Oct. 29, 1990 and continued its previous approaches with MQM in coalition in the government and atrocities continued as a legacy against press and journalists. MQM was given free hand to torment the journalist's community and Nawaz by deeds and by tongue supported and inflamed enormities against journalists (Khan, 2014). Killings and politically activated and supported attacks on media houses and journalists are the creation of this regime, although Nawaz Sharif had expressed in his first address to the nation, that he would instigate opportunities to journalists, teachers and doctors but the coming time saw a diverse condition of prototypic approaches towards press and journalists (Hassan, 2009).

The second term of Benazir Bhutto which begins after victory in general election held on Oct. 06, 1993 proved not different in respect to press and its freedom, from her first tenure. One of the core issues that diverged pressure was the coverage of Sindhi-Muhajir crises that perplexed the government to assure press freedom (Faqr et. al. 2015). Benazir tried her best for democracy to be developed in the state and to strengthen democratic traits in state institutions (Khuhro and soomro, 2013) but the prevailing dictatorial legacy and fundamentalistic approaches of socio-political profile of the state did not gave way her to implement rules in accordance to her vision which is reflected from the actions against the press and pressmen during her regime (Khan, 2014) so that the press remained confined as that was during her predecessor's rules.



Nawaz Sharif for the second tenure took oath of the office to uphold democracy in the state after acquiring an overwhelming majority in the election held on Feb. 03, 1997. Under Nawaz rule Pakistan became the nuclear power and also the government passed two significant amendments (thirteenth and fourteenth) in the constitution that were strengthened parliamentary characteristics in Pakistan (Faqir, et al. 2015) but this era did not change the confining attitude towards the press. A number of journalists were killed, many were injured, a lot were arrested and some were threatened for not following official lines (Hussain, 2019). I.A Rehman (2017) summarizes the condition of press freedom in the words “From the mid-1980s till 1999 the greater threat to the Press and journalists came from political factions and non-state actors who attacked journalists, prevented the circulation of newspapers, burnt houses and killed quite a few journalists”.

The fourth dictatorial era commenced after a coup by General Pervez Musharraf on Oct. 12, 1999. During Pervez’s era, media saw a mushroom growth and boasted but in chains (Iqbal, 2012). Licenses were issued to private TV channels and FM radios but the freedom was confined by legal framework under Publication ordinances, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) (Pakistan I. M., 2023) and defamation laws. Nasreen Akhtar (2008) declares that Pervez Musharraf not only played rough games with constitution, and political profile of the state but also tricked on judiciary and press throughout his dictatorial rule. Shahan Mufti (2007) denotes that Musharraf did more for liberalization of media but direct and indirectly imposed restrictions on particular coverage made his glory ambiguous. Huma Yusuf and Emrys Schoemaker (2013) summarize the condition of media under Musharraf as freer than ever but still vulnerable to state control.

Yousaf Raza Gillani as a prime minister of Pakistan took the reins of government after Pakistan People’s Party won election in February 2008, on the expenses of the assignation of her leader Benazir Bhutto. People’s Party’s government with its ally MQM left no stone to threaten and pressurize press and journalists for vested interests. Killings of journalists increased tremendously and media houses were attacked more than ever (Hussain, 2019). During the rule of Gillani, Pakistan was declared as one of the 10 most dangerous countries for journalists in 2010 by Reporters without Borders (RSF, 2010). Media throughout the Gillani’s regime remained under pressure and faced with confining tactics by state and non-state actors (Schoemaker and Yusuf, 2013).

Nawaz Sharif for the third term in house took the control as premier of Pakistan after he won election held on May 11, 2013. The third tenure of Nawaz Sharif was not different from his previous terms in power and no positive change in the dictatorial attitude towards press was witnessed. Journalists faced with threats and attacks not only during the dictatorial eras but also in the rule under Benazir and Nawaz Sharif (Naqi, 2017).

Imran Khan took over the rein of government after Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf won election held on Jul. 25, 2018, with a hope to endow the press with freedom but the situation is not optimistic in any way and the backbone (official ads.) of media industry has been stretched to the extent that big media groups like Jang Media Group has to postpone its six publications and Dawn has made 40% cut in staff’s salary. Before the election Hameed Haroon (2018) in an article published in daily “The Nation” demonstrated that the media was shrinking due to pressure on its economy and also on its freedom by certain forces who try to prevent media from political coverage independently. The whole country has strucked with protest by working journalists but the government shows no sign to tackle the situation and stop the ongoing economical killings of journalists.

The media landscape of Pakistan

On the basis of medium, press in Pakistan is divided in print and electronic spectrum while a divide on language and main stream and local media structure is also known terms that marks distinctions. Before the independence, press was fully engaged in politics and was playing crusading role in the movement for freedom of the nation from foreign yoke (Iqbal,2010).Media entered the newly created country of Pakistan carrying with it the same nature and political affiliation, and for a long



time could not adopted the new realities and responsibilities to boast popular democracy and its values. The print media is the oldest medium of mass communication in the state.

The Jang was first published from New Delhi in 1941 and after the partition its founder Mir Khalil Ur Rehman moved it to Karachi from it was published as evening paper which later on was promoted to daily and now is the largest circulated Urdu newspaper in Pakistan that sells eight lac copies per day (Shoeb, 2008). Imroze, the Pakistan Times, Jssarat, Maswat, Ummat, and other comprising the media realm of the country and each and every media organization follows its own generated agenda and also have created a specific sphere of influence and distinct market. Nawa-i-Waqt was established by Hameed Nizami in 1940. Hameed Nizami was a proponent figure in freedom movement and his paper was known for advocating the cause of the freedom fighter. The paper is still known for its conservative approaches but have a large share as a mainstream paper in the media environment of the country. The four giants of Pakistani media are Jang Media Group owned by Mir family under the supervision of Mir Shakil Ur Rehman, the Nawa-i-Waqt Group owned by Nizami family under the control of Majid Nizami, the Dawn media Group owned by Saigol and Haroon family in the leadership of Hameed Haroon and the Express Group run by Lakhani family. All these groups are business oriented and run other business side by side. Mir Shakil is known for investing assets in the stock market, the Saigol family runs textile factories, and the Express Group has diagonal relations with other international businesses. ARY Media Group under the ownership of AbulRazaq Yaqoob also owns gold, real estate and other businesses (Rasul&McDwell, 2012). The English, Urdu and local language distribution of media is also distinct and have their specific sphere of influences and follows particular market-based policies (Latif, 2018). The largest share bearing paper Dawn, is elite class paper and its editorial policies and content reflects the class presentation at large. The paper is generally believed freer as compared to the Urdu local language press. The daily "The news", daily Express tribune and daily Frontier Posts are second place English papers and have a reputation for mixed texture of editorial policies and representative status of both the middle and upper class. The local language papers in Sindhi, Pashtu, Arabic, Balochi, Punjabi and Brahvi are representing the local issues and follow distinct local circumstances based approach to media content and orientation. According to Pakistan's Bureau of statistics (2016), five hundred and thirty nine papers and periodicals are published in the country. They are 4 Arabic, 1 Brahvi, Balochi, 55 English, 19 Pashtu, 1 Sindhi, 442 Urdu and 5 others. Urdu language papers dominate the media market both by number and on the basis of circulation. Electronic media was introduced in the country in 1964 when the first television channel PTV went on air and for 50 years continued to keep its monopoly until 2000-2002 when licenses were issued to private channels by Gen. Pervez Musharraf's government. Today the Pakistan's electronic media consists of 92 channels, three still states owned and 89 private and 188 radios of which 143 are commercial, 45 are non-commercial, serving information to twenty billion citizens of the country (APNS & PEMRA, 2018). It is generally held view that electronic media is highly biased in term of content and presentation and reflects a clear divide and inclination on the basis of ideologies and economic interests. The study attempts to calculate the trend and its nature and reasons.

THEORETICAL FRAME

In the light of diverse social and cultural backgrounds and complexed power structure with inconsistent government form and a wide rift in Defacto and Dejure practices in Pakistan, this study explore the media environment under Democratic and Dictatorial eras for the Freedom of Press, as Guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which in its article 19 says *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers"* (UNO, 2023).

Pakistan is a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and also the freedom of press with some restriction by law, is guaranteed by the constitution in chapter 2, article 19 as *"Every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and there shall be freedom of the press, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of*



Islam or the integrity, security or defiance of Pakistan or any part thereof, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, 33[commission of] 33 or incitement to an offence “and 19 A as “Every citizen shall have the right to have access to information in all matters of public importance subject to regulation and reasonable restrictions imposed by law” of the constitution 1973 (in power) Pakistan (CP, 2023).

The RSF asserts that *Ever since its founding in 1947, Pakistan has oscillated between civil society’s quest for greater press freedom and the political and military elite’s constant reassertion of extensive control over the media” (RSF, 2023).*

In this milieu this study establishes its own definition of press freedom as “Press Freedoms is the free flow of information as a sacred trust within the limits prescribe by the local moralities and universal truth, without any interference and interlace from any actor, the government, the establishment, the law enforcement agencies, political parties, religious group, social activists, militants, mafias, the employer, the economic interest groups, trade unions, the advertisers, the journalists and other interest entities for personal, pre-planned and unrecognized designs, from its origin to feed back. The theory of social responsibility theory is the major frame work here and the governmental interference for vested interests in restriction on the freedom of press.

The study is exploring all the reported, perceived, claimed and acclaimed restrictions, interference, threatening, assaulting, intimidating, suppressing, marginalizing, depriving and hating, using all means and sources resources possible.

Here, the study explores the freedom of press under the democratic and dictatorial eras in Pakistan testing the theory that asserts that press enjoys more freedom in democracy than the authoritarian and dictatorial form of government.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is focused to explore the media environment of Pakistan for press freedom as fundamental right under the UN Universal Demarcation of Human Rights (1948) of which Pakistan is signatory. Also the study attempts to testify the state’s guarantees in the constitution of Pakistan for the freedom of press. The scientific enquiry of the phenomenon press freedom as defined in the theoretical frame, is made using the Content Analysis.

Although the international organizations like Freedom House(FH), Committee to protect Journalists (CPJ), International federation of Journalists (IFJ), Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) are calculating press freedom but the ground realities are fully not fully covered and round the years some tactical restrictions like lobbying to bock the official advertisements, unreported threats, cutting paper quota, trapping in legal frames are not the parts of the research tools used by these organizations. Most of the indices are based on sole quantitative techniques which limits accesses to some critical issues whereas, this study explore all the possible literature, reported information and interviews with senior working journalists.

This research employs content analysis mechanism to properly explore the condition and status of press freedom in a comparative texture in democratic and dictatorial eras in Pakistan.

The study makes use of content analysis which is a scientific search of variable “press freedom” in media landscape of Pakistan spreading from Aug. 14, 1947 to Jul. 17, 2017. The content analysis put actions against the press as indicators, killing, arresting and attacks (threatening, beating, injuring) of journalists and physical attacks on media houses, cutting off of official advertisements and bans on publication” to locate the freedom of press. The study under frequency technique, concludes the status of press freedom, accordingly i.e., more the percentage of actions against the press, low will be the condition of press freedom. The study searches the content in published works as secondary data including books, articles, news reports, reports of national and international organizations and websites. The data is quantified and presented in frequency tables and pie charts for better understanding and acceptable generalization.

The study codes the construct of press freedom as threatening, beating, injuring, physical attacks on media houses, cutting off of official advertisements and bans on publication as Media Outlets and Journalists are the major pillars of the Press in Pakistan. The study explored content in 11



books written by local scholars and journalists covering the media history in Pakistan, repository of daily Jang, which is the largest circulated newspaper in the country explored, 39 senior journalists were interviewed throughout Pakistan to get unpublished data and the perceived threats, reports of FH, CPJ, RSF and PPF were visited and the data was statistically analyzed using frequency tables.

As the study is focused to investigate the press freedom in dictatorial and democratic eras which spread over equal tenures, so the time of individual regimes is taken as controlled variable and calculated for more clarification for the quantification of data.

Press freedom during different regimes in term of actions against the press: findings and discussion

The press in Pakistan entered with its full colonial legacy in term of its political affiliation and freedom confining laws. Almost all journalists were part of the freedom struggle and the papers like Dawn, Jang, Anjam and Morning News were centered in their policies to champion the cause of freedom.

This implication can be comprehended till the day present in press, which is a texture of no change in the slave-master complexion between the rulings and ruled whereas press is the reflecting agent of the scenario prevailed.

Freedom of press as prescribed in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that everyone has right to express opinion through any medium free of borders and free of any restriction imposed and interference by any authority. But this research follows the freedom guaranteed by article 19 and 19A of the constitution of Pakistan 1973 which also subjects the freedom of press to necessary restrictions by law. So that freedom of press in this article is the free flow of media content as a sacred trust embodied in local moralities and universal truths.

Restrictions and interference by any state or non-state actor for personally motivated interests are termed as actions against press and journalists which are indicators to locate the status of press freedom in this study. Employing this methodology, the content is searched in different regimes and is quantified as under.

Comparative analysis of curbing actions against the press and journalists resulted in curtailing press freedom

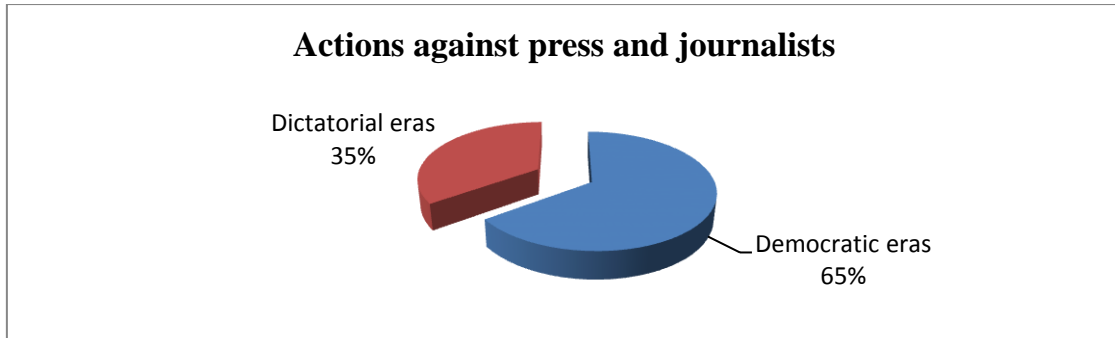
The political history of the country begins as an Islamic Republic of Pakistan from August 1947 when freedom was achieved from the British Raj. Universe of the study is the history of the land in context to the political atmosphere in terms of the form of government and media landscape with reference to freedom of press from August 1947 to July 2017 making 839 months.

Term of democracy includes, the first democratic era spread over a period of 130 months, the second democratic era remained 68 months in power, the third democratic era was in exercise for 20 months, the fourth was for 31 months, the fifth was for 36 months, the six remained for 31 months, the seventh for 50 months and the eighth for 49 months, a total for 415 months.

The dictatorial era is spread over as the first era 129 months, the second for 33 months, the third for 130 months and the fourth for 106 months, for a total 398 months. Both make 813 months whereas the whole life under study is 839 months, an overlap up to 05 month is due to rounding the tenures. Only for 21 months the care takers or substitutes like Raja Pervez Ashraf for Yousaf Raza Gillani for 9 months, Ghulam Mustafa Jajoi for 06 months, Balakh Sher Mazari for 01 month, Moenuddin Ahmad Qureshi for 03 months and Muhammad Mian Soomro for 2 months remained in power.

The difference between democratic and dictatorial period in power is only 17 months which makes no significant factor to change the results and so can be ignored for generalization of results.

1: The following figure illustrates the percentage distribution of actions against press and journalists during the dictatorial and democratic eras. N=467

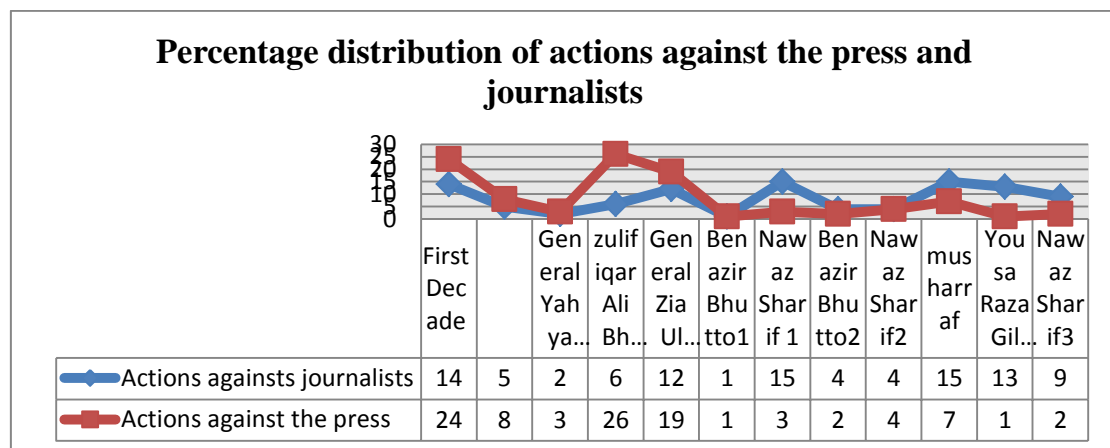


Interpretation: The figure indicates that more (65%) actions against the press and journalists have been taken during democratic eras while 35% of atrocious actions were recorded during dictatorial eras.

Findings reveal that in terms of actions against the press, in the form of physical attacks, bans on publications and stoppage of official advertisement and actions against journalists in the form of killings, arresting and attacking, democratic eras are the worst as compared to dictatorial eras.

But the findings also indicate a trend shift mechanism during the history of media-government linkage in term of actions curbing the freedom of press. The following figure demonstrates the trend shift in actions against the press and journalists.

2: The line bar chart illustrates the percentage distribution of actions against the press and journalists. N=467



Interpretation: The figure indicates that regarding actions against the press the era of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was the most drastic at 26% followed by the first decade at 24%. Zia’s era is following at 19%, the Ayub’s era at 8%, the Musharraf’s era at 7%, the Nawaz’s second era at 4%, the Yahya’s and Nawaz’s second’s era are at 3% each, the Benazir’s first and Nawaz’s third era are at 2% and the Benazir’s first and Gillani’s eras the least at 1%.

Regarding actions against journalists, the eras of Pervez Musharraf and Nawaz (first era) are on the top at 15% following by the first decade at 14%. The era of Gillani is at 13%, the Zia’s era is at 12%, the Nawaz’s third era is at 9%, the Z.A. Bhutto’s is at 6%, Ayub’s era is at 5%, and Benazir’s second and Nawaz’s second era are at 4% each, the Yahya’s era is at 2% while the least at 1% is the first era of Benazir Bhutto.

Findings demonstrate a clear trend shift in actions against the press and journalists. The line graph indicates that actions against press were high to the end of Zia Ul Haq era but from the start of Benazir’s era, the level of actions against journalists is continuously growing. The findings also indicate a growth in physical attacks on the freedom of press.



CONCLUSION

The analytical study of political history in connection to actions against press and journalists aimed at confining the freedom of press makes it fair to conclude that press in Pakistan has never enjoyed freedom as it has suffered atrocities in every regime either that is the democratic form or is a dictatorial rule. It is also proved that press and journalists has suffered more in democratic era than in the dictatorial period.

The study concludes that the freedom of press has always confined by the powerful agents including state and state factions due to uncomfortable intolerance for press's criticism and illogical and frustrated zeal for political communication. It's clarified that governments always tried to silence the decent voices using all possible means of power play.

The results negate the perception that press enjoys more freedom in democracies than in the dictatorial form of governments. Significantly, the study reveals that the restrictions on press are mostly linked with the governmental interests and have no deal with the form of government. The study also attests that in some cases, the declines have occurred in the context of general democratic breakdown, aimed at limiting the space for opposition, silencing critical voices and manipulating electoral processes, while in other cases, it has occurred in a context of less severe democratic deterioration, explained by the rise of nationalist political parties, and justified by arguments of national sovereignty, law and order, national security and firm responses to terrorism.

The study proves that press (media) in Pakistan has always tried to follow the elite's line and publish and disseminate only the popular narrations. Noam Chomsky's conception of Media as a Propaganda Machine and Consent Manufacturing Industry is justified here. The research reveals that journalists were threatened, killed, arrested and media houses were attacked and financially disputed due their professionalism which urges impartiality, publishing facts and truths.


The study urges full-length academic research in this area to locate the actors behind the actions against the press and journalists and also feels the need that the causes and objectives of confining agents to be explored.

As the study proves the bitter approaches of democracies towards the freedom of press, it is also necessary to consider this indicator as a significant factor for further studies.

The study also indicates that democracy in Pakistan doesn't reflect its standard features as the findings prove it more atrocious than dictatorial eras. Measures are needed to be taken to improve democratic characteristics in the state to assure the freedom of press and be benefited from its implications.

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