

# A Brief Historical Sketch of Press in Pakistan

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PhD

Media Studies

# Pre-partition

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- The media in Pakistan dates back to pre-partition years of British India, where a number of newspapers were established to promote a communalistic or partition agenda.
- Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar and Maulana Hasrat Mohani were the famous names of that era. These people never cared about the ferocious laws of British Government and they continued their work. Zimindar that was published by Maulana Zafar Khan faced several time bans but it continued to print and gained much popularity among people. This brave stance of Journalism in the history of Print Media of Sub-continent is known as Militant Journalism.
- The newspaper **Dawn**, founded by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and first published in 1941, was dedicated to promoting for an independent Pakistan.
- The conservative newspaper, **Nawa-i-Waqt**, established in 1940 was the mouthpiece of the Muslim elites who were among the strongest supporters for an independent Pakistan.



# Pre-partition

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- The Urdu daily 'Manshoor' and weekly 'Aaj- Kal' were printed in the same age.
- 'Inqalab' was representing Uninest party in Lahore but after Pakistan Resolution it started to portray Muslim League stance.
- In 1937, Progressive Papers Ltd started Pakistan Times in Lahore by Mian Iftikhar.
- All these above newspapers played a vital role in awakening people for the struggle of Pakistan as a homeland where Muslims can save themselves from cultural eclipse of the dominating Hindu majority.

# Post-Independence

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- After independence there was no organized structure for mass communication in Pakistan and there were few radio stations that were functional.
- After the establishment of Pakistan it was expected that there would be a shift in the print media and it would be far better from the age of colonialism. But the problems at the time of independence were so grave like the problem of refugees, lack of infra structure, absence of official machinery and lack of administration that government remained disheveled and so as the press of Pakistan.
- Most of the newspapers that were in India prior to independence were shifted to Karachi including *Morning News*, *Dawn*, *Jang* and *Anjam* while the papers of Lahore (*Pakistan Times*, *Zamindar*, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, and *Civil and Military Gazette*) continued to work in their normal routine.



# Post-Independence

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- 'Imroz' started its publication and put together prominent personalities like Abdullah Malik, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Chragh Hassan Hasrat. So 'Imroz' very quickly attained a reputable place in the leading newspapers.
- In 1953 'Kohistan' was published by a famous novel writer Nasim Hijazi in Rawalpindi. This paper gave a new trend to publications by starting Offset printing method instead of Litho printing which introduced photo journalism.
- Till 1957 media was free in Pakistan and there were only 60 cases that were registered in the entire country in which actions were taken against newspapers. □
- In 1960 Magazines were replaced by 'Digests' that were influenced by western style.

# The Darkest Era of Press

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- The first step in introducing media laws in the country was done by the then military ruler and President Ayub Khan who promulgated the Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO) in 1962. The law empowered the authorities to confiscate newspapers, close down news providers, and arrest journalists.
- Progressive Papers Ltd. Published Lail-O-Nehar, Imroze, Pakistan Times and the literary personalities attached with Progressive Papers Ltd. started Progressive movement in literature. During that time there was a shift in the government and Gen M. Ayub Khan took control of the country as President of Pakistan and imposed Martial Law. So the progressive movement was unacceptable for government. Therefore, government took over Progressive Papers Ltd.
- National Press Trust was established by the government and government took the stance that the trust will look after or take over those newspapers that are suffering from financial crisis. So gradually till 1960, it took over almost 60% renowned newspapers of the country.



# Shift from Politics to social life

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- To maintain the interest of the readers in the newspapers was a big challenge as martial law government put ban on all political news.
- This resulted in an effort on the behalf of newspapers to seek other topics and they started to publish different supplements like Sports Supplements, Women Supplement, and Youth Supplement etc. So the focus shifted to social life.
- The trend also shifted to weekly and episodically features. These features covered the social and cultural aspects.

# Press in Chains

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- Press and Publication Ordinance (PPO) was not used by the Yahya government. So a mushroom growth of newspapers was seen but journalists were under strict observation and no newspaper was permitted to write about situation happening in East Pakistan, to keep the people blind of the situation. Freedom of press which was bestowed on newspapers and journalists was for obscene and immoral things, not for objective or unbiased reporting. People's right to know was an unacceptable thing to the government.
- During Bhutto's regime, the PPO remained, as did the National Press Trust. Furthermore, through coercion and manipulation, there were only two news agencies APP (state-owned) and the Pakistan Press International (PPI) in the country.
- In 1977, General Zia ul Haq ousted Bhutto and once again imposed martial law under which abuse of journalists became public rather than covert.



# Press in Chains

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- More draconian additions were made to the PPO during the reign of General Zia-Ul-Haq in the 1980s. According to these new amendments, the publisher would be liable and prosecuted if a story was not to the liking of the administration even if it was factual and of national interest. These amendments were used to promote Haq's Islamist leanings and demonstrated the alliance between the military and religious leaders. Censorship during the Zia years was direct, concrete and dictatorial. Newspapers were scrutinised; critical or undesired sections of an article censored.
- In 1985, Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo was elected to the National Assembly, based on nonparty elections, and lifted martial law in December 1985. Even though Junejo was a more democratic political figure, the PPO remained in place under him, and he relied on the old media laws.

# ERA OF 1988 TO 1999

- A new law, known as the Registration of Printing Presses and Publications Ordinance came into effect in 1988. The most significant change made in the press law of 1988 was the right of an applicant to be heard in person by the authority before any punitive action was taken. Appeals were also now allowed.
- A new trend of evening newspapers was introduced. However, many critics said that they started a fiction trend and yellow journalism was started to practice. However, newspapers refuted this blame.
- The regime of Benazir Bhutto, brought with her a new phase of liberalism and allowed government-controlled radio and television to provide daily and well-balanced coverage of the speeches and statements of its opposition in news bulletins and current affairs programs. The independent press grew stronger during this phase; the Urdu press and the English press, as well as the regional language press, showed a new energy in reporting the news and in analyzing the issues of the day.
- In Sharif's two and one-half years in power, he used many heavy-handed methods to deal with journalists who dared to criticize his government. He put tremendous pressure on independent journalists, using both covert and overt means of retribution.



# PAKISTAN TOWARDS PRESS FREEDOM

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- The satellite communication made it impossible for the governments to hide facts from the public. Pakistan was also affected by the new satellite technology and Dish antennas became quite common. Government also felt the change and started to think about the freedom of press gradually.
- By the early 2000s, 1,500 newspapers and journals exist in Pakistan, including those published in English, Urdu, and in regional languages; and the press remains strong and central to public life in spite of government efforts to control it.
- From 2002, under General Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani media faced a decisive development that would lead to a boom in Pakistani media and paved the way to it gaining political clout. New liberal media laws broke the state's monopoly on the electronic media. TV broadcasting and FM radio licenses were issued to private media outlets.

# THE PRESENT SITUATION OF PRESS IN PAKISTAN

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- The most influential newspapers in Pakistan are the daily *Dawn*, *The News*, *The Nation*, *The Express Tribune* and *Daily Times* in English, the daily *Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqt* and *Daily Express* in Urdu, and the daily *Business Recorder* in the area of business and finance.
- *Jang* is the top daily newspaper with a circulation of 850,000. *Nawa-e-Waqt* holds second place with 500,000, followed by *Pakistan* (279,000), *Khabrain* (232,000), *The News* (120,000), *Dawn* (109,000), and *Business Recorder* (22,000).
- The typical Pakistani newspaper is of regular rather than tabloid size, averaging about 20 pages per issue. Most newspapers have a weekend, midweek, and magazine section. All the leading newspapers, including *Jang*, *Nawa-e-Waqt*, *Dawn*, *The Nation*, *The News International*, and *Business Recorder*, have online editions and many of them have become media conglomerates like Jang, Express, Dawn have their news channels and radio networks.