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Cite Us



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## Mushrooming of Media under Musharraf Regime and its Impacts on the Functioning of Democracy

**Abstract:** *The political elite, bureaucracy and establishment had not played their expected role in Pakistani society. Pakistan's establishment is always overshadowing the political landscape. This study analyses the role of media during the Musharraf regime in Pakistan. It also aims to figure out the factors which are playing a role in the promotion or degradation of democracy. In this study, the qualitative research technique is applied. This research proved that Pakistan's ex-military rule has remained worst in initiating change, opinion building and betterment of society. It also played an inverse role in social change and to support and strengthening democracy. Pakistani Journalist has demonstrated an unprecedented ability to act as a catalyst in connection with the efforts by the civil society in strengthening democracy during the Musharraf regime. Musharraf's regime is one of the darkest eras in Pakistan's media history in terms of the subjugation of media and journalists.*

**Key Words:** Mushrooming, Media, Democracy, Dictatorship

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### Introduction

Traditional media has played an important role in political awareness in the rural community. Every individual knows about the political process in any democratic society. Everyone knows the duties of the prime minister; and what are their rights unaddressed. Media also point out the

drawbacks in the political process and let the government try to remove these drawbacks. Media makes processes more accountable, responsible and public friendly (Taylor, P., 2001). We are aware of the fact that no one is perfect so our media is also not that much perfect. It also has some drawbacks but we cannot think about any democratic country without a free media.

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Media is used to strengthen and keep the government active. It keeps democracy prevail and progressive institutions. It is now gradually becoming the machine for making money but not working for the welfare of the public. The rich and the powerful are ruling over the media and are using media for their own personal benefits (Murray, S. 2004). Many politicians own different media outlets so defiantly those media outlets will not expose the dirty deeds or will not point out the mistakes of the ruling class. The ruling class use media as their plus point which will promote them and thus create a biased environment.

Since the 16th century, it has been recognized that the press is the fourth pillar of the state. Moreover, it is acknowledged that it is a forum for discussion and debate of great importance. In today's world, despite the media's Susceptibility to skullduggery, exaggeration and hollowness, the media's notion to serve as a watchdog, as protector of the public interest, as a channel between rulers and the ruled relics is intensely embedded. In the real world, the fact is that media is a new form of communication and that existing democracy is not in its ideal position.

Democratic rules are often staggered by rigorous laws and sometimes, the threat of basic force. Serious reporting is not getting hype and sensationalism in this modern media market of exaggeration. Most of the time, media is not used for consensus between two parties but is used for divisiveness in between rivalries, for cultivating hate rather than debate, and for a state of suspicion instead of trust. In such cases, media contributes to democratic deterioration. The situation is not the same in all countries and in all situations. Sometimes media plays a pivotal role to deepen democracy and its penetration is social nerves (James, S. 2001).

There are various examples showing that the media influences corrupt governments and play a very energetic role to brought corrupt governments into their homes and boosting the credibility of the media. It confirms the media's role as a watchdog of society amongst the public.

Media can be a supportive tool for democracy if it is used in safe hands. Media can only be the source of democracy if it is used and handled in responsible hands. All the duties media can play socially is entirely dependent upon certain element. If media is free only then it can serve as a tool to democracy. Similarly, media can guarantee its role in democracy only if it is financially viable, free from state control, and working in a competitive market. Moreover, different media protection bills increased media accountability and democratized media (Murray, S. 2004).

This research looks into constraints with the variety of ways which can promote democracy and development. In modern media, several democracies have been secured and resorted through media activities. This research will end up with a qualitative analysis to show the role of media in the promotion of several democracies. Media makes people concerned with certain objectives whether government-oriented or vice versa. Media performs as a civic forum. It brings important issues of the public into the limelight and focuses on the good and bad of these government plans over the issue to emphasise the government taking actions against the issue and to resolve them.

Media has the potential to bring political change in Pakistan. Politically Media is a powerful instrument which is used for watchdog purposes in society. It also brings information and analysis. It is a platform for debate and discussion over many issues in Pakistan. In different situations, the media had played its obvious role as an agent for political change. Certainly, the media put many issues under light and though played its role in the process of political change. To what extent and where media put its effects for political change is the concern of this research.

The core objectives of the research are to evaluate the role of media in the promotion of democracy; to explore the role of media in promoting democracy in Pakistan and to highlight the functioning of media during the Musharraf regime.

R.Q1 What role media is playing in promoting democracy in Pakistan?

R.Q2 How mushrooming of media under the Musharraf regime shaped the functioning of democracy in the country?

## Background

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In Pakistan being the fourth pillar of the state, media is a platform for ping public discussion and despite its aspects of spreading panic and sensationalism, it has become a guardian of the nation. Media's role in democracy is not as it is thought to be and of to be. In the presence of all negative elements broadcasted by media such as promoting panic instead of calmness, predicting lies instead of truths, adding spices to small news in order to make it something dreadful and so on, media moves itself to democratic decay however. In many democratic countries, media is still playing a strong role in deepening democracy. A type of reporting known as investigative reporting is helping media to play its respective role in an organized way. As it involves deep research regarding each aspect of the elected government and its representatives; it makes them more accountable by keeping a strict eye on each of their actions. Many scholars have taken these points under consideration and worked on it.

Taylor (2001) elaborated that there are certain roles of the press and the press is also sabotaged with different tricks in different time spams. Likewise, the press is different in autocracy and played a static role in history whereas the press in democratic political systems has played a vibrant role, thus the active rather static role of press in democracy. This research is based on static operational variables. Media is a vast field which is covering all aspects of human living. His ideas endorsed that in modern democracy; media has involved bringing new certain changes in the field of democracy and is a matter of concern for both the classical and new trends in democracy. Further to that, media is not the last word for change. There are many other social and political variables which have been involved in the process to prevail democracy

in society. It questions about media's role in spreading democratic values and how media is promoting democracy. Further, it is an accepted reality that media is spreading democratic values, that's the major concern which is addressed. Media is a strong pillar to strengthen democracy (Jones, Z. 2004).

Media is a power in society which can perform any role in any capacity. It entirely depends on the capacity of humans to use media for social change (James, S. 2008). Media is supposed to be the social institution which could be used as a social agent. Further, media is a social tool to use for the induction of sociological dose.

Media is not only a value induction tool. Media participation is evident in strengthening and rooting democracy. It would be better to say that media is a vast topic which has millions of directions and millions of different variables. The media's responsibility is to promote positive and ethical good notions rather than to portray and show negativity and unethical products and portrayals (Khan, M., 2006).

Nawaz, S. (2007) elaborated that media created a buzz in autocratic regimes- a buz of restriction and thus media has not performed so much valuable role in the pursuit of social change. In comparison with autocracy, the media has performed a multi-directional role in politically democratic regimes. This study is closely related to a comparison between two regimes of politics; an autocratic regime and a democratic regime.

## Methodology

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This research is based on qualitative analysis of media to know and trigger the democracy's dependence on media. It is qualitative research to visualize the topic from diverse perspectives.

There is a vivid difference between research done by media workers for media development and their evaluation of individual studies and the academy of mass media experts working for democracy. They tried to find out the relationship between media and society. There is no bridge to build

a balance between micro and macro levels of democratic values which could lead to a clear understanding of the relationship between variables.

Media is a system of communication through which public voices correspond. This research investigates the media belonging to democracy and the potential of information systems in the promotion of democratic values.

### **Findings and Discussions**

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Electronic media in Pakistan is under government control which serves to legitimize the social system of which they are a part. The rise of the commercial press can challenge the legitimacy of the political system eventually. For the revival and nourishment of democracy, it is crucial to check and obstruct governments to control mass media. Pakistan's mass media should sanction only constitutional and lawful procedures as legitimate methods of protest to explain structural inequalities.

Musharraf has termed himself the champion of freedom of the press. This is an unjustified statement though Musharraf has done a lot more toward freedom of the press. Throughout history, the media has been attacked ruthlessly over and again. Military rulers and non-democratic civilian governments had subjugated this national institution over and again. Musharraf has gone through the revision of the press and publication ordinance (PPO) which was made by Ayub Khan and tried to control media under the umbrella of PPO.

Media has no doubt flourished with the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The number of private channels has increased and started operation for the first time in Pakistan. However, this change was due to the revolutionary struggle of the media. This evolution taking place in telecommunication was the result of long efforts which were done over the last 50 years. With the dawn of new channels within the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pakistan television was a backdrop in the coming years. As time passed, people were very constructive

and revolutionised so they expected the same from state-owned media channels. State-owned media has a different theoretical approach in its presentation and it was never an acceptable pattern for Pakistan television to adopt which was practised in the private sector. That is the reason behind its downfall and low television rating point. From 2002, under General Musharraf, the media faced a decision development that would lead to a boom in Pakistan's electronic media. TV broadcasting and FM radio licenses were issued to private media outlets. The justification was as much a desire to counter India's media power wish to set the media it strayed from what the regime believed in the national interest and in accordance with the government's own political agenda. In fact, the media turned into an important actor in the process which led to the fall of Musharraf and his regime. In 2007 lawyer's movement and struggle with Chief Justice was reinstated. Media played a significant role in mobilizing civil society (Alam, N., [2007](#)). Media is considered to be the mirror of social avenues and pointed out the relationships between media owners and financiers in obstructing the freedom of journalists for strengthening democracy in Pakistan. The Pakistani state is very unfair in terms of facing risk, wages, violence and job security risks which are the core of democracy. This situation forces anti-state persons to highlight and enforce their interests which could eventually lead to an anti-democratic state.

Media provide a platform for public participation and democracy demands active participation of the public. Media's ideal work is to keep informing and educating about the government and political processes. Media can also build peace in the community without which you cannot think of democracy; Media provide an opportunity for both government and opposition to sit together in order to sort out their differences. Now, the media use them for high ratings of their shows by creating differences between them. Media has given many times voices to the voiceless by giving coverage to all aspects of an issue and has also resisted violence. Media can only perform its

function positively when there is a suitable environment. Media will be considered free when it is totally free from government control. Media made things corporate and capitalized (Alam, N., 2007).

A few media experts are of the opinion that libertarian societies are perfect for media and their democracies are more powerful than any region of the world. When media is accessible to a large number of people, citizens are more educated and aware of; what is going on in their society; what their government is doing in order to facilitate them; how much their rights are being protected and so on. If there is no access of the public to public rights, democracy will not grow and the roots of democracy will get weaker day by day. Free media make politicians more accountable to the public. This is the duty which the media has performed to its highest extent during the Musharraf regime.

There is variation in the functioning of media in different societies. In some countries, it works more accurately and performs well than others. It is all because of their level of freedom because we can't think of a free media without democracy. Actually, the quality of media affects the quality of democracy because, in countries where the media's performances are high, there will be more participation of the public in government affairs and less corruption by government officials. There will be a more peaceful environment and elected persons reflect the mindset of the society. When democracy is powerful, it also gives strength to public broadcasting and produces a more informed society. Media in a democratic society empower the political process and citizens by using information and communication technologies. Democracy has also contributed to media.

There are many audiences which we can say are passive audiences and if they are turned into active participants, a real big change can be experienced by societies in terms of democracy. We can also use media in terms of promoting government officials. If they have done something really good or big for society it will be a sort of reward for them. They will

make good decisions in future also. Media can use its power if their rights are protected; and if the government is not influencing their work. Media should have to use trained and professional journalists for this purpose who cannot easily sell their credibility, and if any journalist gives some confidential investigative report about the government so he should be given full protection regarding his life. There should be made some laws which can guarantee the life of those journalists in a free working environment. Many democratic countries and their press associations have made appreciable steps for protecting journalists.

The most powerful ability of media is that it can bring change in both society and government levels. The role of media becomes more important when we see that the majority of the public is silent listeners and are not participating in government affairs. Here comes the role of the media, the media motivate them to participate actively in the political process, educates them on how to vote and elect a responsible person for them. We have seen that whoever wanted to control the media, the public has always raised their voices.

Media since the time of its existence is used as a platform of public voices and as a mirror of society whether it is traditional media, social media or electronic media. Every medium has played its role in terms of bringing change to society. Developing countries like Pakistan where most of the people are living in rural areas. They are illiterate and have only one platform for raising their voices which is the media. Moreover, the media is known as the voice of the voiceless in the era of Musharraf. Ministries get powerful feedback regarding any new policies; they get to know whether the policy is working good or bad for society; then they make changes if needed. With the advent of new technology, media is getting new dimensions and now media is more easily available to the majority of the public. It is creating more awareness about democracy and political processes over the past few years. People get to know about different political

processes prevailing worldwide. Media is now much more globalized. The person sitting in your area will talk about the election campaigns and will argue with you about the election of the United States of America; he will know about the electoral colleges; the oath-taking ceremony of any other country's president to scenes of war etc. Media is so much powerful in terms of influencing minds of the public.

Mass media, if not, working properly likely to become a dangerous thing for democracy. It has a great impact on politicians; they know that if we do something wrong we will be immediately accountable to the media and in front of the public. Democracy also put some restrictions on media that it will not cover sensitive issues without sources and will not cover explosive issues, we can say that media is restricted only on some moral and ethical points. There are some corrupt officials who use media for their personal benefit and they started the culture of biased media (McChesney, R., 2016).

A democratic government surely needs free and unbiased media for the growth of the government and society. A person living in a democratic country depends upon media for his day-to-day functioning whether it is for his own personal life. Media is used as a supplier of information so it must supply information in a true and unbiased manner and let the public choose who they want to elect. Media work is only to inform what politicians are doing and what they have done in the past. It will create some easiness for the public to choose their leader. The media is only the informer who can only tell about the vision and manifestos of the party and then the public will decide who to elect but the information should be true and unbiased (Murray, S. 2004). In developed countries like UK and USA media's function to inform is considered fine but in countries like Pakistan where most people are illiterate and uneducated so only informing them will not be enough. Here media has much more responsibility in terms of educating them and spreading awareness regarding political issues and political processes in a democratic society. A democracy where the literacy rate is low,

demands frequent communication between the government and the public so they can interact more often. Media is less expensive and more accessible for the majority of the public that's why it is considered as a bridge between leaders and citizens. Media and democracy are closely related so if there is democracy there will be free and fair media which will support democracy in each and every step.

Media will play its role in order to strengthen democracy and will survive for many years. In a democratic region, freedom of media is very significant because there will be free and fluent information for all. Thomas Jefferson says "If it were left on me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter".

Media motivation is a key factor in the success of journalism. Moreover, organizations can use particular frames in their messages to emphasize certain aspects over others. Framing means communicating to the audience to see something in a certain light or from a certain perspective. The decision on which frame to choose depends again on the objective of the anti-corruption campaign or the organization's media reach. It has contributed to its eventual success in the coalition between civil societies. Media are more likely to be effective in uncovering corruption in the short term and creating a culture of transparency and accountability in the long run (McChesney, R., 2016).

## **Conclusion**

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Democratic norms which media brought into society during the Musharraf regime proved development in media practices. The role of media is very prominent in egalitarianism, caretaker, and property politicians. In the years of the Musharraf regime, the media has come out to be strong and more committed than ever. This was underlined reality in March 2007; the Lawyers' Movement led serious protest rallies in support of disposing of the Chief Justice. President Musharraf was gathering millions of people in street rallies

but Pakistani media especially the electronic media was supporting the rule of law in the country. Overall, the role of the media in

Pakistan in promoting the rule of law and ensuring free and fair elections was acknowledged during Musharraf's regime.

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