

# Role of electronic media in democratization



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Democracy has very vast meanings. Everyone explains democracy according to their mindset and their experiences. It varies from one region to another region. But there are certain basic principles on which democracy is based upon. These principles can be called a universal one, which applies in all societies or in all types of democracies. Democracy empowered the people, it is system by the people. People enjoy the freedom of speech and rights to exercise their life according to their wish. But these rights and duties which are the fundamentals of democracy are necessarily be conveyed to the all actors of the society. Every single of the society should have awareness about his or her rights and duties. Electronic Media (EM) play its important role in this regard. EM has become more prominent with globalization. Now people from all parts of the world can access the larger part of the information. Now people have access the magnitude events around the world. EM provide platform for the people to raise their voice for the rights. In the case of Pakistan, EM played very important role after its freedom in 2002. Media was under control by the government of Pakistan before 2002. But when Pakistan itself realized that now media is an important tool to achieve the national interests as well. Media can be used to change the mindset of the people. So during Musharaf Era (the Military dictator) media is being privatized. Before this privatization only one National TV channel Pakistan Television (PTV) was working. After privatization of media number of TV channels were opened e. g Geo, Ajj TV, ARY one and Express News. These TV channels grew rapidly and started to influence all sectors of society. Particularly Geo and Ajj TV played very significant role in this regard. Geo became more prominent. The aims to privatize these TV channels were

to have control on the mindset of the people and to have better impression on the world community. But domestically it proved totally opposite; when these TV channels stood up against the military dictatorship rule. These TV channels provoked a common man against the military rule. During the Musharaf Era, media was repressed and all other democratic institutions like judiciary and political parties. This is considered to be Dark Age of Pakistan. Mr. Musharaf not only undermined the freedom of speech but also put ban on other sectors of democratic institutions.

On 9th March 2007, Mr. Musharaf during his rule dissolved the judiciary. He seized the Chief Justice of Pakistan (Mr. Iftihar Choudhary) at home. He targeted the most respectful pillar of the country. This was considered big blow for the Pakistan. Media played its very important role in highlighting the issue domestically and internationally. Media supported the cause of judiciary and criticized the aggressive behavior of Mr. Musharaf. The ruling party was defaming because of its brutal policies against the most respectful pillar of the country. The political system of Pakistan during these crises was losing its credibility. Most of Private of TV channels were supporting the cause of judiciary and civil society. On November 3, 2007 Musharaf imposed emergency and once again sacked the chief justice of Pakistan and put him in house arrest. Musharaf Government was strongly criticized by the media throughout the period.

During this time media faced tuff circumstances in which ban imposed on all TV Channels. Like GEO, AJJ and ARYONE were banned by the government. TV channels were forced to shut down. This act was criticized by the all sectors of society. GEO was the channels which targeted most of the time. Most of

other private TV channels were re-opened after few days but GEO faced almost 3 months ban. In these crucial circumstances media was playing its significant role against the ban on freedom of speech. Journalists came on the roads for the strike against the brutal policies of government. Journalists were beaten by the police, many were injured but strike against the ban remain continue. Journalists also faced house arrests during emergency in Pakistan. The basic rights were violated and freedom of speech was undermined.

But Media continued to show the real picture of the circumstances. Media highlighted the issue of Chief Justice and gave full coverage to other political turmoil. With billions of lose and completely ban on TV channels became credible aspect for the journalist. Government lost its credibility and faced criticism from all sections of the society. Media was blamed that it is creating hip among the people. Media also blamed of being biased and anti government. But a common man became a big supporter of the journalists. By suppressing the journalists and judiciary government lost its trust among the nation. People were chanting for freedom of media. Students from all major university went on strike against the ban on TV channels. They were beaten by the police in some cases but strikes became a common way of contributing for all sectors of the society. In these circumstances external powers also condemned the act by the government of Musharraf. Media continued to call for to uplift the ban and it also gave full coverage to Long march by the lawyers. Lawyers were struggling for the restoration of judiciary.

In this struggle by the media and lawyers the other political parties also joined them against the policies of President Musharaf. In which PML(N) and PPP played significant role to overthrow the dictatorship. Media provided a platform to all other forces. Media became global after 2002, so media had a very important role which drew the true picture of the President Musharaf's government. Media highlighted all actions which were against the democratic institutions. Media gave awareness to the street man to understand the current political scenario. Because in Pakistan the literacy rate is very low comparatively to other developed countries and people were also less aware from political issues. But media through its current affairs programs, different talk shows and some comedy political programs awared all sectors of society. So a common man became more interested in the current issues. Because of all this people of Pakistan condemned the aggressive behavior of the government. They joined the journalists and lawyers. Long March by the lawyers was not only supported by the people of the Pakistan but also through media. Media provided best coverage to these issues.

It highlighted the issues not only domestic level but also on international level. Because of this media became a global power which led international forces to condemn the policies of Pakistani government. Government of Musharaf was even criticized by its major allies like USA and Britain. They also condemned the behavior of state against media in Pakistan. The political circumstances were getting worse, Musharaf's government was losing its credibility and all sympathies were with media and judiciary. All Internal and External forces were pressurizing Musharaf to give freedom to

press and uplift the emergency rule. On December 15, Musharaf ended the emergency rule. Media was prominent tool which forced the Musharaf to uplift the emergency rule and to resign.

Both major political parties of Pakistan, PML (N) and PPP were mobilizing people through media. In the past both parties were struggling against the Musharaf rule. But media gave them enough support for the promotion of democratic rule in Pakistan. Both parties were calling the changing of the regime in Pakistan. The era of Musharaf which was almost 9 years was big lesson for both of political parties. During this era the major change in Pakistani system was the privatization of TV channels. This privatization led the people to understand the current happening in the political arena. This is also a fact that when common man supported the Long March (2006) it was because of media. The prominent role was played by the Geo, ARY one and Ajj TV. These TV channels faced not only aggressive behavior of the state but also the economic loss as well. In almost 77 days of halt cost millions of rupees which was faced by Geo. But their struggle for promotion of democracy remained there. They faced house arrest, batten charge, and brutal acts by the police. But they never lost their hearts and in the end they got the result in shape of democracy. Although this democracy is not delivering to the people what they expect. But democracy strengthens gradually. It takes time. Experts of the view that weakest democracy is better than dictatorship rule. Democracy provides opportunity to a common man to raise voice for his rights.

## **Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that electronic media and civil society played major and significant role in democratization of Pakistan.

## **Research Question**

What role media and civil society played in democratization of Pakistan?

## **Objective of Research**

This research study intends to explore that how media played its role in democratization of Pakistan. How media became a platform for the all sectors of society for their cause in Pakistan during President Musharaf Era. This research study will also focus on the transitional era from dictatorship to democracy.

## **Significance of Research**

This research work important in this regard that it will dig out the consequences which forced Media and civil society to raise their voice for the democratic rule. This research also throws light on the Musharaf policies against media and democratic institutions. Initially it was the view that media is propagating the situation and playing negative role against the so called democratic rule, so the research study aims to explore the true picture of that so called democracy under Military rule and how media played its role in changing the regime in Pakistan.

## **Research Methodology**

This research work will be conducted through various article, Journals, Internet sources and Book. The Books and article are contemporary one.

## Literature Review

The political situation in Pakistan became worse after the military coup under Pervaze Musharaf in 1999. Pakistan fell into dictatorship once again after ten years of struggling democratic rules. As C. W. Dugger quoted in his article that:

The new military ruler of Pakistan imposed martial law shortly after midnight today, suspending the Constitution, dismissing the Parliament and dashing hopes of a quick return to civilian rule in the world's newest nuclear power. Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the army chief who led a brutally efficient but bloodless coup on Tuesday night, also proclaimed himself chief executive of Pakistan. The declaration came in the form of a broadcast in the middle of the night on Pakistan's Government-run television station, seized by General Musharraf's forces Tuesday night. It displayed, in a close-up, a copy of what looked like a hastily drafted document declaring martial law in everything but name. Instead, the document referred carefully to a "state of emergency." 1

Pakistan again fallen into military rule. Democratic government was overthrown and constitution was suspended by military. This was big disaster which was criticized by all pro-democratic forces. Mr. Bill Clinton also condemned this brutal act. C. W. Dugger wrote in his article that;

President Clinton addressed the coup's leaders, saying: " ' You should not do it. It's not necessary, it will hurt your economy and endanger your future. That is our message to Pakistan, and we hope they will move to a civilian government as soon as possible.' 2



But expectations from all over the world were badly broken when Musharaf retained his rule and didn't let the democratic political parties to participate in election. This was era when media was under government control. The Pakistan Television (PTV) was the only channel which broadcasting the information to the people. This was state run TV channels which only promoting the state interest. But after few years Gennral Musharaf decided to privatize this department.

But the change in Pakistan is perhaps most surprising, since it has occurred under a military ruler who took power in a coup, in a country ruled by the military for much of its existence. Two years ago, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani president, decided to liberalize the broadcast media, creating the first access for millions of Pakistanis to homegrown, independent information. 3

Now people of Pakistan were having more access to current political scenario. New means of information changed the attitude of the people. With this freedom of speech people started to voice for their rights. Media provided them a platform for this purpose. After the general election in 2002 the political scene changed dramatically. Government started to adopt brutal policies and targeted not only media but also judiciary. But media and judiciary remained strong against this aggressive behavior. People were motivated and more awaked then in the past.

After suspending the constitution on 3 November – including articles related to freedom of the press – to respond to a “ growing Islamic militant threat”, Musharraf ordered a halt to broadcasts by privately-owned TV channels in all

the country's major cities. Private TV channel Aaj TV in Islamabad and two FM radio stations, FM103 in Karachi and FM99 in Islamabad, were raided by police – a new ordinance allows for the media regulatory authority PEMRA to confiscate equipment and bar entrances to media premises. According to PPF, some mobile phone communications were also cut, and international and national news websites were blocked. State-run Pakistan TV was the only news broadcaster still on domestic airwaves as of 6 November. 4

This act lost the credibility of the government. Gen. Musharaf also sacked the judges and put them under house arrest. Lawyers started their movement to restore the judiciary. They announced the long march for restoration of judiciary. This struggle supported not only by political parties but also media and civil society.

The curbs have been widely condemned by IFEX members and local media organisations, including the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), who calls the moves the “ worst kind of repression against the media in Pakistan in 30 years.” PPF is currently organising a joint action by IFEX members denouncing Musharraf's measures. ARTICLE 19 is also calling on Western governments to use their influence to bring about the release of activists and a repeal of the oppressive media laws. 5

This issue became a global issue because of vast coverage of media. GEO, AJJ and ARY one played their significant role in promoting the democratic values. They showed the true picture of the Gen. Pervez Musharaf government. All external forces condemned this act by Gen. Pervez Musharaf. They pressurize the Musharaf Government to release all people

who are in house arrest and free the judiciary. Ban on media also being criticized by the pro-democratic forces.

The U. S., a main ally, has expressed deep concerns, but said Musharraf's actions would not affect military support of Pakistan. " This is as big a test for the Bush administration as it is for Musharraf," says Human Rights Watch. " Thus far, Washington's long support for a military government has merely led to an unprecedented political crisis that could lead Pakistan to disaster, not least in the effort to address international terrorism." 6

Gradually with these political crises the President of the Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharaf decided to uplift the emergency and restore the judiciary. The ban on media also lifted. This was great achievement by lawyers and media persons.

## **Tentative Outline**

### 1: Historical Background

a) Pakistan under dictatorship

b) Privatization of TV channels

### 2: Role of Electronic Media

a) Judiciary and Media

b) Political parties and Media

### 3: The political turmoil

a) Changing Regime in Pakistan

b) Future status of Media