



Coverage Of Civil Military Issues And Social Responsibility Of Pakistani Media

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Abstract

Since the inception of Pakistan, the nation is gripped in political crises. Number of martial laws and rifts between civil and military leadership during democratic eras kept Pakistan under extraordinary political crises. During the two democratic regimes of Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League (N) from 2008 to 2018, one more player came into the political scene of Pakistan due to the arrival of private electronic media. This study explores, assesses and recommends the required role of media in the civil military conflicts from 2008 to 2018. For this purpose ten experts were thoroughly interviewed and thematic analysis was applied to fetch the results. Findings revealed that it's the social responsibility of state institutions to legislate the new laws in order to specifically draw lines and enforce the current laws. Similarly in order to end monopoly of media houses, cross-media ownership should be banned and income generation models of Pakistani media should be revisited, so that socio-economic issues of the country are not ignored at the cost of the coverage of Civil Military issues and other popular content.

Keyword: *Civil Military Conflicts, Social Responsibility of Media, Press Freedom, Thematic Analysis*

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Introduction

In today's world media plays multiple roles. In addition to entertain and inform the masses it can shape the society as well. Eijaz, et al (2014) reminded the classic work of Wilbur Schramm in which he emphasizes on three key functions of media in the developing nations, i) 'watchdogs', 'policymakers', and 'teachers' for transformation and modernization. While media can play a constructive role to shape a society, scholars emphasize on the media functioning within the accepted norms of media. Talking about media democracy, Eijaz, et al (2014) also argued that the check on concentration of media ownership, promotion of citizen journalism and just regulations are the key determinants for media democracy. In order to cover the contemporary Civil Military Conflicts (CMCs), this study includes all the important CMCs after restoration of democracy in 2008, until the end of the tenure of PMLN in 2018.

Although Pakistan's 73 years history is full of CMCs but after restoration of democracy in 2008, we have seen numerous CMCs during last 12 years. Some of the civil military conflicts during last decade were putting Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) into Interior Ministry's control in 2008, a memo written by the then Pakistani Ambassador to United States Hussain Haqqani allegedly against Pakistani military in 2011, allegations on Ex Director General (ISI), Shuja Pasha for supporting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf during 2011, Dawn Leaks in 2016 and various such conflicts. The aforementioned civil military conflicts did not only disturb the political order of the country but it may also have affected the due coverage of socioeconomic issues of Pakistan, as vulnerable socioeconomic situation of Pakistan has been

discussed in literature review of this study. Therefore, it was indeed important to study, the normative role of Pakistani press while covering civil military conflicts and coverage of socio-economic issues during civil military conflicts. Present study aims to examine how the Pakistani media depicted civil and military leadership during conflict from 2008 to 2018 and explores the social responsibility of Pakistani media while covering civil-military issues.

Background

This sections deals with the troubled Civil Military relations in Pakistan, its history and media's inability to cover the core issues of the country. While Pakistan has been gripped by crises since its inception. The first decade after Pakistan's formation was packed with musical chairs by politicians and military men (Raza & Khan, 2019).

Eleven years after the partition, Pakistan faced with its first martial law. General Ayub Khan's 11-year rule was marked by industrial revolution and economic growth, as Hussain (1967) reported. But the seeds of Pakistan 's separation were sown during General Ayub 's period, as voices of dissension from East Pakistan were not discussed, as Ziring (1981) explained the decline of Ayub Khan, he argued that social justice had been ignored during Ayub Khan 's tenure, and changes in Pakistan's economy had effectively strengthened the already wealthy elite.

The political struggle between civilian and military leadership did not end even after Pakistan had split up in 1971. Pakistan's one of the most successful politician, Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto, was also confronted by the Zia ul Haq Martial Law of 1977 (Taseer, 1979).

Meanwhile Qureshi (1979) explained that how Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had lost, he believed that after gaining power, Bhutto modified his policies and supported traditional politicians like "feudals" and elites. Abbas (2004) explored in detail the problems facing Pakistan since the

Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. He believes that the United States sided with the then military dictator, General Zia ul Haq, to win Pakistan during the Cold War and, sadly, Pakistan again paid the price in the form of the exodus of millions of Afghan refugees, resulting in the country's poor economic condition.

Abbas further argues that opium and arms trade have rocketed into Pakistan after the Afghan war, though religious extremism also grew after the Cold War. Pakistan's transition to democracy also never sailed smoothly from 1985 to 1999, Akhtar (2009) argued that "Pakistan's parliamentary experience during the transformative democratic period from 1985 to October 1999 struggled to play a proper legislative role with all the elected parliaments; they stamped out all ordinances and approved the executive bills without any discussion or review" (p. 47).

In the 1990s decade in Pakistani politics is characterized by a political tie between Pakistan Muslim League N and Pakistan People's Party, allegedly with the support of the military establishment, neither the Prime Minister nor the elected legislatures succeeded in completing the specified term (Rizvi, 2011).

The democratic period ended in Pakistan when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, with a two-thirds majority, was overthrown by then-Army Chief General Pervez Musharraf in a bloodless coup. In the 1990s, Pakistan's economy remained in a desolate condition due to civil-military tussles (Hasnain, 2008). According to Rand Cooperation (2010) 'Between 2000 and 2008, Pakistan's economic growth was higher than in the 1990s, with an average of 5.4% between 2000 and 2008, up from 3.9%. While in 2008, democracy was completely restored in Pakistan and two legislatures ended their term of office. But the past decade has already been packed with speeches about civilian dominance and the role of the military in civilian institutions, which is why this analysis contains CMCs since the return of democracy in 2008 to 2018.

As the study shows Pakistan's 72 years of history is full of CMCs, we have seen several CMCs over the past 12 years since the restoration of democracy in 2008. The charged defense climate gives the military around the world a crucial significance. In the case of Pakistan, some intellects contend that military dynamics need to play an important role in crucial decision-making processes because of international security dynamics, while others are purely in favour of civilian dominance.

Rizvi (2004), regarded as a civil military relations expert, described Pakistan as "a praetorian state in which the military has acquired the capacity, desire, and ample expertise to control the core political structures ... Because the political powers are disparate and weak, the disposition of the military has a strong effect on the direction of political reform" (p. 88).

On the other hand Janjua (2010) from National Defense University, a senior army officer of Brigadier rank argued that the principle of civilian primacy in most contemporary societies, must be adopted while considering the counterinsurgency warfare.

In 2014, Greenwood and Balachandran produced a working paper entitled "The search for common ground: civil-military relations in Pakistan", in which they pointed out the gaps in the civil and military bureaucracy of Pakistan. They also recommended that the contradictions between civilian and military leadership be dealt with halfway. They also claimed that "the pervasive role of the military in Pakistan means that working indirectly with the government includes working with the military as a key political actor with broad budgetary power and leverage over the civil administration, and a constitutional obligation to respond." (p. 19)

In addition, Jaspal (2015) argues that the presence of the Pakistani military in political processes disturbs the creation of democratic systems. While Dawood (2014) also deplored Pakistan's legitimacy crisis as he viewed military interference in politics as a cause for the country's weak governance. When talking about military economic activity, Siddiq (2017) alleged that the Pakistani economy was harmed due to the political and economic presence of the Pakistani military.

Akhtar (2017) analyzed civil military relations during the rule of Asif Ali Zardari, alleging that Pakistani political parties used the vibrant Pakistani media to rally support, while on the opposite, the military used it against the covert anti-military policies of the government. Fair (2011) outlined the military

strategy against the "inefficiencies" of the Pakistan People's Party during the floods of 2010. He claimed that amid weak PPP governance, the Pakistani military will not interfere by claiming that, "despite the obvious lack of leadership of the PPP at a time of extraordinary crisis, there is little risk that the military will seize power or antagonize the PPP-led government to the point of failure, at least in the near future." (p. 109).

Similarly, Wolf (2017) argued that the ouster of Nawaz Sharif would certainly decide another setback in Pakistan 's unhealthy civil-military relations and the strengthening of military control over CPEC. Similarly, Nawaz Sharif 's regime also did not enjoy perfect working relations with the Military. With the introduction of the CPEC, the army has been able to significantly expand its formal position within the political-administrative structures of the country.

In spite of daunting socio-economic problems, the Pakistani press does not give social issues much significance. Shehzad, et al (2016) deplored the English press coverage of Pakistani newspapers, where he argued that the newspapers kept on discouraging Government's efforts to defeat terrorism. As Qadeer (2017) concluded his study by claiming that "the media debate deliberately engages in the broader democratic process" (p. 186), Pakistani media is part of the political process (p. 186). There is still a deplorable situation in Pakistan about press freedom. Ashraf & Shabbir (2019) also concluded that ' political interference bars practitioners from exercising media freedom and that influence includes government subsidies, government

ads, unfair commercial access, RTI source partnerships, recommendations and threats from the government'

While showcasing the extent of the divide between civil and military establishments in Pakistan and how it affects the life of a common man, the literature review revealed the state of civil military relations in Pakistan, thereby disrupting the social and economic structure of society. Moreover literature depicts the Pakistani media's inability to portray the societal problems of the country pertaining to socio-economic woes of the people.

Research Questions

RQ 1. How do the experts view the media coverage of Civil Military conflicts from 2008 to 2018?

RQ 2. How can Pakistani media fulfill its social responsibility while covering civil-military issues?

This study examined the dimension of CMCs and the role of the press and journalists, taking into account the fundamental assumptions of SRT. The expert interviews of the study discusses the SRT 's normative dimension of the media and journalists.

Operational Definitions

1. Pro-Civilian

Those experts who advocate the supremacy of civilian institutions and back democratic mode of governance. They may not necessarily be against the institution of Army.

2. Pro-Establishment

Those experts who advocate the powerful role of the Military in civil institutions. They may not be against democratic

governments but always give more weightage to the armed forces than the civilian institutions.

3. Socio-Economic Issues

Issues related to human development and improvement in human life.

Experts Interviews

The interview approach is implemented in order to accomplish the study objectives.

Interviews with ten experts were undertaken on the subject, as Young et al ,(2018) claims that "Over a quarter (26%) of interview papers concentrated on awareness the understanding, viewpoints, beliefs or decision-making of particular stakeholder classes," whereas Sarantakos (2005) argues that qualitative interviewing is not a soft analytical choice, but that it needs further experience on the part of the interviewer and respondents to express opinions.

Secondly, in their own words, qualitative interviews help to explain reality and how reality is manifested in everyday life. The respondents were asked open ended semi formal questions. All the questions were answered, with the research targets in mind.

To ensure validity, one Pro Civilian and one Pro Establishment expert was taken. Ten following experts were interviewed.

Academicians

- Dr. Huma Baqai (Associate Professor, IBA) pro civilian
- Dr Ishtiaq Ahmad Head of Department Peace & Conflict Studies NDU pro establishment

Military Experts

- Let Gen. Khalid Naeem Lodhi (ex secretary defense) known for neutral approach
- Let. Gen. Amjad Shoaib pro establishment.

Urdu Newspaper Editors

- Abdullah Tariq Sohail (ex editor express, dunya, nai baat pro civilian
- Isar Rana (ex editor Jang) pro establishment

English Newspaper Editors

- Ziaudeen (ex executive editor Express Tribune with 50 years journalism experience) pro civilian
- Nasim Ahmed (Ex chief editor and chief executive Pakistan Times with 40 years journalism experience) pro establishment

Senior Politicians

- Muhammad Ali Durrani (ex federal information minister) pro establishment
- Muhammad Zubair (ex- governor sindh and chairman privatization commission) pro civilian

Thematic Analysis

The approach to grounded theory was applied as some definitions were derived from the literature review and population pilot research and subthemes were derived from data analysis. Thematic analysis was aimed at exploring that how the Pakistani media treated Civil Military rifts by applying thematic analysis. The themes employed inductive and deductive thematic reasoning to examine the content of the interviews.

Data analysis was conducted on the basis of previous categories derived from the literature, but new subthemes and categories arose from data during analysis.

There was a Grounded Theory approach and three types of coding were used, including open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Secondly, information was broken down into different units known as open coding (Goulding, 1999). Then, "Through systematic analysis and constant comparison of data the next stage is to reduce the number of codes and to collect them together in a way that shows a relationship among them. Axial coding and the development of concepts relate to this point. (Moghaddam, 2006). In selective coding, categories are connected to the core category, third and last level, providing the basis for the core category.

"The process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that require more refinement and growth" (p.116), according to Straus & Corbin (1990).

The core category combined the categories into a framework or theoretical structure and provided the study with a central concept. For qualitative thematic research, a programme called NVIVO was used to evaluate the agendas of Pakistani newspaper editorials about Covid-19.

The results were finally presented after finding core categories from the data.

Table 1: *Prominent agendas and sub-themes regarding civil-military conflicts & Media discussed by experts.*

| Major Themes | Sub-Themes (Pro-Civilian) | Sub-Themes (Pro-Military) |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Negative Media | Media is agenda driven, Media has it's own vested interests. | Media is agenda driven, Media has it's own vested interests. |
| Press Freedom | Military interferes in media affairs. Military influences media houses. | Press Freedom challenged by political leaders, Military only interferes when it's necessary for national security Developed nations discourage news against their national interests. |
| Socio-Economic issues & Media | Socio-economic issues overlooked by the Press due to CMCs, Media is urban centric. | Socio-economic issues overlooked by the Press due to CMCs. |
| Normative role of Media | There should not be cross-media ownership, Media ethics should be enforced, Military should mend it's ways, "national interests" should be defined properly. Legislation s needed, Media regulatory institutions are tools in the hands of the government. Income generation models of the media should be revisited. | There should not be cross-media ownership, Restrictions against press to publish anything against Pakistan army should be enforced, Media ethics should be enforced. Legislation s needed. Media laws should be enforced. |

Discussion

Points of views of both, Pro-Civilian and Pro Military experts were merged to reach conclusive analysis and viable recommendations from both group were also entertained.

Research Question 1: How do the experts view the media coverage of Civil Military conflicts from 2008 to 2018?

Experts agreed that media's role in projecting civil-military conflicts is negative as media adds spice to get advertisements, while media is also agenda driven as it toes the line of its owner for his/her vested interests. Similarly cross-media ownership also monopolizes media content. Meanwhile media also gives too much time and space to civil military conflicts at the cost of socioeconomic issues of the country. Opinion on interference of military in media affairs is disputed, pro civilian segment directly blames the military whereas the pro military group argues that military only interferes when the national security is on stake.

How can Pakistani media fulfill its social responsibility while covering civil-military issues?

1. Laws & Enforcement

Media laws, including the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002, the Defamation Ordinance 2002 and the Pakistan Press Council Ordinance 2002, are available, but experts were of the view that implementation of these laws is limited. For example, clause 8(e) of the Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 limits the achievement of defence and national security documents, but certain quarters of the press published a national security record in newspapers, subsequently referred to as 'Dawn Leaks,' where a Dawn reporter published a 2016 discussion of top civil and military officials.

Experts worried that such events might take place one after another due to the absence of law enforcement. Experts also suggested that new regulations should be in force to resolve problems related to civil military disputes, since certain sensitive

issues could not be addressed by the above-mentioned legislation. In addition, Article 19 of Pakistan's 1973 constitution promotes the creation of laws relating to Pakistan's stability or defence. Article 19 of the 1973 Constitution states that '... freedom of the press shall remain, subject to any fair restraint enforced by law for the sake of the prestige of Islam or the dignity, protection or defence of Pakistan' (p. 12).

Therefore, under the domain defined in the Constitution of Pakistan, more detailed laws on press coverage of civil military conflicts should be made. After meaningful debate among relevant parties, including the public, opposition political leaders, military leadership and the sitting government, these laws should be developed.

2. Meaning of National Security

Experts agreed that the word 'national security' should be better defined, as pro-civilian experts suggested that press freedom is limited in the garb of national security. Thus, under new legislation or in every other platform agreed by all related stakeholders and experts, the term "National Security" should be established properly.

3. Coverage of Socio-economic problems coverage

The experts agreed that during civil-military conflicts, socio-economic problems were neglected in the Pakistani press. Many who blame civil military leadership say that when people want to know more about the crises, the press has no other choice but to report the crises created by civil-military leadership. Some experts, on the other hand, blamed the press for ignoring Pakistan's poor state of affairs in terms of poverty, gender

problems, stunted child development, lack of education and health facilities. They argued that the press prefers to cover metropolitan issues with its own commercial purposes because of the demand from advertisers. While discussing key takeaways from the Theory of Social Responsibility, Copeland & Copeland (2010) urged the media to reflect the image of the constituent groups in society should be projected by the media and it should present and explain society's priorities and principles.

It is also proposed that the Pakistani press should give the country's socio-economic problems more attention.

4. Media Ownership

Both pro-civilian and pro-military groups recommended ending cross-media ownership media outlets as various newspapers and news channels are owned by the owner Media Corporation or owner. They argued that cross-media ownership is not tolerated in most countries, because it monopolizes the media industry.

5. Press Freedom

Although both pro-civilian and pro-military parties acknowledged Pakistan's military intervention in media affairs, but they remained split on the subject of whether or not the military should intervene. The pro-civilian party was adamant that the military should never meddle into media affairs, but the pro-military group believed that the military could advise the press on issues of national security.

In view of the above, it is advised that the military should not engage in press matters but in case of national security problem, the military should not exercise its own powers to harm,

assault, physically harm, cut cables or other action which is not under the legitimate authority of the military. As a last resort, if the press crosses the red line, the military can approach public authorities, including the executive, parliament, press offices or any appropriate avenue appropriate. Considering an important point given by Copeland & Copeland in SRT, that media should provide a factual, detailed and intelligent account of the day's events, media should be provided full fledged freedom in the coverage of Civil Military Conflicts, similarly media should serve as a platform for the exchange of criticism and commentary.

Conclusion

This study revealed that experts urged legislature to legislate more specific laws regarding coverage of Civil Military issues and already devised laws should be implemented in letter and spirit. Similarly, state should urge regulatory bodies like PEMRA to enforce relevant laws. Moreover Military's direct meddling in media affairs like abducting journalists, switching off channels from cable networks, or forcing media houses for favourable coverage should not take place. Similarly social responsibility of the press demands the objective coverage of Civil Military issues but the matters pertaining to the national security (which should be well defined by political, media and military stakeholders) should be covered with caution.

Experts also agreed that the income generation models of Pakistani press are faulty, therefore socio-economic issues are ignored at the cost of over coverage of Civil Military issues and other popular content which fetches TV ratings in news channels and more reader base in newspapers. Government with the help

of media industry should also legislate against cross-media ownership as it monopolizes the media market. Similarly, role of the editor should be kept with the professional rather than the owner himself as it creates conflict of interest and undermines the press freedom. By discouraging the popular and insane sentiments for triggering the civil military conflicts, media can play its part in bridging the gap between these two institutions while maintaining the balance of fair coverage of important issues of the country.

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