Chapter V

The Role of the Press and Public Opinion in Foreign Policy Making
Chapter - V
THE ROLE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC OPINION IN FOREIGN POLICY MAKING

In every democratic system, the ultimate power of decision in matters of both domestic and foreign policies, rests with the people. But it is common knowledge, that practically in every State, the people as a whole are much more concerned with domestic policy, rather than with foreign policy, except perhaps in times of war or other acute forms of international crisis [1].

Moreover, in the three countries under study, due to economic, technological, educational and even social backwardness, the involvement of the people with foreign policy issues is on a low key, when compared to the public in the more sophisticated and developed systems.

Public opinion lacks homogeneity as well as mobility. Most often, it is not possible for them, to get the benefit of the national and international Press, or Parliamentary debates and policy statements. The majority of the populace has only a vague idea on foreign policy, and that too, is imbibed by them from the propaganda of the political parties.

-------------

1 For further elaboration see, J.Bandyopadhyay, The Making of India's foreign policy: determinants, Institutions, processes and personalities, (N.Delhi, 1970), p.106.
Even if it does succeed in getting through the various obstructions, its volume is often so small, that the Government may consider it negligible. Also the output of messages from the Governmental structures, to the various strata of society tends to be far larger than the input of messages, from the society [2].

All the functions performed in the political system - political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule making, rule adjudication and rule application - are performed by means of communication. Interest group leaders and representatives and party leaders perform their articulation and aggregation functions by communicating demands and policy recommendations. Legislators enact laws on the basis of information communicated to them and by communicating with one another and with other elements of the political system. In performing their functions, bureaucrats receive and analyse information from the society and from various parts of the polity. Similarly, the judicial process is carried on by means of communication.

Communication has, therefore, come to occupy an important place in the political system. However, when a political system is precariously held together by promises, material benefits and coercion, it controls information and communication. In such a state, with a lack of alternative source of information, the

---

public may mistake for the real world, the selected messages presented by the media. Distorted communication denies to the public effective participation in the government [3].

In analysing political systems it is useful to classify types of structures which may perform communications functions. The presence or absence of these structures, the volume of information passing through them and the freedom from control they may enjoy have important implications for the system [4].

There are "informal face-to-face contacts; traditional social structures, such as family or religious - group structures; political "output" structures, such as legislators and bureaucracies; political "input" structures, like trade unions and interest groups and political parties; and the mass media" [5].

The significance of informal personal contacts suggests, the impact which a high level of mobility may have in a society. As a person moves from city to city, he establishes a whole new set of personal communications, patterns, exposing himself to new information sources.

---
4 For details, see Herbert H. Hyman, Political Socialization, A study in the psychology of political behaviour, N.Y., Free Press, 1959.
5 Gabriel Almond and G Powell, Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach N. Delhi, 1975, pp 165-66.
Traditional social structures can be easily overlooked in a modern society, but in a traditional and developing society their influence is very marked. Tribal heads and councils of elders, the extended family and religious leaders may play a powerful role as initiators and interpreters of information for large sections of the population.

The bureaucracy plays an important role in the governmental structure making it possible for the political leaders to communicate directions for rule implementation to various political office holders in an efficient and unambiguous fashion.

The input structures such as interest groups and parties, constitute yet another significant information channel. By their very nature they are engaged in transmitting popular and special-interest demands to the political leadership. The existence of such structures where permitted, provide the citizens which a large number of channels of access to the political elite [6].

Also, lobbyists not only seek to influence political activities, but also make sure that elite activities affecting their interests are subjected to careful scrutiny. Similarly, the opposition party is eager to expose the mistakes of the incumbent administration.

---

6 For details on the types of interest/pressure groups operating in a political system, see Graham Wootton, *Interest Groups*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1970, ppl-6.
The mass media, including newspapers, radio, television, magazines and books are the most specialised structures of communication [7], capable of transmitting information to people. The mass media provides the political elites with a tremendous potential for arousing the interest and influencing the attitudes of the citizens. By the same token, the free circulation of information through a mass media structure creates a great potential for popular action on the basis of widespread and accurate knowledge about political events [8].

PAKISTAN

"Public" in Pakistan, is a fluid material which can be made to flow into as many 'opinion' streams as there are groups which feel concerned about a particular situation at a given time. Hence, public opinion, because of its diversified nature, loses its force and fails to have the impact which it can have if it were akin to one powerful stream. All the same they have a considerable amount of indirect influence on Government policies.

7 The mass media is both industrialised and professionalised, says Lucian W. Pye. It is self-consciously guided by a distinctive and universalistic set of standards. For more details see his "Aspects of Political Development", Amerind Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1972, pp 153 - 171.

8 For further elaboration on the role of the mass media as reflecting the orientations and attitudes of people, see Bernard C. Cohen, "Foreign Policy Makers and the Press", in Readings in the making of American Foreign Policy ed. by Andrew Scott and Raymond Dawson (2nd ed., N. York, Macmillan, 1966), p137.
In the words of James Bryce, "Governments have always rested and, special cases apart, must rest if not on the active approval, then on the silent acquiescence of the numerical majority. It is only by rare exception that a monarch or oligarchy has maintained authority against the will of the people" [9].

This is also true in the sense that the basic values and presuppositions of the legislators are shaped to a very great extent by the public opinion prevailing in the country even before they became members of the legislature. As Lane and Sears put it, "In many ways, it is the basic belief system which these men develop in their pre-official lives which makes them responsive to the needs and values of their constitutions" [10].

The normal and usual channels through which public opinion is said to flow are the newspapers, interest groups of various kinds and political parties. In the absence of any balanced growth of political parties and well organised interest groups in developing countries, newspapers naturally play the leading role in the formation of public opinion. Literacy being abysmally low and the written word held in great veneration in Pakistan as in any other developing country, newspapers have a great influence [11].

11 Told to the author by Salamat Ali.
Among the several varieties of reading material, newspapers and magazines hold a unique position. They form, by far the largest part of the publishing industry, for while there are not more than 250 book publishers in the whole country, there are about 1,000 publishers of papers and periodicals. Again, while only about 5,000 different titles are published every year by the book publishers, including new editions, numerous fresh issues of newspapers are published during a whole year [12].

At the time when Pakistan came into existence, newspapers did not really exist. All newspapers of some standing were started after 1947. However, before that Karachi had three newspapers - two in English and one in vernacular - but none is alive now. The Civil and Military Gazette published from Lahore was started in 1870 but was closed down on February 1, 1961 [13].

One of the factors that had a decisive effect on the rise and spread of newspapers in Pakistan has been the political activity.

Although the first Urdu newspaper in Pakistan came up as early as 1850, they only attained sizeable circulation under the impetus of stirring political events that fired the imagination of the people. That was in the years 1905-1906, when the Russo-

Japanese war took place, and constitutional Government emerged in Turkey, and the province of Bengal was partitioned by the British. It was during these years that there appeared the first newspaper with a political character and marked views and large circulation [14].

As the tempo of political activity increased, more and more important newspapers came up. The first world war gave a great fillip to newspapers, and their circulation also mounted steeply.

The Press found unprecedented opportunities for development with the establishment of Pakistan because of the free play of political forces and the hectic public life that followed. This was in West Pakistan. The case in East Pakistan, was, however, different, as there were no newspapers there for some years after the creation of Pakistan. Two or three newspapers which used to support the Pakistan movement, were located in Calcutta, which had a trying time to pursue its policies from there [15].

In Pakistan, the leading dailies are neither the property, nor the official organs of political parties, nor are they owned by important political leaders or famous journalists or writers. Regular chains of newspapers and periodicals are being built up in Pakistan under the control of business magnates, who are involved in many other business ventures too. The Pakistan Herald

Publications Ltd., Karachi, controls the Dawn (English and Gujarati), Vatan (Gujarati) Evening Star (English) and the Eastern Film (English monthly). The Progressive Papers Lahore, run the Pakistan Times (Lahore and Rawalpindi), Imroze (Lahore and Multan) both dailies. Lail-O-Nihar (Urdu Weekly) and Sports Times (English monthly), the Nawa-i-Waqt and the Qandil (weekly) The General Newspapers Ltd., Karachi, bring out the Millat (Gujarati), the Hurriyet (Urdu) and the Leader (English evening paper). Other leading papers - the Morning News (Karachi and Peshawar), the Jung (Karachi and Rawalpindi) and the Kohistan (Rawalpindi, Lahore and Multan) are similarly controlled by other chains [16].

It is also widely believed that there were weighty reasons for the Government take-over of the Pakistan Times in 1959. However, till the military regime was established in Pakistan, in October 1958, the Press in Pakistan could not be considered as altogether muzzled. Outspoken criticism of the Government was not an uncommon phenomenon [17].

16 The controlling shares of the PPL were held by Mia Iftikharuddin and his son, Arif Iftikhar. But they ran into trouble with Ayub's regime soon after Oct 1958. Under an ordinance, the Board of Directors was dissolved on the charge that the newspapers were being run in the interests of a foreign power. See Times of India, (N.Delhi), 23 Nov 1961. Also see "the Pakistan Times (editorial)" in Hindustan Times, (N.Delhi), 16 Jan 1952.

17 Disclosed to the author by Salamat Ali.
The Press Under Ayub

With Ayub Khan's takeover in 1958, the government passed a new Press and Publications Ordinance in 1960 [18], which aimed at amending and consolidating the press laws which emerged in the first hours after the revolution. The ordinance extended to the whole of Pakistan and specified under what conditions a newspaper could be commandeered by the authorities. Prominent English dailies such as Dawn of Karachi, Morning News of Karachi and Dacca and the Observer of Dacca were allowed to remain under original management. The same was true of some vernacular papers in both the wings. All these journals more or less adhered to the dictates of the martial law regime and refrained from making critical judgements on Government policies [19]. President Ayub even used to meet editors of newspapers to discuss national issues with them describing them as "guides of public opinion" [20].

The already curtailed press, was faced with further restrictions, when amendments to the 1960 Ordinance were passed in September 1963, which barred newspapers from publishing the proceedings of a court or legislature without the permission of

18 For the text of the 1960 ordinance, see Pakistan Times, (Karachi), Apr. 29 & 30, 1960.
20 This was a clear indication that Ayub wanted editors to toe his line. See Pakistan Times, Mar 23, 1961.
the presiding authority concerned [21].

The new regulations even empowered the Government to suspend a newspaper if a particular headline was not to its liking. The Government could also down the press where the offending publications were printed, and take over the newspapers or journals. It could take these steps if a publication contained "any words, signs or visible representation which tended directly or indirectly to bring into hatred or contempt the Government", or which were likely to create or excite feelings of enmity, ill-will or hatred between the population of the two provinces [22].

Commenting on the new regulations, the Times of India wrote

"The inequity of the new regulations lay in making the Government the sole judge of the accuracy or otherwise of any headline" [23].

Although the Law Minister of Pakistan explained the new regulations at a Press Conference and gave the assurance that the Government would not nationalise the newspapers or screen the editors and working journalists, the fears of the press were not allayed [24].

On November 6, 1963, the West Pakistan Government banned the publication of Kohistan for two months and arrested its Managing Editor, the Editor and also its Chief Editor [25]. On October 7, 21

21 See Times of India, (N.Delhi), 4 Sep 1963, Indian Express, (N.Delhi), 5 Sep 1963. For text see Dawn, 9 Sep 1963.
22 Art. 23 of the Press and Publications Ordinance of 1960, as modified upto 1 Sep 1964, cited in Dawn, 9 Sep 1963.
24 Ibid.
In 1963, the Government of East Pakistan, under a Public Safety Ordinance, ordered that all material, except Government Press Notes, should be submitted to the authorities for scrutiny [26].

The 1963 Ordinance raised an outcry in the press, and as a result of concerted action and negotiations with the Government, it was replaced by the West Pakistan Press and Publications Ordinance 1963, for the Western Wing and the Press and Publications (Amendment) Ordinance for the Eastern Wing. While they removed some of the unwelcome features of the September Ordinance, such as previous certification of assembly and court reports and compulsory publication of all Government handouts, the newspapers were still not to print portions of assembly or court proceedings indicated by the presiding officers and it was obligatory to print press notes in the regions where the note was issued [27].

Whatever the modifications in the new ordinance, the Government came down on the Press with a heavy hand. Proceedings were instituted by the Government against the Ittefaq, Singhbad and the Dacca Times, all from East Pakistan. While some of these proceedings were quashed by the Courts, the Government continued with its repressive measures.

The National Press Trust and Control Over Press:

With a view to influencing the public opinion, the

27 See Amjad All, n.12, p.8. Both the ordinances were promulgated on Oct 9, 1963.
Government backed the National Press Trust which had been sponsored and financed by a number of well-known industrialists of Pakistan. The National Press Trust proceeded to acquire in March 1964, a number of existing newspapers and periodicals, and established and published some new newspapers.

The Government controlled the Press through this Trust, by appointing its Chairman, who in turn appointed the managing directors [28]. The Trust was criticised by a member of the opposition in the National Assembly as "nothing more than a public relations department of the conventionist Muslim League.

There is nothing surprising about the way it functions, because it was quite clear from the very beginning that the party in power wants to use it as a tool to mislead and miseducate the public opinion in matters relating to the state" [29].

Malik Jilani further added that

President Ayub wanted an organisation within the press itself to play a positive role in singing his eulogies and giving a biased version of the country's relations with the outside world. The trust, it was pointed out, had been created with contributions from the public, but Jilani alleged, rich industrialists had been threatened and forced into making large contributions. Maintaining that the papers run by the Press Trust represented the lowest standard of journalism, Jilani cited the example of the Pakistan Times which was popularly known in Pakistan as the "Ayub Times". The National Press Trust being the largest press organisation in the country, it was "an irony of fate that the Press itself was supporting all that was being done to curb and stifle the press itself" [30].

---

28 Told to the author by Salamat Ali.
A classic example of how freedom of opinion is curbed in Pakistan was the way in which the "Outlook" was dealt with. The Outlook had started its publication on November 10, 1962, and wanted 'to promote a free and frank discussion of issues and problems'. With the general tightening of control over the Press in Pakistan, the Government decided to crush this bold adventure in journalism within two years of its existence [31].

Similarly, on 25 June, 1964 another popular progressive daily "Sanghban", from East Pakistan was closed down. The closure was nothing but a link in the chain of the policy of the Government to suppress the freedom of the Press [32].

Another means of control over the press was through the Information Ministry. The press had to take orders from the ministry on what stories to play up and where. A semblance of opposition was also permitted in order to give an impression of 'Free Press' [33].

This tolerance of token opposition also ran out, as the information ministry in 1967, cancelled all government advertising going to the Nawa-i-Waqt [34].

Despite the curb on the freedom of the Press, there have been occasions when the entire press, irrespective of the nature

33 For instance the 'Pakistan Observer' and the 'Nawa-i-waqt' were permitted to print what they wished.
34 See Times of India, (N.Delhi), Jan 29, 1967.
of its ownership had acted in unison with the official line.

A glaring illustration of this phenomenon was provided by the Chinese invasion of India in October, 1962, when Pakistan's hostility towards India, persistently encouraged and fed by the official propaganda, found its unrestrained echo in the Pakistani Press, which was brutally frank in arguing as to what should determine Pakistan's attitude at this moment of India's adversity. Wrote the Pakistan Times:

No nation acts as logically and high-mindedly as the Western countries seem to have Pakistan believe....That we should raise the Kashmir issue admittedly in the hour of India's peril is perfectly natural...We hope, danger might awaken Mr. Nehru to reality, if his sense of justice has so far failed to do it, but surely he will not be awakened to it, unless we help him in the process. That way we can help him by withholding assurances that Pakistan will not embarrass India during her engagement with China [35].

In fact, the Pakistan press seemed to have taken up a tirade against India. Wrote the Morning News:

India's past record of expansionism and its blood and iron policies would have put even Bismark's militarism under a shade, for it has already alarmed its neighbours and they cannot view with equanimity a perilous rise in its striking power [36].

Public opinion in Pakistan as reflected through the columns of the controlled press and leaders of political parties, had generally been flowing into anti-Indian channels.

Bhutto and the Role of the Press

With Bhutto assuming supreme power on December 21, 1971, the press, contrary to his 1970 election manifesto had been effectively muzzled. Every attempt was also made to stifle freedom of speech, expression and organization. The people of Pakistan had hoped that restrictions imposed during the rule of President Ayub and General Yahya Khan [37], would disappear with the emergence of a people's Government. But this did not happen, much to the dismay of the people. The National Press Trust which had been created by President Ayub Khan to impose official control on a major segment of the national press had been continued by Bhutto, despite persistent demand by the opposition parties to disband it.

The system of Press Advice was rigorously followed, and non-conformist newspapers were punished by withdrawal of Government advertisements or by other means. Independent minded editors were arrested and convicted on fake charges. The Press became a target of repression. Bhutto could not reconcile himself with the concept of a free press commenting adversely on his policies and actions. Soon after the assumption of power when some comments appeared in the press regarding his reshuffling in the armed forces, Bhutto immediately banned the publication of such

information, and even imprisoned the editors of some papers. Public meetings were banned by Bhutto, and the opposition parties were even denied to express their point of view through such gettogethers. Difference of opinion was not allowed within the ruling party too [38].

Until Bhutto's rise to power, the news medium was extremely restricted. The printed word during most of the Ayub and Yahya years had to be cleared through Government officials. When official lines and procedures were not followed, journalists and editors were often silenced and even jailed. With Bhutto's installation to power, controls over the Press and other media were temporarily suspended. However, once, the news media began publishing news critical of the present regime, the Government reinstituted some controls.

The Press in Pakistan had not been much happier under Bhutto rule than it was under General Yahya Khan or Ayub Khan. Any Government is ready to swear by its attachment to press freedom, but most Governments went to circumscribe this freedom on what seems to them the best of reasons that the press is not responsibly supporting the national interest.

CEYLON

The system of Government by the ballot box has been more vigorously practised in Sri Lanka than in any other Asian

38 Told to the author by Salamat Ali.
country, except Japan and India, the other two main Asian Parliamentary systems. This is because the ruling party has been defeated through the democratic process much more in Sri Lanka than in India or Japan [39].

Although the electorate in Ceylon is small, it is highly political and literate and extremely sensitive to the various problems facing the island on the international front. The rulers therefore cannot ignore the temper of their own people [40]. Added to this extremely sensitive and responsive public opinion are the communicational elites - the press, radio and television.

The Role of the Press:

The Press enjoys an advantage over the legislature and the executive and other wings of a modern state, in that, it can reach and communicate with millions of people. Although the radio is more pervasive as a means of mass communication, than the Press, the Press, is however, more influential and powerful in a democratic country than the Radio. This is so, because the Radio does not involve itself in controversial politics [41].


This therefore places a lot of responsibility on the Press, for it is generally seen that most people form opinions by what they read in the newspapers.

Says Walter Lippman (a journalist): "Without criticism, and reliable and intelligent reporting, the Government cannot govern. For, there is not adequate way in which it can keep itself informed about what the people of the country are thinking and doing and wanting" [42].

The Ceylonese Media:

There were no newspapers in the island before the advent of the British and the first known newspaper, The Weekly Government Gazette, was started in 1802 [43]. This weekly newspaper continues to be the official source of government information. In addition to public announcements, this paper also published local and foreign news. Independent newspapers gradually joined the fray, the first being the Colombo Observer which was started in 1834 [44].

Until the establishment of the State Council in 1931, the newspapers in circulation were either supporting the colonial

rulers or fighting for reforms of a political nature. Those newspapers which were owned by the British were naturally pro-status quo. But there were critics of the Government too. To mention a few - Dr. Eliot and A.M. Ferguson, editors of the Observer and Armand de 'Souza [45], editor of the Times of Ceylon.

But it was D.R. Wijewardene [46] who caused a revolution in the field of journalism in the country by introducing business methods and the latest machinery for the production of newspapers. He foresaw the influence and mass circulation of Sinhalese newspapers.

Advent of Independence

With a change of status from that of a colony to an independent nation, the island had an active press with a large circulation. The English newspapers of D.R. Wijewardene were catering to the need of the English speaking elite, while the Sinhala newspaper gave expression to the aspirations of the Sinhala educated intelligentsia [47].

45 Armand De'souza was also editor of the 'Morning Leader'. The quality which distinguished this paper from the others in the island was its role in laying the foundation of the political life of the Ceylonese. For details, see C.A. Tharmarathnam, Sketch of the life and career of Armand De'souza, (Colombo, 1922).

46 The era of Press magnates in the island began with the entry of D.R. Wijewardena. His matrimonial, social and political connections played a significant role in the growth of his newspaper industry. For details see, J.D. Abeysinghe, A critical and documented review of the Tudugalla family, (Colombo, 1971). Also see N.M. De'Silva, "DRW", New Lanka, (Colombo), Vol.1, no.4, 1950, pp.86-89.

There are four main newspaper groups in Ceylon:

1. The Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. This publishes five dailies, the Dinamine, Thinakaran, Ceylon Daily News, Janata and Ceylon Observer and six weekly papers, Sarasaviva, Mihira, Budusarana, Vathakama, Lassana and Naya Yuga (a periodical).

2. The Times of Ceylon Ltd. This publishes Lankadipa, Ceylon Daily Mirror, The Times of Ceylon (all dailies) and Vanitha Viththi, Weekly Times, Sunday Mirror, Sri Lankadina and Rasavahini (weeklies and monthlies).

3. The Independent newspaper of Ceylon Ltd., publishes Dawasa, Dinapathi, Sun, Sawasa, Thanthi, Star (dailies) and Visitura, Tikira, Gitanjali, Irunama Rasakatha, Rividina, Chinthamani, Weekend Sun and Sri (periodicals, monthlies and weeklies).

4. The Virakesari Ltd. publishes Virakesari and Mithiran (newspaper and dailies) and five weekly papers [48].

The three biggest combines in Ceylon are the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon (the lake House Group), the Times Group and the Dawasa Group. The Dawasa Group came into prominence in the post 1956 period, while the other two held the sway till then with the Lake House Papers way ahead of the newspapers published by the Times Group.

---

Together all these three newspapers monopolise the newspaper reading public, publishing dailies in English and Sinhalese and barring the Times Group, in Tamil as well.

These three newspaper combines enjoy a unique advantage in that they claim to publish national newspapers as distinct from the dailies and weeklies put out by party presses [49]. In addition to the newspapers of the four major concerns in the country, the other daily and weekly newspapers were predominantly the organs of political parties — all Sinhalese publications [50].

The Press in Sri Lanka caters to almost all shades of political opinion in the country. The major group of newspapers, use vast resources of men, money and material to command larger circulations and great influence. The Sri Lankan Press now consists of 16 weekly papers and 18 daily newspapers. The daily newspapers are said to have a circulation of 650,000 and weekly national newspapers nearly one million [51].

There is, however, no strong tradition of journalism, editors tending to change, depending on the political sympathies ————


51 Ceylon Yearbook, n.48.
of the proprietor or the political atmosphere of the time. The political partisanship of the press is a characteristic feature in Ceylon which is borne out by the reports of propaganda meetings during elections, and party manoeuvres [52].

The Lake House Group was the monopoly of the Wickramasinghe family while the Devas group of the Gunasena family. Wickramasinghe was the brain behind the Colombo meet. He even brought forth a Journal 'Jana' trying to make it an Afro-Asian journal. The Times Group has a diversified ownership, but its editorial policies are influenced by one or two individuals who have sizable amount of shares in it, and pedalled the British viewpoint, who in turn paid them in the form of advertisements [53].

The Lake House Group of newspapers had consistently supported the UNP in general and the Senanayakes' in particular [54]. The group was decisively opposed to Marxists and hence to the SLFP. The political change of 1956, brought about a revision in the attitude towards the national press in the island.

53 Told to the author by Mervin De'silva.
54 A case in point is the 1952 general elections, when overwhelming support was given to the UNP. See I.D.S. Weerawardene, "The general elections in Ceylon, 1952", The Ceylon Historical Journal, Vol. 2, nos. 1&2, 1952, p. 126. Esmond Wickremasinghe, the Managing Director of Lake House, became the closest advisor to the UNP government. In fact the foreign policy of the government was determined at the Lake House and its Managing Director was given the status of an envoy extraordinary. See Interim Report of the Press Commission, Sessional Paper IX, Colombo, 1964, p. 11.
The Times Group also followed a similar policy but its support for the UNP has been more disguised and not seldom critical and qualified.

The Davasa Group articulates Sinhalese Buddhist opinion and hence, its support for the UNP was conditional in so far as the interest of the Sinhalese were not adversely affected. It became increasingly disillusioned with the 'National Government' of Dudley Senanayake, 'because of his ties with the Ceylon Tamil Federalists and the Indian Tamil C.W.C. (Ceylon Workers' Congress) [55]. Thereafter the Davasa Group like the Lake House Group gave their full support to the SLPP and the United Front.

Press Legislation:

Ever since the growth of mass oriented politics in Ceylon, the Press in particular has become the object of criticism. It was criticised as a 'definite monopoly' in which concentration of ownership and control had prejudiced the free expression of opinion and the accurate presentation of news.

Excepting the Lankadipa which welcomed the political change in 1956, the rest of the Press openly campaigned for the UNP showing hostility to those forces which culminated in the victory of the People's United Front (M.E.P.) in 1956 [56]. It was this

55 Told to the author by Mervin De'silva.
hostility of the Press to the 1956 regime which encouraged a member of Parliament of the M.E.P. to table a private members motion in 1959, with a view to initiate a discussion on the role of the Press [57]. This was the beginning of an attempt to break and control the press monopoly in the island.

A Press Commission was set up which had as one of its provisions, the preventing of any newspaper or periodical criticising or exposing the Government. The concentration of ownership and its effect on the role of the Press also received attention of the Commission [58]. The Press Commission submitted its Interim Report in July 1964, recommending the establishment of a Press Council and a Press Tribunal. But, the Press legislation which the SLFP-LSSP coalition of 1964 attempted to pass in the legislature, fell through, culminating in the collapse of the Government led by Mrs. Bandaranaike. Attempts to break the press monopoly thus failed.

The Press in 1965-70:

In early 1967, the then Government in power (UNP) closed the leading opposition paper, the pro-LSSP paper Jana Dina (Peoples' Daily) and even sealed the Press where it was being published. The action was explained as having been prompted by a news item

58 For the Commission's report, see Sessional Paper IX, n.54, p.13.
allegedly defaming the Prime Minister [59]. An immediate consequence of the closure of this paper was an increase in the circulation of a communist sponsored daily Aththa (Truth) which was then left as the only opposition daily [60].

By the turn of the decade, there began a new era in the approach to press freedom in the country. The policy-makers elected in 1970, saw the Press industry, as a vestige of private monopoly power and were determined to divest interest groups, so as to employ the Press as a component in the strategy of national development [61]. The model favoured by the policy makers was nationalization of the Wijewardene enterprises (Lake House) and establishment of a Press Council.

Pressure had been mounting since the 1960's from populist interest groups in Ceylon to combat the private monopoly. The Associated Newspapers (Lake House), controlled 58 per cent of the news dissemination in the country [62]. The issue was exacerbated by the fact that editorial opinion reflected in all the Associated Newspapers Company Limited (ANCL) dailies opposed many populist measures.

60 This was the most influential Sinhalese paper, as its form of journalism was mainly agitational in nature.
Another aspect which disturbed policymakers was the close linkage between three of the largest newspaper syndicates, the ANCL, the Times of Ceylon Ltd., and the Virakesari Ltd. with the Reuters News Agency. These groups being the major shareholders of the Press Trust of Ceylon, maintained exclusive rights to distribute Reuters' foreign news in Ceylon [63]. A Press Commission of Enquiry was set up by the UF Government in 1970 to look into any wrong doings by the Press Chain. Although their findings were inconclusive, it was not exonerated of guilt by the commission [64].

Finally, the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. Act was passed by Parliament in 1973, whereby the ownership of Lake House was transferred from a private to a public company. Since then, direct and indirect controls had also been placed on pressmen who had been intimidated rather than cajoled to tow the Government policy [65]. The oppositions criticised this move saying that the Lake House papers had become a "mouth piece" of the Government [66].

Another legislative act became law in February 1973 — the

63 Coomaraswamy, n.61.
Sri Lanka Press Council Law. This act stipulated the formation of a seven member Press Council, including the Director of Information, a representative of working journalists and a representative of other employees in newspaper enterprises. It barred the publication of proceedings of Cabinet meetings or other "official secrets" which led critics to charge that the powers granted to the Council in this respect interfered with the freedom of the Press [67]. The Sri Lankan Press reacted to this by saying, "it is the first step to autocracy and end of all freedom" [68].

The Government, however, in order to clarify its stand issued a communique entitled, "The Truth About the Press Council Bill" in October 1973 [69].

Involvement of the Press:

The press has proved to be an excellent lobbyist on several issues, especially the Lake House. Mervin-de-Silva comments, "Moreover, in the absence of proper informational network in the early years of independence, the newspapers of the Lake House Group, Ceylon Daily News and Ceylon Observer, proved to be important sources for foreign news".

The views of the Lake House papers and those of the UNP leaders were similar and hence its influence was very noticeable. Such was the relationship, that when Kotelawala was the Prime Minister, he appointed the Managing Director of the Ceylon Daily News as special ambassador to the United Nations to lobby for Ceylon's admission to the U.N. when Gunawardena was already Ceylon's ambassador to the U.N. [70].

Ananda Thissa de Alva and John Morrison of the Lake House Group who were both identified with John Kotelawala used to give a weekly talk on Radio Ceylon, as guided by Kotelawala.

Similarly Mervin De Silva who was a parliament correspondent, during S.W.R.D's time, was called by him to do a weekly commentary on Foreign Policy on Radio. He used to confer with S.W.R.D once a week and discuss all issues before presenting the commentary. S.W.R.D. wanted to make the people more aware of the issues of foreign policy through this commentary [71].

In recent times, Don Mithuna and Rex de Silva write commentaries on foreign policy for the Sunday Island, while Mervin De Silva and Neville De Silva give commentaries on Rupavahini, the Government channel on Television [72]. Although radio provides another effective means of reaching the

70 J.L. Fernando, Three Prime Ministers of Ceylon, (Colombo, 1963), pp.21-22.
71 Told to the author by Mervin De'silva.
population, the Press in Sri Lanka is still the principal vehicle for the dissemination of information to the public and is an effective channel of political information.

NEPAL

An inquiry into the growth and the style of functioning of the Press in Nepal would also call forth an inquiry into the level of intellectual development, literacy growth, communicational advancement and above all the attitudinal change of the people at large. Statistics indicate that Nepal is "having perhaps the lowest percentage of literacy and the lowest level of education. Of the total population, 6 years of age and above, only 13.8 per cent were found literate in 1971" [73].

An enquiry into the level of intellectual development becomes more complex by the undifferentiated role of private papers and Government sponsored papers. At one end there are two largely circulated dailies which are Government owned and at the other end there is a multiplicity of papers privately owned. They are relatively colourless, personalityless and to a large extent valueless. The former thrive on the public treasury and enhance the values of the system; the latter also do the same, but with a slight difference [74]. The question of survival is also

greatly determined by Governmental financial help. The privately owned dailies are independent of such help, and survive at their own risk.

The Growth of the Press

Nepal's efforts at modernization were strangely enough unaccompanied by a breakthrough in the fields of political and social reform, language and journalism [75]. However, the first hand-operating printing press, popularly known as 'Vulture Press' was set up in 1851, and the first electrical Press was installed in 1912. The first private venture - the 'Pashupati' Press started functioning in 1893 [76]. "But despite such antecedents of the printing press in Nepal, no independent papers or journal, barring a few literary magazines, could play a crucial role in disseminating political consciousness in the country. This could be attributed to the then prevalent political climate; for whatever presses were operating, were instrumental in promoting the value systems of the Ranas. As the development of healthy journalism was not possible without political consciousness, the Press became a non-entity in Nepali socio-political life" [77].

75 Herbert Passin, "Writer and Journalism in the traditional society", in Lucian W.Pye, ed., Communications and Political Development, (Princeton, 1963), p.82.


77 Disclosed to the author by Rishikesh Shaha.
But, with the overthrow of the Rana regime there came a breakthrough in experimenting with modern liberal democratic values.

The Post-Revolution Period:

The overthrow of the Ranas brought in its wake, innovations in several fields; of which one was journalism. In 1951, the first public owned Nepali language daily Awaz was started, which was followed by the registration of 32 dailies and 65 weeklies in 1960. By 1965, their number rose to 65 and 101 respectively [78].

But the new government demanded of the Press, conformism to some of the accepted principles of the new set up. Many papers which were oriented towards the pre-1960 period found it difficult to accept the new situation, while others who had no such orientations; suddenly adjusted their role to the changed set-up.

Ever since the royal takeover in December 1960, the importance of Press and publicity had been keenly realised by the Government. An unrestrained press could strike at the very roots of the new system, while a controlled one could immensely strengthen it. Every effort was therefore made to control it.

Immediately after the installation of the new regime on 26

78 Baral, n.74, p.171.
December, 1960, Vishwa Bandhu Thapa, the Home Minister, struck a note of warning to the Press, that criticism made with any ulterior motive or aimed at obstructing national progress by encouraging instability in the country, would not be tolerated. "We want responsible and constructive criticism", he asserted [79].

Likewise, Tulsi Giri, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers in the new Government, lashed out at the Press and asked it to "refrain from criticising Government policies". He was, however, prepared to tolerate, what he called 'constructive criticism' [80].

But soon the Government found that the Press was going "beyond constructive criticism" and consequently the Home Ministry passed an order by which all local newspapers were subject to scanning by a Kathmandu Magistrate before their release for sale. Any newspaper which dared to differ or criticise the Government was immediately banned. In March 1961, two newspapers - The Kalpana and Dainik Nepal were banned. The order for its ban came within thirtysix hours of its criticising V.B. Thapa, the National Guidance Minister [81].

In May 1961, the Philingo and a communist weekly Sameeksha

80 Hindustan Times, (N.Delhi), Mar 31, 1962.
were banned following their publication of articles critical of the government. Similarly, Samaj was asked to stop its publication for three months, from August 26, 1961 [82].

On 8 December 1961, Swatantra Samachar was banned without being told of the reason for its closure [83]. To top it all, the king's Government enacted the Rashtriya Sambad Samiti (R.S.S.) Act, 1962, thereby putting an end to whatever little freedom the Press still enjoyed. Article 32 of the Act made it imperative that no other news agency (except the Government controlled RSS) shall be allowed to operate, collect and sell news in Nepal and about Nepal [84]. Since very few persons purchased the shares of the RSS, the entire Board of Directors was constituted of the nominated members. With this the Government acquired complete control over this important medium of mass information. On December 14, 1965, the Government enforced new press regulations, whereby it prescribed certain minimum requirements and standards for newspapers and periodicals brought out in the kingdom. The regulations not only prescribed the size of the newspapers, and the number of pages, but also stipulated that the minimum circulation should be 1000 copies.

This regulation instead of raising the standard of the Press, hindered its free growth. As it is, in the absence of adequate financial resources, technical hands, lack of

84 Ibid., Dec 24-31, 1962, p.4963.
advertisements, wide circulation and assistance from the Government, the Nepalese Press has always been poor in stuff, size and service. The paucity of funds also deters them to improve their standard and also denies them the chances to criticise the Government's policy openly [85].

The case of Motherland, a local English daily is a case in point. This newspaper which had been critical of the Government was asked to cease its publication within two months of the announcement of the new 1965 Press Regulations. It had failed to submit a plan for a change over to the specifications laid down in the new regulations, while many other dailies showing deference to the Government were allowed to continue even though they did not fully correspond to the new regulations [86].

Another step taken by the Government to regulate the Press was the starting of another official newspaper in the early 1960s - The Rising Nepal, the other being the Gorkhapatra. Since it was better equipped and financed, its circulation increased rapidly. As a consequence, the circulation of some of the local dailies declined which led to rivalry and tension between the privately owned Press and the Government Press.

These regulations put severe restrictions on the free functioning of the Press. Any daily or periodical which tried to

85 Disclosed to the author by a senior Indian correspondent stationed in Kathmandu who wishes to be anonymous.
86 Ibid.
criticise or expose the government ran the risk of drastic punitive measures against itself. Manik Lal Shreshtha, editor and publisher of a local daily, the Samaya, was verbally summoned without any prior official notice and his statement was recorded at the office of the Zonal Commissioner of Bagmati [87].

The All-Nepali Journalists Conference Meeting on 10 March 1967 expressed concern at the prevalent rules and regulations that obstructed a free and healthy development of the Press in Nepal. It asked the Government to amend the Press and Publications Act of 1965, which had a Draconian clause under which the Government was empowered to ban for "public good" a newspaper without assigning any reason whatsoever.

The Conference also deplored discrimination in distributing Government advertisements and asked the Government to extend a favourable treatment to the papers published outside the valley [88].

**Government Indifference to Press:**

A classic example of the press not being given ample support by the Government can be highlighted by the following illustration. In Nepal's search for national identity and particularly in the calculations of King Mahendra, China came to acquire an important place by the mid-sixties. China too gave

87 Chauhan, n.81, p.197.
full support to the royal regime and did not mind being used by
the King as a pressure against India. But the spill over of the
Cultural Revolution into the external relations of China exposed
the extent to which Nepal had lost her options vis-a-vis China
and had no alternative but to put up with everything her northern
neighbour chose to do [89].

The Chinese personnel stationed in Nepal even engaged
themselves in subversive propaganda. Incidents which greatly
embarrassed the Government of Nepal were those on 17 and 25 June
1967 at Gaucher Airport at Kathmandu, when Chinese demonstrators
at the airport prevented the Nepalese, Indian and other foreign
correspondents to take photographs, of the demonstration [90].

The Nepalese Press reported and condemned this event in
strong language. The Nepalese Daily Motherland condemned the
airport incidents as militating "against all canons of diplomatic
practice" and described them as "a serious abuse of our
hospitality" [91].

However, while the Press took up cudgels against the
demonstrators, the Government maintained a sort of studied
silence. The Government made no official protest to China. When

89 Rama Kant, "Sino-Nepalese relations: the interlude of the
Cultural Revolution", South Asian Studies, Vol.11, nos.1&2,
Jan-Jul 1976, p.111.

90 Two officials of the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi had been
deported to China, via Kathmandu and there was a welcome
awaiting them at Gaucher airport. Some of the members of
the welcome party indulged in anti-Indian and anti-Soviet
slogans. For details, see Ibid., p.113.

91 Motherland, (Kathmandu), 26 Jun 1967.
the Government was asked about the unfortunate happenings, to everyone's utter surprise, the Deputy Prime Minister denied them altogether [92].

The Government of Nepal probably did not want any deterioration in the Sino-Nepalese relations and hence decided to continue with its old policy of promoting friendly relations with China without prejudice to its own national interest [93].

Further Press Regulations:

Although on August 4, 1967 the Government lifted the ban on two local newspapers - the Motherland and Sameeksha, the attitude of the Government towards the freedom of the Press became clear when Chairman Thapa warned the entire Press of Nepal that severe action would be taken against those who challenged the constitution of the country and those who opposed the Panchayat System [94].

In order to suppress the progressive elements and those institutions which would have posed a challenge to the Panchayat Democracy, the Press was made the victim of the Government's wrath.

Some more dailies were closed down in 1967. The publication of Jan Akanksha (Weekly), Vasuda (monthly), Nepal Times (daily),

94 Chauhan, n.81, p.198.
Chetna (weekly) and Coreto (Weekly) was banned because they had criticised the Government policy. Likewise, the entry of Blitz and Searchlight was banned in the kingdom [95].

In 1969, although steps were taken to streamline the administration and to strengthen the economy, Nepal continued to live under the spell of an oppressive system in which the people had been deprived of their right to express their opinion and to organise themselves as political parties. During early 1969, hopes were raised, however, that the Government was thinking to liberalize its policy when it released a number of important political detenus like B.P. Koirala, Ganesh Man Singh and extended amnesty to many self-exiled politicians. This was only a face wash, for the government, enacted the Organization and Associations (Control Amendment) Act 1969, which stated

...no person shall issue statements, shout slogans, hold demonstrations, take out processions, organize publicity and broadcasting, or act otherwise advocating the establishment of any political party or group, organizations or association motivated by political party objectives or instigate others to do so [96].

Journalism in Nepal, either in the public or private sector has not yet shown positive symptoms of development much less professionalization and specialization, even though a few educated young men have undergone training in this field. 


96 Nepal Gazette, Sep 4, 1969, cited in Ibid.
Moreover, paper producing is a hobby, a part-time job, a source of livelihood for some and not a "full-time vocation" to be followed in its own right.

Papers in Nepal are published by individuals, not monetarily sound. Nor do they have professional zeal or a sense of mission. The Government it also responsible for heightening the inter-Press differences by joining sides with either one or the other section of the Press.

Another reason for this not-so-positive trend is, the publication of the two largest dailies - Gorkhapatra and Rising Nepal - by the Government which has huge resources and a well trained staff, which can only lead to the decline of the Press in the private sector. Moreover, the only news agency - the RSS- has made the condition of other newspapers miserable, as all are dependent on this agency, which present only a one sided view [97].

There has been a considerable decrease in the intensity and volume of principled dissent. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the political role of the Press - in forcing the Government to take fresh opinion into account while making decisions - is becoming negligible. Fed by sensationalism, personalism and make-believe rumours, the press also lacks credibility [98].

97 Told to the author by Rishikesh Shaha.

98 Baral, n.74, p.182-183.
The Kathmandu based political, bureaucratic, and other elites do not seem to have given serious consideration to improving the lot of the press in Nepal and hence, the Press has not been able to make headway in the right perspective [99].

The illustrations cited above leaves no doubt in concluding that the role of the Press in shaping public opinion, articulating it and thus influencing foreign-policy decision making has been very limited in the three countries under study. Normal political developments were rudely interrupted by the imposition of martial law in Pakistan accompanied by the strict control of the Press and other mass media. One can only commend the Pakistani Press for whatever little asides it has managed in the face of these inhibiting constraints. In Nepal, lack of literacy and difficulties of terrain have severely restricted the circulation of newspapers. Establishment of the Rashtriya Panchayat System added to existing difficulties the obstacle of authoritarian control. Even in Ceylon where the Press has been free, it has not distinguished itself by any remarkable enterprise in the domain of foreign policy making. Editors may have sought to inform and educate, but they have seldom taken the lead. Their main task has been of elaboration and explanation.

[99] 'Commoner', an English daily said that none of the ministers of the Information and Communications Ministry had so far given any evidence of their being serious about even understanding what the problems of the Press were. See article in Commoner, (Kathmandu), Dec 21, 1982.