

A century of struggle: Afghanistan's media development under monarchies

Qurban Hussain Pamirzad*

Xi'an Jiatong University, China

Abstract

This paper has used a series of historical sources, mainly in the Persian language, to explore the one-century history of Afghanistan's media. The country has 150 years of media history, of which a century occurred during the monarchy's political system. This study explains the chronological order and structure of the media from the first newspaper, Shams-u-Nahar, which was founded in 1873 during the reign of Amir Shir Ali Khan. In addition to explaining the press's role in the war for the independence of Afghanistan, it also explores the media's situation during King Zaher Shah's (1933-1973) reign, when a diverse media environment emerged; simultaneously, systematic political repression was carried out and derailed the achievements. This comprehensive centenary review of Afghanistan's media history fills the research gap about Afghanistan's media, which has only been accessible to readers and researchers in the Persian language so far. Hence, this paper will be the first of its kind to cover this era in detail, address this research void, and pave the way for researchers to learn more about Afghanistan's media history.

Abstrak

Makalah ini menggunakan serangkaian sumber sejarah, terutama dalam bahasa Persia, untuk mengeksplorasi sejarah satu abad media Afghanistan. Negara ini memiliki sejarah media selama 150 tahun, dan satu abad di antaranya terjadi pada masa sistem politik monarki. Kajian ini menjelaskan urutan kronologis dan struktur media dari surat kabar pertama, Shams-u-Nahar, yang didirikan pada tahun 1873 pada masa pemerintahan Amir Shir Ali Khan. Selain menjelaskan peran pers dalam perang kemerdekaan Afghanistan, artikel ini juga mengeksplorasi situasi media pada masa pemerintahan Raja Zaher Shah (1933-1973), ketika lingkungan media yang beragam muncul; secara bersamaan, represi politik sistematis dilakukan dan menggagalkan pencapaian. Tinjauan komprehensif sejarah media Afganistan

Keywords:

Afghanistan's media history; constitutional monarchy; independent media; Mahmood Tarzi; political outlets; Saraj-ul-Akhbar

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*Corresponding

author: Qurban Hussain Pamirzad, email: pamirzad2014@gmail.com, Xi'an Jiatong University, 28 Xianning W Rd, 交大商业街区 Beilin, Xi'An, Shaanxi, China, 710049.

yang berusia seratus tahun ini mengisi kesenjangan penelitian tentang media Afganistan, yang sejauh ini hanya dapat diakses oleh pembaca dan peneliti dalam bahasa Persia. Oleh karena itu, makalah ini akan menjadi makalah pertama yang membahas era ini secara rinci, mengatasi kekosongan penelitian, dan membuka jalan bagi para peneliti untuk mempelajari lebih lanjut tentang sejarah media Afghanistan.

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INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan has experienced several decades of hostile and turbulent history, and like any other aspect of life in the country, the media's growth and development were substantially affected. Afghanistan's media has 150 years of history, starting in 1873 when the first publication, *Shams-u-Nahar*, under the guidance of Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani, was established (Ahang, 1970). Sayed Jamaluddin was a pan-Islamist thinker of the late nineteenth century, coinciding with the decline of colonialism in the region. He was one of the modernist Islamist thinkers who believed in the coexistence of tradition and modernity in the form of nation-states and religion, whereas his predecessors saw a paradox between the notion of bordered nation-states and borderless religious fraternity (Wafayezada, 2023). Based on his thirst for modernity and other broader global and regional trends toward literacy and information accessibility, the first publication emerged in Afghanistan (Ahang, 1970).

Shams-u-Nahar was published once in two weeks with 16 pages and in Persian language (Gorzang, 2018; Sims-Williams, 1980). Rasul Raheen (2008), the author of *Afghanistan Media History: From Shams-u-Nahar to Republic*, argues that based on his collection analysis of this newspaper, the foreign reports received by this outlet show that the impact of the Iranian and Indian newspapers on this outlet had been salient. Furthermore, the language used in this newspaper indicates that it had a systematic and well-organized network of reporters inside the country and in the neighboring regions. Similarly, he argues that the writing style of the outlet has been influenced by English journalism; as he has mentioned, in every report, the English term "*correspondent*" has been used instead of its Persian synonym "*Guzarushgar*".

Mirza Abdul Ali was the chief editor of this publication, which, after 40-48 issues, due to the Anglo-Afghan war and the death of the previous Amir, was closed (Ahang, 1970; Raheen, 2008). The next Amir, who was installed by the British Empire, having no

media; his era is regarded as the darkest era of media in Afghanistan's history. Almost three decades later, after Abdurrahman Khan's death, in 1906, Abdul Rauf Khan Kandahari, who was a teacher, proposed to Amir Habibullah Khan the establishment of a new newspaper called 'Saraj-ul-Akhbar. The notion of establishing such a newspaper was adopted from the *Habl-ul-Matin*, a Persian newspaper published in Calcutta, India- which was the only source of the news circulating in the country at that time (Sims-Williams, 1980). Afghanistan media history, despite having a long and fluctuating history, has received little attention, and the reason lies in the absence of comprehensive introductory research in the English language to open up discussion among scholars.

Previous studies regarding Afghanistan media can be classified into two categories: the handful of English articles that episodically have explored this topic. For example, Sims-Williams (1980) and Gregorian (1967) only focused on a certain topic at a specific period, which does not provide a thorough understanding of Afghanistan's media history during monarchies. The second is the books and articles that holistically have addressed this topic but are not in English. E.g., Ahang (1970) and Raheen (2008) have collectively studied Afghanistan's media history; however, their works are in Persian and not accessible to foreign readers. This is a visible research gap that needs to be filled, and this article, following a holistic approach, aims to bridge this caveat. Using historical documents mainly in the Persian language, which is mostly inaccessible to foreign researchers, this study will provide valuable insight into Afghanistan's media development under monarchies, facilitating in-depth exploration of this topic.

METHODS

This article aims to provide a succinct but comprehensive review of this centenary history of Afghanistan media. Hence, following a desk-based research method, based on reviewing the relevant second-hand historical materials, website articles, and documents, mainly in Persian and rarely in English, explores Afghanistan's media during monarchies from 1873 to 1973, a century's history and a few achievements. Through extensive review and taking note of relevant literature both in Persian and English, the media development history in each period during the last century was summarized, and its accuracy was evaluated through cross-reference checking. Except for the books and related website articles, archival historical documents such as the country's constitution and the media laws in each era were also reviewed. The topic's significance stems from the lack of research about Afghanistan's media in this era, particularly in the English language. To both serve the systematic flow of the text and the logical structure of the article, a chronological order was adopted, and the result of the extensive literature review was presented accordingly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical context: The emergence of modern media in Afghanistan

Media has been one of the most politically affected sectors in Afghanistan’s modern history. The history of media during the era of amirs and monarchs in Afghanistan can be classified into three main categories: the pre-independence era, the independence era, and the post-independence era (Figure 1). Each of these eras has been deeply influenced by the dominant political atmosphere at home and abroad. In the pre-independence era, the media still did not have established robust institutions, and any foreseeable and predictable future was not seen on the horizon. On the one hand, Afghanistan was struggling with foreign aggression, coinciding with the Anglo-Afghan First and Second Wars, and on the other, the low literacy rate in the country still did not appreciate the existence of modern publications. Nonetheless, this era also coincided with the decline of colonialism in the region, in which the local riots were spreading across the Indian sub-continent against the British Army (Marshall, 2011), which subsequently resulted in the collapse of Britain in Asia.

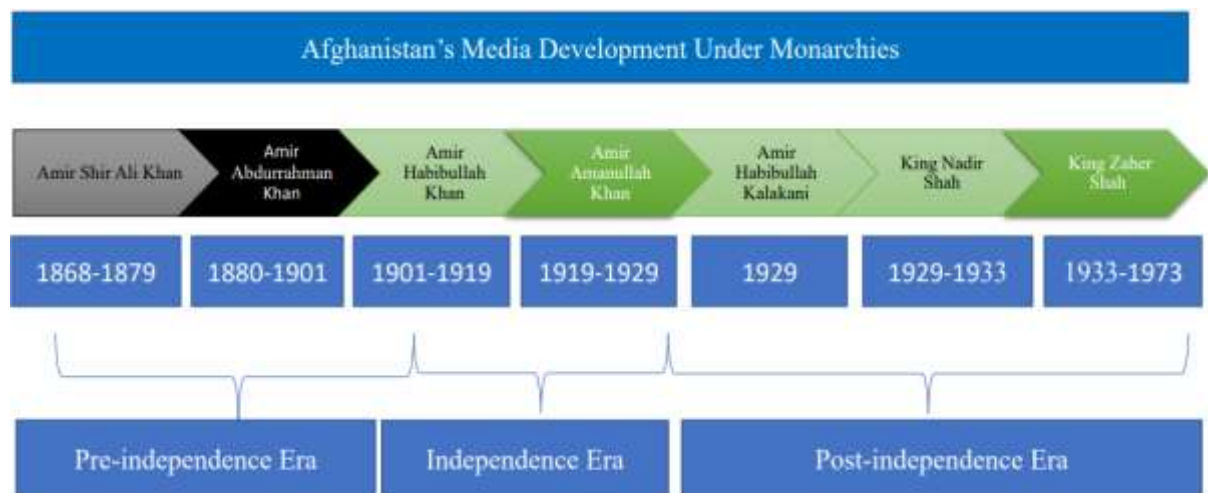


Figure 1. Chronological order of media history between 1873-1973

Such a situation gave rise to the emergence of liberation movements and armies in the region, including Afghanistan. In order to avoid mass mobilization against colonialism, the British occupation in the region forcefully restricted the flow of information, which was one of the reasons behind the Shams-u-Nahar’s closure in 1878 (Ahang, 1970). However, soon after, a new wave of media actors appeared in Afghanistan who used publications to mobilize the nation against foreign aggression (Sistani, 2020). The political determination of the rulers, accumulated with the steadfast intention of the thinkers and intellectuals in this era, contributed to constitutionalism, a movement not

only to fight for liberation from the British colony but also to advocate citizen rights at home.

Pre-independence era: The constitutionalism movement and the press

After the death of Amir Abdurrahman Khan, in 1906, Saraj-ul-Akhbar was founded in Kabul during the reign of Amir Habibullah Khan. The founder of the publication was Abdul Rauf Khan Kandahari, a teacher in the royal family. In a situation when Britain set the country's foreign policy, the educated elite -who shaped the country's first generation of intellectuals later on (constitutionalists)- disapproved of the circumstance, and Saraj-ul-Akhbar was shining on the horizon as a beacon of hope.

The emergence of the constitutionalism movement, which contributed to the independence declaration and afterward to Amanullah Khan's reforms in the country, is admitted to have evolved around this newspaper and its successor 'Siraj-ul-Akhbar Afghaniya. However, the Saraj-ul-Akhbar publication, due to being highly critical of the King's Habibullah passive foreign policy tolerating British colonialists, was shut down after a few issues were printed. During this era, new printing machines were imported from Turkey, which facilitated the process of printing publications (Ahang, 1970); Amir's attitude, however, remained hostile toward media until 19011, when the new era of media history began in the country.

Mahmood Tarzi's liberation campaign through press

Mahmood Tarzi, who is known as the 'father of Journalism' in Afghanistan due to family kinship and intimate friendship with King Habibullah, revived Saraj-ul-Akhbar newspaper in 1911. After a few issues, this publication was renamed Siraj-ul-Akhbar Afghaniya and founded the basis of modern journalism in Afghanistan. Although until 1919, Afghanistan remained a protectorate of Britain; however, the narrative for independence was promoted and mobilized people in the media sphere. In 1916, Mahmood Tarzi on Saraj-ul-Akhbar frankly wrote:

Saraj-ul-Akhbar Afghaniya is neither a British, Russian, French, Italian, German, Chinese, or Japanese outlet; it is a Muslim newspaper, and it is specifically an Afghan newspaper. Whatever it says, whatever melody it sings, is from an Afghan point of view and stems from the tone of Afghan national dignity (Gorzang, 2018; Saikal, 2006).

Since its inception, Saraj-ul-Akhbar embarked upon the lofty goal of Afghanistan's independence. This was a valuable demand that was not realized until 1919, but mentally,

the era of independence started with the publication of this newspaper in 1911. The articles published in this newspaper were highly critical of the British control of the country and equally critical of the Amir in Afghanistan. Mahmood Tarzi, as the father-in-law of the king's sons, had a distinct position within the royal family, owing to the marriage of his two daughters to Amanullah Khan and Enayatullah Khan. Meanwhile, Mahmood Tarzi was the teacher of the king's and queen's children (Sistani, 2020), which gave him a unique position to advocate his worldviews and promote his independence campaign through Saraj-ul-Akhbar more practically (Sims-Williams, 1980).

Notwithstanding this newspaper's low circulation, it was famous among the kingdom's bureaucracy and literate citizens and served as the nation's voice against foreign aggression. Mahmood Tarzi, except for the Pashtu and Persian, was fluent in Arabic, Turkish, French, and Urdu languages. Due to political reasons, his family lived in exile for a long time, and he had lived in many countries, including British India, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria; expectedly, he was well-educated and sophisticatedly aware of the global and regional situation (Sistani, 2020). Hence, his translated articles from European languages, which were published in Saraj-ul-Akhbar- broadened Afghanistan's elite worldview.

He blamed the religious constituencies for keeping people in darkness; as such, it shaped a new polarized elite in Afghanistan -those who were conservative and religious and those who were influenced by the pan-Turkist secular thoughts of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. At the same time, one of the dominant aspects of Tarzi's works was the nationalism narrative and coining of the term "Afghaniat," or being Afghan, which was considered equal to being Pashtun. One of the criticisms regarding Mahmood Tarzi is his attempts to marginalize Persian and replace it with the Pashtu language, which he called the "Afghani Language." He promoted Pashtu as the national language while ignoring the fact that Persian as lingua franca has been in Afghanistan's Royal dynasties for centuries. It was in this era when the preliminaries of naming the Persian language Dari as an attempt to localize it started (Lee, 2022), which some believe was a denial of the historical and cultural richness of this language associated with Persian civilization.

Despite these criticisms regarding Mahmood Tarzi's way of thinking, doubtless, his thoughts contributed to nationalism and patriotism, which were the main themes covered in the content of Saraj-ul-Akhbar newspaper -advancing national awareness and patriotism, consequently bringing about independence to the country. Most of the articles published in this newspaper concentrated on Afghanistan's autonomy. For instance, an article titled "Religion, State, Nation, and Homeland" was published in this newspaper, emphasizing the importance of independence, using religion as a factor to mobilize the nation for a national uprising for country independence. He believed that the country

should be liberated because he said it was an Islamic country, and no Muslim accepted non-Muslim rule. Similarly, in another article, he urges the people to wake up, criticizing the Amir for indulging in enjoyment while the country's independence was being compromised (Sistani, 2020). However, some people believe that the ethnocentric nationalism that Tarzi advocated advanced systematic inequality and sectarianism in the country as his inheritance (Lee, 2022).

Saraj-ul-Akhbar newspaper, except for domestic readers, had extensive coverage and distribution areas, such as British India, Turkey, Iran, and Bukhara, which included today's central Asian countries. The content of this newspaper was fraught with nationalism and patriotism, instigating the audiences, particularly the youths, to the uprising against the colonial forces. Because of the provocative content of this newspaper encouraging insurrection against colonial powers, the Russian government in Turkistan sent a message to the representative of the Russian government in British India to pressure the Afghanistan Amir to change the newspaper's policy. Similarly, in 1914, the British India government asked the Afghanistan government to change the tone of the newspaper, but this newspaper's policy, regardless of internal and external pressure, did not change. Consequently, in 1913, the newspaper could no longer be distributed in (Turkistan) the Russian sphere of influence. Later, in 1914, W.M. Hailey, the chief commissioner of Delhi, wrote that the distribution of this outlet must be stopped because it goes against our interests. Thus, in 1916, its distribution was also banned in India (Sistani, 2020).

Afghanistan independence and the new age of media

The Saraj-ul-Akhbar role in declaring independence in Afghanistan was instrumental. After 40 years of foreign policy being controlled by Britain, in 1919, King Amanullah Khan, the son-in-law of Mahmood Tarzi -the chief editor of Saraj-ul-Akhbar newspaper- declared independence of the country from Britain. Historians believe Mahmood Tarzi's independence campaign launched by Saraj-ul-Akhbar greatly influenced the royal family, notably the young King Amanullah Khan (Sistani, 2020). In 1919, after signing the Rawalpindi treaty, which ended the third Anglo-Afghan war, Britain recognized Afghanistan as an independent sovereign state (Ahmed, 2019). The new King, who was influenced by Mahmood Tarzi's thinking and political transformation in the region, particularly in Turkey, earnestly supported the growth of the media. For the first time, Saraj-ul-Niswan, the first exclusive women's newspaper, and Saraj-ul-Atfal, a particular newspaper for children, were established (Gorzang, 2018). Nonetheless, the low literacy rate limited the newspaper's distribution, and only royal and well-off families

close to the government benefited significantly. Such efforts, however, encouraged education development among the low-level segment of society.

The first press law of the country, known as “Nizamnama-e-Matbohat” (Press regulation), was also ratified in this era, which is another achievement of media in Amanullah Khan's reign. The first article of this press regulation says, “As it was noted in the 11th article of the “Nizamnama-e-Asasi” (National Constitution), only the government and the citizens of Afghanistan have the right of publishing news. p.2” (Nizamnama_Matbohat, 1924). Although this press regulation per se was an achievement, it restricted the media from publishing issues related to politics and issues related to the royal family, government officials, and other friendly countries. In terms of media quantity, however, this era is exemplary in Afghanistan's early stage of media history. During this time, except the Aman-e-Afghan outlet, which was the official government newspaper, Ershad-ul-Niswan, Saraj-ul-Atfal, Satara-E-Afghan, Pashtun Ghag, Anis, Urdo, Nasim Sahar, Etihad-E-Mashriqi, Etefaq-E-Islam, Baidar, Tolo E Afghan, Islah, Soorwat, Haqiqat, Ghazi, Nawrooz, and Majmoa -E- Saya were the other publications of this era (MizanOnline, 2016). As Table 1 list suggests, publications with diverse content, including news and special issues related to women, children, art and literature, economics, and culture, were published during this time.

Table 1. List of journalistic publications in the era of Amanullah Khan

Number	Name of Publication	Affiliation	Establishment Date
1	Amani-E- Afghan	Governmental official newspaper	1919
2	Etihad-e- Mashriqi	First provincial publication	1919
	Siraj-ul-Atfal	The first kids' exclusive publication in Afghanistan	1919
3	Muhref-e-Mahref	Publication of Ministry of Education	1919
4	Etifaq-e- Islam	Publication of Herat Province Education Directorate	1919
5	Sitara-e-Afghan	Provincial publication in Parwan province	1919
6	Afghan Newspaper	The first newspaper of the country in this era	1919
7	Ghazi	Provincial outlet in Khost	1921
8	Tolo-e-Afghan	Provincial publication in Kandahar	1921
9	Eblagh	Gazette in Kabul	1921

10	Ershad-u-Niswan	The first women's weekly publication of Afghanistan	1921
11	Majmoha-e-Askaria	Ministry of Defense (Ministry of War)	1921
12	Beidar	Provincial publication in Balkh province	1922
13	Eslah	Provincial publication in Kunduz province	1923
14	Surwat	Publication of Ministry of Finance	1924
15	Haqiqat	Publication in Kabul	1924
16	Ayeena-e-Urfan	Affiliated to the ministry of education	1924
17	Majmoha-e-Saya	Affiliated to the healthcare independent directorate	1927
18	Anis	The first independent newspaper in the country	1927
19	Nasim-e-Sahar	Private and Independent publication	1927
20	Pashtun Zhagh	Private and Independent publication	1928
21	Nawrooz	Private and Independent publication	1928
22	Jarida-E-Maktab	Affiliated to the Ministry of Education	1929

Source: (Ahang, 1970; Jafari, 2004); self-compiled table

The emergence of independent media is one of the other characteristics of the press in this era. Anis was the first independent newspaper that was founded in 1927, and Ghulam Mohiuddin Anis, the founder of this newspaper, is one of the prominent figures in Afghanistan's journalism history. Afterward, Nasim-e-Sahar and Nawrooz were established as other independent publications. As a result, a wide range of topics from governmental and non-governmental perspectives were published, enriching people's understanding and knowledge and enlarging their worldview about the situation of the country and abroad (Shadan, 2011).

Notwithstanding, in some cases government restricted independent news outlets that criticized the officials. For instance, about the police's complacency with the thieves and their mistreatment of people, a letter criticizing the officials was published in the Anis newspaper. Similarly, Nasim-e-Sahar published a critical article about a "First Class Minority" who talked about modernity and European values (indirectly criticizing the royal family and the King), criticizing them for going to Europe wearing modern and fashionable European clothes and spending the national budget. Expectedly, such critical

content was not acceptable to the government at that time and brought about more restrictions on media -Ghulam Mohiuddin Anis was arrested, and Nasim-e-Sahar newspaper was closed altogether (Shadan, 2011). In addition to independent newspapers, radio broadcasting in Afghanistan began for the first time in this era. In 1926, with the technical help of the German engineering team, the first radio broadcasting called Radio Kabul was inaugurated. However, soon after, due to political changes, it could not be broadcast until 1941 (Hussainzada, 2011).

Post-independence era: Political chaos and media recession

While King Amanullah Khan was modernizing the governmental system and trying to promote literacy and social development, particularly girls' education and women's rights, a group of religious people and tribal leaders did not approve of the king's initiatives and regarded them as anti-religious. In early 1929, when the rebellions started against Amanullah Khan's reformist government, the new era of post-independent media started. Under tribal and religious groups' pressure and rebellion, he was ousted, and Habibullah Kalakani –a religious person, took power. Regarding the media, the new government changed the “Aman-e-Afghan” newspaper, the previous government's official newspaper, to “Habibul Islam” as the new governmental newspaper. Furthermore, only a limited number of governmental and independent newspapers from the previous government were published in this era. After nine months, his government was toppled by Nadir Shah, who served as the minister of war in the Amanullah Khan government (Shadan, 2011).

Nadir Shah's infamous government started with the execution of the previous Amir, Habibullah Kalakani. During Nadir Shah's reign, similar to Amir Habibullah Kalakani's era, the media experienced serious setbacks. Anis, the prominent independent newspaper, was brought under the government's control, and the founder, Ghulam Mohiuddin Anis, was sent to jail (Gorzang, 2018). Similarly, in this era, a lot of prominent journalists and constitutionalists were imprisoned and killed, and the media came under government control. Nonetheless, the founding of Kabul University in 1932 can be regarded as one of the significant achievements of King Nadir Shah (BBC-Persian, 2013). In the media sector, however, historians believe this period did not have any achievements except for the establishment of a yearbook and an authors' association, in which many were sent to jail (Shadan, 2011).

Media landscape in forty years (1933-1973) of King Zaher Shah reign

The reign of King Zaher Shah can be divided into two mean eras. For the first three decades, the family elders governed the country on behalf of the king, and the second era

was when the king himself directly took power and exerted his influence as the monarch of the country. This classification is crucial in the sense that who ruled the country directly impacted the media situation.

Family oligarchy

Mohammad Zaher Shah, son of Nadir Shah, was only 19 years old when he was throned as the new King of Afghanistan after his father was shot dead by a high school student. The first three decades of his reign were a family oligarchy, where he was behind the scenes because of his young age, and the royal family's elders ran the government. Among the eight prime ministers he had during forty years of his reign, three influential prime ministers were from his family, each with their own policies toward the media. During his first prime minister, the King had no power, and in reality, Prime Minister Mohammad Hashim Khan, the uncle of the King (1929-1946), was running the state. He was highly hostile toward the media and could not accept minor criticism about his government; in his era, there was no free media in the country, and many authors and journalists were sent to jail. Nonetheless, during his rule, the Independent Office of the Press and Bakhtar News Agency in 1939 were founded (Nadiri, 2006). The next prime minister, Shah Mahmood Khan (1946-1953), was the brother of the previous prime minister; however, his policies toward the freedom of speech and political and citizens' rights differed from his brother's. In this era, for the first time, political outlets and political parties emerged in Afghanistan society; nonetheless, they were not sustained. See 3.1.2 By the next prime minister, Mohammad Daud Khan (1953 -1963), many intellectuals, authors, and journalists died in prisons, and media freedom faced repressive crackdowns and setbacks (Ahmadi, 2023).

Constitutional monarchy: Decade of democracy (1963-1973)

In 1964, King Zaher Shah directly took control of state power. He exerted his influence through the new constitution, which ordered a constitutional monarchy that limited the royal family members holding public office (Britannica, 2023). This last decade of Zaher Shah's reign is known as the decade of democracy. For the first time in Afghanistan's history, the national constitution explicitly explained the frontiers of the freedom of speech and press. According to the 31st article of this law:

Freedom of thought and expression is inviolable. Every Afghan has the right to express his thoughts in speech, in writing, in pictures, and by other means under the provisions of the law. Every Afghan has the right to print and publish ideas under the provisions of the law without submission in advance to the state's

authorities. The permission to establish and own public printing houses and to issue publications is granted only to the citizens and the state of Afghanistan under the provisions of the law. Establishing and operating public radio transmission and telecasting is the state's exclusive right (Afghanistan Constitution, 1964; Ghorzang, 2020).

Consequently, in 1965, the new press law was ratified, and the framework for media activities was defined. Contents going against the religion or the royal family were forbidden, as the law endorsed that “Matters implying defamation of the principles of Islam or defamatory to the King. Article 31st” should not be published. The 1965 Press Law had 55 articles and eight chapters. In this law, the general rules and regulations related to media activities, media ownership, people’s freedom of speech rights, and punitive provisions were included and explained (Ghorzang, 2020).

Table 2. Publications during the reign of King Zaher Shah (1933-1973) in Afghanistan

Governmental Publications	Private and Independent Publications	Political Publications
Adab	Afkar-e-Naw	Afghan Milat
Afghan Nasaji	Anis	Angar
Afghan Tebi	Anis-Atfal	Etihad-e-Mili
Afghanistan Bank	Atom	Gahiz
Alefba	Ayeena	Islam
Al-Falah	Barg-e-Sabz	Jabaha-e-Mili
Aryana	Beidar	Karwan
Badakhshan	Hadaf	Khaibar
Badani-Warzush	Karwan	Khalq
Balkh	Kumak	Massawat
Bazgar	Mardum	Nida-e-Khalq
Bikhan-o-Bidan	Milat	Parcham
Eslah	Nilab	Shula-e-Jaweed
Etihad-e-Baghlan	Paikar	Wuls
Helmand	Parwana	
Hewad	payam-e-Emroz	
Kabul times	Payam-e-Wujdan	
Kano Aw Sanayu	Ruzgar	
Pamir	Saba	
Paktia	Sada-e-Hawam	

Payam-e-Afghan	Sada-e-Milat	
Payam-e-Haq	Sapida Dam	
Pohani	Shukhak	
Sada-e-Milat	Tarjuman	
Sara-Miyasht		
Shariyat		
Sistan		
Storay		
Tahlim-o-Tarbiya		
Urdo		
Zhuwandon		

Source: (Nadiri, 2006; Jafari, 2004); self-compiled table.

Besides clarifying the frontiers of Journalism activities, this law in Article 9 comprehensively demonstrates the standards that must be met to run a publication. This Press Law indicates that non-state actors, political parties, and associations alike can have their publication under the law provision.

Moreover, the Press Administration Office, founded in 1940, was promoted to the Ministry of Press in 1963, further facilitating media affairs in the country (Fars, 2015). Consequently, a series of promising media activities emerged under the legal provisions of the national constitution and press law. The advent of the non-governmental press, particularly the revolutionary and political press, is one of the features of this era. Political parties emerged in light of the constitutional provision of civil liberty, whereby party-affiliated outlets also skyrocketed. Dozens of political, independent, and state-affiliated publications and outlets, including "Nida-e-Khalq", "Watan", "Karwan", "Payam Wujdan", "Payam Emroz", "Afghan Milat", "Etihad milli", "Wolus," "Ruzgar," "Sada-e-Hawam", "Saba", "Kumak", "Afkar Naw", "Hewad", "Anis", "Shokhak", "Kabul Times", "Paikar", "Jabha-e-Milli", "Biadar" and "Payam Haq" were published during this time. Based on this list (see Table 2), most of the publications were published in the capital, Kabul city, and only two provincial outlets, namely "Baidar" and "Payam Haq," were published in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat cities, respectively (Raheen, 2008).

Due to the country's low literacy level and the lack of efficient educational facilities in the other provinces beyond the capital and mainly in rural areas, it seems that except for the capital and big cities residents, the rest of the people did not benefit from these publications. Categorically, the publications of this era can be classified into two main groups: the political and independent outlets, which individuals or political parties owned, and the state-affiliated publications.

Political and independent press

After King Amanullah Khan, many of the first constitutionalist movement members who were educated elites, mainly authors and journalists, were imprisoned due to the unfavorable political environment and state oppression. The advent of the new political era during Prime Minister Shah Mahmood Khan's (1946-1953) government - when civil rights were relatively granted to citizens- educated and aspirational elites, shaped a new wave of intellectual circles, resulting in decades of democracy in Afghanistan (Shadan, 2014).

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) -a Marxist-Leninist movement- was one of the revolutionary groups that emerged. The publications affiliated with this political group, which was calling themselves a movement at that time, were called "Nidah-e-Khalq" (The Voice of the People) and Watan (the Homeland). Similarly, other political entities, such as the nationalist movement of "Wesh Zulmaiyan" (The Awakened Youths) Those influenced by the first constitutionalists had outlets called "Angar" and "Wolus". Kazim Ahang, the author of Afghanistan's Media History (1970), stated that the main themes covered by these outlets were progressive issues about independence and modernity, nullifying the traditional thoughts that seemed unpractical and laggard (Ahang, 1970). Also, he argued that among the abovementioned publications, "Nida-e-Khalq" has had more readers and extensive influence. As Ahang stated, compared to other publications such as "Wolus, Angar, and Watan", "Nidah-e-Khalq was more aggressive and radical in criticizing the government and officials (Shadan, 2014).

During this time, owing to the internal inefficiency of the monarchy system, rapid external change in global politics, and the collapse of colonialist powers, aspirational youths interested in the country's political ideologies started to publish their thoughts and spread their narratives. Under such circumstances, the leftist and rightist political movements penetrated educational institutions, governmental organizations, and particularly the armed forces, while their affiliated outlets provided and spread their narratives (Nadiri, 2006).

As the political movements infiltrated inside educational institutes and among the students at Kabul University, and consequently, the emergence of the Kabul University Student Union in the 1950s (Ruttig, 2020) the government saw the political parties and their outlets as a potential threat to the government. Hence, Firstly, the "Angar" publication was confiscated, and three months after the first issue of the "Nida-e-Khalq," this publication also ceased. Lastly, 11 months after the "Watan" outlet's first issue, it was also shut down. With this crackdown on outlets, almost all members of the "Nida-e-Khalq" and "Watan" publications were sent to prison (Shadan, 2014). Back then, for ten years, neither political parties were allowed nor their outlets could publish.

In the aftermath of the constitutional provisions of rights for civil and political liberty in 1964, the new independent publications such as “Payam Wujdan”, “Ruzgar”, “Saba”, “Kumak”, “Afkar Naw”, “Paikar”, “Biadar” and “Payam Haq” among others were published. At the same time, the first generation of comic publications emerged in this era: Tarjuman, a comic weekly founded in 1968, and subsequently, the Shukhak weekly was established in 1970 (Khanaqa, 2004). These publications covered issues for fun and sometimes satirically expressed public resentment and complaints about the situation. Similarly, the political parties, particularly the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), with greater freedom, emerged as an official political party in 1965, shaping the future of political power in the country. The Press of this era was famous for political diversity and hot debates on both sides of the political orbit: the leftist communist parties (Khalq, Parcham, and Shula-e-Jaweed) and the rightist (the Islamic movements known as the Mujahedeen). In this era, political satire and political and revolutionary poems were introduced in Afghanistan’s journalism. However, this diversity did not last long, and a military coup by Mohammad Daud Khan in 1973 ended the monarchy system in the country. Historians believe that although freedom of speech and media was officially endorsed in the National Constitution (1964) and Press Law (1965), the government never applied the law as needed, and the political environment for the political press did not remain stable (Nadiri, 2006).

Governmental newspapers and publications

As Table 2 shows, in this era, almost all of the governmental bodies had their affiliated publications. The state-affiliated media in this era were more powerful than political and independent media; they had modern printing systems imported from foreign countries. During King Zahir Shah, “Hewad” a synonym of the “Watan” (the Homeland), was the official Pashtu publication of the country, which covered diverse topics from politics, economics, society, and cultural issues. This newspaper was founded in 1957 and is still one of the governmental outlets covering news and other topics from a governmental point of view in the Pashtu language (Shadan, 2014). Also, Kabul Times, the first governmental newspaper in English, was established in 1972; this newspaper covered international issues and published national news for international agencies. A wide range of topics were published in this newspaper; Kabul Times is still the government's official English-language news outlet in Afghanistan (KabulTimes, 2023)

Moreover, the Anis newspaper, the first independent outlet -founded in 1927 and later merged into the government publication system during Nadir Khan's reign- in this era, under the provision of the new media law, was allowed to continue its publication independently. As a reformist and elite outlet, this newspaper has been instrumental in

defending people's rights and has played a crucial role in Afghanistan's free media landscape. Nonetheless, having many ups and downs, it is currently a governmental newspaper under the direct control of the Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan. It publishes in a manner that is aligned with government policies, mainly in the Persian language.

Besides newspapers, magazines were also famous among the readers in this era. Afghanistan Magazine, founded in the 1960s, covered and published articles about the country's development. However, by far and large, *Zhuwandon* has been one of the most famous magazines of this era -which projects the country's image and partial achievements (Khanaga, 2004). This magazine was founded in 1949 and was published up to the first time the Taliban took over in 1996. Having high-quality content with a fashionable paperback design, this magazine has been one of the most-read magazines of that era. The King's plan for establishing a modernized Western-style liberal democracy can be seen through this magazine; similarly, in terms of content richness, this magazine was exemplary at that time and later during the 80s. The content of this magazine was in line with the government's policy for modernizing the country and establishing a modern and prosperous society (Withlock, 2018). Additionally, in this era, the initial attempts were made to import television technology but could not be achieved.

Forty years of King Zahir Shah's rule, besides achievements in terms of legalizing the framework of journalism and modernizing the printing machinery, had severe setbacks, which historians criticize. Critics believe that until 1964, when King Zahir Shah directly exerted influence in governance, the family members and relatives of King Zahir Shah had repressive policies toward the political actors, intellectuals, and journalists. Still, after 1965, when the constitutional monarchy regime was in place, the role of the laws remained limited and only on paper (Shadan, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan's media has a long history of 150 years. Monarchy and constitutional monarchy political systems include 100 hundred of this history, a long history with limited and unstable achievements. Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani introduced the idea of media activities to the country, and the first publication in the country, called *Shams-u-Nahar*, influenced by his notions, was founded in 1873 during the rule of Amir Shir Ali Khan. However, because of the Anglo-Afghans war and the impacts of the British on Amir's decisions at that time, the outlet was stopped, and for almost three decades, there was no media in the country. In 1906, the new publication, *Saraj-ul-Akhbar*, was founded after the first issue was suppressed, but in 1911, it revived and sowed the seed of modern media in Afghanistan. Although, after *Saraj-ul-Akhbar*, the media activity in Afghanistan

did not stop anymore, compared to the achievements and developments of the modern media in the region seemed to lag far behind.

King Amanullah Khan's era is considered one of the golden ages of Afghanistan. In this era, the first media regulation was ratified, the first independent newspaper was founded, and radio as a mass media was introduced in the country. Nonetheless, after he was ousted from power, the successors for almost three decades could not effectively safeguard his achievements and step forward for enhancement. After 1965, when the new constitution and media law were adopted, the media landscape changed to some extent; however, the objective of a modernized liberal constitutional monarchy in the country was not realized.

This study tried to follow a chronological order and briefly address the research void about the one century of media history in Afghanistan in English. Being introductory in nature, this article generally observed the media situation while each period's details were not adequately covered, which can be considered a shortcoming. Regarding the content and journalistic features in each era, there are ample grounds to conduct systematic and empirical studies. Future research can use the chronological order proposed in this research to concentrate on the commonalities and differences of each period in terms of the type of genre, the language, and journalistic professionalism. Similarly, based on content richness theory, there are a multitude of angles to explore media content, a subfield that has rarely been tapped in Afghanistan's media. Future research can employ structured discourse and content analysis of media content that has not yet been touched.

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