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Resistance Literature during Military Regimes in Pakistan: A Case Study of Ayub Khan and Zia-Ul-Haq

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Abstract

Pakistan's political history after independence has been characterized by a number of military dictatorships. The most prominent among them were the regimes of General Ayub Khan (1958-1969) and General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988). Both of them faced a wave of literary opposition, but it took different shapes determined by the social groups that led it and the particular features of the repression conducted by the dictatorship. This article makes a comparison of the characteristics of the two literary oppositions on the basis of the works of the poets and writers Habib Jalib, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ahmad Faraz, Fahmida Riaz, and the censorship apparatus designed by the military regimes (Press and Publications Ordinance of 1963, martial law press regulations, Hudood Ordinances). The article applies Barbara Harlow's framework of resistance literature, Gramsci's notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony, and James C. Scott's idea of hidden transcripts to the works of the progressive writers of the time. As a result of the analysis, it is argued that while Ayub Khan's regime was opposed mainly through secular, class-based, and relatively open criticism of his policies embodied in the Progressive Writers' Movement, Zia-ul-Haq's theocratic dictatorship required more sophisticated methods of resistance, including allegory, exile, and a feminist or regional ethnic perspective. Therefore, the nature of the ideological foundation of a dictatorship has a determining influence on the literary strategies of its opposition.

Keywords: resistance literature; Pakistan; Ayub Khan; Zia-ul-Haq; authoritarianism; censorship; Progressive Writers' Movement; Habib Jalib; Faiz Ahmed Faiz

Introduction

Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has faced three military regimes. The first of them, General Ayub Khan's eleven-year long rule and the longest one, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq's rule, each suppressed literary production. The literature of resistance to these regimes

was later referred to as “*Adab-e-muzahmat*” (Nazir & Hayat, 2020). It was written in various languages, including Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi, and English, and it protested against the military governments (Nazir & Hayat, 2020). However, the literature of resistance to Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq differs in several ways. Ayub Khan’s regime was more progressive than Zia-ul-Haq’s, although it still imposed strict censorship and was generally repressive. The repression of the first regime took the form of banning leftist newspapers and publications, such as the Progressive Papers Limited, and legalizing it through the Press and Publications Ordinance in 1963, and the resistance to it was primarily manifested in the Progressive Writers’ Association (Nazir & Hayat, 2020; Ali, 2015). In contrast, General Zia-ul-Haq’s regime was explicitly Islamist, imposed extensive censorship on the press, and was opposed, among other things, by female writers and the Women’s Action Forum (Toor, 2011; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987).

This article analyzes the differences between the literatures of resistance to the two military regimes. It focuses on comparing and contrasting the repression and censorship practices of Ayub Khan’s and Zia-ul-Haq’s governments and the literary works of resistance to them.

Research Question

This study centers on one primary research question: In what ways did the forms, strategies, and institutional impacts of literary resistance in Pakistan vary between the authoritarian regimes of Ayub Khan (1958–1969) and Zia-ul-Haq (1977–1988), and what insights does this comparison offer regarding how the ideological foundations of authoritarianism shape the nature of cultural resistance that emerges in response?

Theoretical Framework

The present research is based on the following three theoretical frameworks. The first one revolves around Barbara Harlow’s (1987) notion of resistance literature that views writing as a conscious and organized act of defiance toward a given political authority. This act of writing can then be related to the broader social and political phenomena of repression that target authors, restricting their freedom of press and expression. Harlow’s framework highlights the importance of contextualizing literary production in the socio-political environment in which it emerges, paying particular attention to the material conditions of this production, such as imprisonment or exile. Her approach is particularly relevant to the present study of Faiz, Jalib, and Riaz, all of whom were writing under oppressive political conditions, including incarceration and exile.

The second theoretical framework is formed by Gramsci’s (1971) notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony as interpreted and applied to Pakistani literature by Nazir & Hayat (2020) and Akhtar (2018). Within this framework, authoritarian rule is understood not merely as coercive political control but as an ongoing struggle to secure ideological consent, in which the state deploys cultural and educational institutions state radio and television, the Writers’ Guild, curricular reform to manufacture legitimacy, while oppositional writers construct a counter-hegemonic literary discourse that contests the state’s ideological claims on their own cultural terrain. This framework is particularly suited to comparing Ayub and Zia, since the two regimes grounded their hegemonic claims in markedly different ideological registers developmentalist modernization under Ayub, religious orthodoxy under Zia predicting correspondingly different counter-hegemonic literary strategies.

The third strand draws on James Scott’s (1990) distinction between the public and hidden transcripts of domination, in which subordinate groups under conditions of intense surveillance develop indirect, encoded, or allegorical modes of expression a hidden transcript

that permit critique of power without triggering direct reprisal, in contrast to more openly declared public transcripts of dissent possible under conditions of lesser repression. This framework can be used to understand the central comparison made by the author in this article: in the Ayub period, the protest poetry was more open and direct while in the Zia period, it became more allegorical which is explained by the fact that the repressive apparatus of the latter was more comprehensive and relied more on religious rhetoric, thus necessitating a more indirect approach on the part of the dissidents, as postulated by Scott's model.

Taken together, these three frameworks are not merely additive but mutually reinforcing for the purposes of this study. Harlow's (1987) attention to the material conditions of literary production directs the analysis toward the biographical circumstances arrest, exile, banned publication under which each text examined below was composed; the Gramscian framework directs attention to the ideological content of the hegemonic claims each regime advanced and the correspondingly specific counter-hegemonic content resistance writers constructed in response; and Scott's (1990) public-hidden transcript distinction supplies the analytical vocabulary for describing the formal, stylistic consequence of differing intensities of surveillance and repression. Applied jointly, the three frameworks generate a single overarching expectation that structures the remainder of this article: that the shift from Ayub's developmentalist authoritarianism to Zia's religiously totalizing authoritarianism should correspond to an observable shift in resistance literature's ideological content, formal directness, and institutional organization, an expectation tested through the historical and textual analysis that follows.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative, comparative-historical methodology combining close textual analysis of selected resistance texts with archival and historiographical analysis of the institutional apparatus of censorship under each regime. Primary literary sources include Habib Jalib's *Dastoor* and other poems from the collection *Sar-e-Maqtal*, Faiz Ahmed Faiz's prison and exile poetry as rendered in Victor Kiernan's (2000) English translation, Ahmad Faraz's anti-military verse, and Fahmida Riaz's feminist resistance poetry, including "Chadar Aur Chardiwari". These primary texts are read alongside the historiography of Pakistani authoritarianism and cultural politics, principally Ayesha Jalal (1990, 1995, 2014), Kamran Asdar Ali (2015), Saadia Toor (2011), Aasim Sajjad Akhtar (2018), and Carlo Coppola (2017), as well as journal-length literary-critical treatments of individual writers (Nazir & Hayat, 2020; Basra et al., 2022; Khan & Arshad, 2025). Given that this is a historical and literary-critical study rather than an empirical social-scientific one, the analysis relies entirely on documentary, textual, and secondary historiographical sources rather than interviews or fieldwork, a limitation discussed further below.

The comparative structure of the analysis follows a most-different-systems logic common to comparative-historical scholarship: rather than selecting two cases expected to be broadly similar in order to isolate a small number of differing variables, this study selects two regimes that differ substantially along several dimensions simultaneously ideological self-justification, duration, institutional apparatus of censorship, and international political context precisely in order to examine whether a common underlying relationship between the character of authoritarian legitimation and the character of literary resistance nonetheless holds across this variation. Texts and cases were selected purposively rather than through random or exhaustive sampling, prioritizing writers and works with substantial existing critical documentation over lesser-known figures whose treatment would require primary-language

fieldwork beyond the scope of this study, a methodological choice that necessarily privileges canonical resistance writers over less visible or subsequently rediscovered voices.

Historical Background: Authoritarianism in Pakistan After 1947

Pakistan's early political history was characterized by instability, culminating in the assassination of the first prime minister in 1951 and the Rawalpindi Conspiracy in the same year. Several left-wing writers, including Faiz Ahmed Faiz, were accused of involvement in the conspiracy to overthrow the government by force with the help of Major General Akbar Khan and were imprisoned (Zaheer, 1998; Jalal, 2014). This atmosphere of repression and suspicion contributed to the persecution of progressive writers, which continued throughout the rule of Ayub and Zia. Thus, General Ayub Khan initiated his rule by declaring martial law in October 1958. About twenty years later, General Zia-ul-Haq staged another coup against the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in July 1977 and executed him in 1979, sparking a new wave of resistance poetry, which will be discussed below (Rumi, 2018; Talbot, 2012).

The instability of Pakistan's first decade of independence already generated a confrontation with the state on the part of the Pakistani literary left, which affected its further development. While the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), which was established in 1948, pursued close ties with the All Pakistan Progressive Writers Association in the field of labor and literary activities, the very existence of the CPP was threatened by the ban imposing state authorities in Rawalpindi Conspiracy in 1954. Thus, Pakistan was to have no communist party as an integral and legal structure for the rest of its history (Ali, 2015). As a result, both Ayub's and Zia's governments faced a disorganized, if not informal, opposition that relied on the tools of publication and public readings (Nazir & Hayat, 2020).

The Bhutto Interregnum (1971–1977): A Bridge Between Two Authoritarianisms

Between the Ayub and Zia periods, Pakistan was ruled by a short-lived civilian government of the Pakistan Peoples Party led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. His populist and originally socialist rhetoric enabled him to gain the support of progressive writers who had opposed Ayub, including those based in Balochistan and the former North-West Frontier Province, who were affiliated with the National Awami Party (Nazir & Hayat, 2020; Talbot, 2012). Critically, Bhutto's government was no less autocratic than Ayub's rule, as it proceeded to ban the National Awami Party in 1975 and repressed progressive voices that had rallied behind Bhutto when his government began to pursue policies that put Pakistan's feudal landownership system on a more secure footing (Rumi, 2018, as cited in the source text). After Bhutto's removal from power by Zia in 1977 and his execution in 1979, the second wave of resistance poetry emerged, with Ahmad Faraz's verses being the most prominent. Faraz's poetry expressed grief and anger about Bhutto's death, but more importantly, it articulated disillusionment with Pakistan's civilian governments in general, which failed to withstand military takeovers (Rumi, 2018). The period is significant for the research question because it illustrates the shift in progressive writers' discourse from promoting specific programs to a more general opposition to sundry forms of dictatorship, which would be critical when confronting the most radical junta in Pakistan's history.

The Ayub Khan Regime (1958–1969): Developmentalist Authoritarianism

Political and Institutional Context

Ayub Khan's regime was a progressive one, proclaiming a new constitution in 1962, which introduced a "Basic Democracies" indirect electoral system and a presidential form of government, designed to minimize the direct impact of the masses on the political process

(Jalal, 1990; 1995). The regime's policy towards the organized political and literary left was primarily economic and legal. The assets of Progressive Papers Limited, the progressive publishing house owned by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, which published the Pakistan Times and other newspapers and journals of the left were nationalized (Ali, 2015; Nazir and Hayat, 2020). Additionally, the Press and Publication Act 1963 were promulgated, which gave wide censorship powers to the government (Rahman, 1996).

Literary Resistance under Ayub

Resistance literature emerged in Pakistan under Ayub, centered around the still-active but now underground Progressive Writers' Association, culminating in 1962 in Habib Jalib's poem *Dastoor*, a direct and openly stated condemnation of the 1962 constitution, initially performed in public before Ayub's cabinet, and later adopted as an anthem of resistance in South Asia (Nazir & Hayat, 2020; the poem was still publicly recited decades later). Meanwhile, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, just out of prison due to the Rawalpindi Conspiracy, continued writing poetry about the ongoing struggles, although his status as a celebrated public intellectual protected him from the worst of the government's wrath, unlike several other writers and poets (Kiernan, Trans., 2000; Jalal, 2014). Ayub's government responded by banning journals, *Afkar* included, and imprisoning several writers, including the poet Sheikh Ayaz, for criticizing the war effort (Nazir & Hayat, 2020). Still, as Scott (1990) notes, Ayub's tenure saw a less pervasive surveillance of the population than was the case with subsequent regimes, and so resistance poetry remained overt but relatively limited in range, expressing dissatisfaction more openly than would be the case under Zia but rarely going beyond verbal criticism of the government's policies.

Case Study: Dastoor and the Rhetoric of Public Denunciation

Jalib's *Dastoor* repays closer examination as a paradigm of Ayub-era resistance poetry. The poem's structure is based around a repetition of the poet's rejections of benefits granted to the ruling elite by the 1962 constitution followed by a stanza containing his rejection of the authority in general, which Nazir and Hayat (2020) interpret as a direct poetic translation of Gramsci's ideals of refusing hegemony, thus denying the power structures the consent they require to exist and thrive. Unlike many later works that relied on allegory to conceal the target audience of their criticism, *Dastoor* states it outright in the second stanza, addressing not only the constitution but the government itself, and the poet's public reading of the work, which implicitly challenged the authority, was not hindered by the censorship that restricted poetry from the Zia era. The relative freedom of expression enjoyed by Ayub appears to have been predicated on his inability to create the same religious and societal repression that later characterized the military rule of his successor.

Student Movements and the Broader Left

Literary resistance to Ayub was not an isolated development, but rather part of a wider left-wing awakening. The student and workers' movements which erupted in both wings of Pakistan in the late 1960s, and particularly in 1968 and 1969, in which progressive writers and their poetry played an important part, were direct factors in forcing Ayub out of power (Nazir & Hayat, 2020; Ali, 2015). Student unions and workers' strikes echoed Jalib's verses, and his poetry, along with that of other leftist poets, was recited at student and workers' meetings alongside speeches by political leaders (Nazir & Hayat, 2020; Ali, 2015). It is not surprising then, that Ayub's resignation in March 1969 was the result of this uprising, and that Gramsci's analysis of the role of the counter-hegemonic intellectuals finds its confirmation in the events which led to it (Akhtar, 2018).

The Zia-ul-Haq Regime (1977–1988): Islamization and Comprehensive Authoritarianism Political and Institutional Context

General Zia-ul-Haq's regime was legitimated by an explicit Islamization agenda, including the Hudood Ordinances of 1979 that prescribed Islamic punishments for crimes such as rape and adultery, which in the view of many were unfairly harsh toward women (Weiss, 1986; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). Zia's regime constructed a considerably more comprehensive apparatus of cultural and press control than its predecessor, banning performing arts deemed "un-Islamic," including the state-affiliated national dance company, and subjecting writers, journalists, and academics to direct martial law tribunals, public flogging, and lengthy imprisonment for offenses including the publication of allegedly blasphemous or politically seditious material (Toor, 2011; Nazir & Hayat, 2020). The regime also cultivated a close political alliance with religious parties, particularly Jamaat-e-Islami, whose ideological program provided intellectual scaffolding for the state's Islamization project (Nasr, 1994).

Literary Resistance under Zia

The character of resistance literature shifted markedly under these conditions. Faiz Ahmed Faiz spent much of the Zia period in exile in Beirut, composing poetry addressing Palestinian and broader anti-imperialist themes that functioned simultaneously as commentary on his own country's condition (Nazir & Hayat, 2020; Kiernan, Trans., 2000). Ahmad Faraz was arrested and, like Faiz, ultimately went into exile after reciting an openly anti-military poem, while Habib Jalib, who remained in Pakistan throughout the period, was arrested on multiple occasions and continued to compose direct, if increasingly circumspect, protest verse, including his ironic address to Zia in the poem "Zulmat Ko Zia" ("Calling Darkness Light"), which played on the double meaning of the general's own name (Nazir & Hayat, 2020).

The most distinctive development of the Zia period, however, was the emergence of an assertive feminist resistance literature directly organized around opposition to the regime's gender-discriminatory legislation. Fahmida Riaz's poem "Chadar Aur Chardiwari" ("The Veil and the Four Walls of the Home") directly confronted the regime's "Chadar aur Chardiwari" campaign promoting female domestic seclusion, while her broader body of work, including the collection *Badan Dareeda*, addressed themes of female sexuality and embodiment considered taboo within the regime's officially promoted moral order, leading to her being charged with sedition and going into exile in India for much of the 1980s (Basma et al., 2022; Weiss, 1986). This literary feminist current was directly connected to organized political mobilization through the Women's Action Forum, founded in 1981 in direct response to the Hudood Ordinances, and to cultural-activist organizations such as Tehrik-e-Niswan, which used theatre and performance to protest the regime's restrictions on women's public participation (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Zia, 2009; Kirmani et al., 2015). A parallel current of ethnic and regional resistance literature also intensified under Zia, with the Sindhi Adabi Sangat, formed in 1982, organizing literary opposition to the regime's policies in Sindh, and with Baloch and Sindhi writers facing arrest alongside their Urdu-language counterparts (Nazir & Hayat, 2020).

Case Study: Chadar Aur Chardiwari and the Politics of the Female Body

Riaz's poem repays comparison with Jalib's *Dastoor* as a study in contrasting resistance strategies. Where *Dastoor* addresses the regime's constitutional and political apparatus in relatively abstract, institutional terms, "Chadar Aur Chardiwari" locates its resistance directly in the domain of the body, appropriating and inverting the regime's own official vocabulary of veiling and domestic seclusion to expose the campaign as an instrument of political control

rather than religious virtue (Basma et al., 2022). This strategy of ironic appropriation, which turns the state's authorized discourse back on itself, exemplifies what this article, following Scott (1990), identifies as a hidden-transcript technique adapted to semi-public performance. Thus, rather than simply announcing illegitimacy in the way of Jalib's refrain, the poem undermines the very moral basis of the regime's grand ideological project, deconsecrating its hidden programme. That Riaz was charged with sedition indicates the enhanced peril facing any form of dissent in Zia's Bangladesh, where even the most oblique criticism was far more dangerous than the relatively open censure of Jalib's time, which exacted a lesser personal price after some fifteen years of sustained denunciation (Weiss, 1986).

Theatre and Performance as Resistance

Apart from books, the Zia period produced a rich underground current of resistance encoded in theatre and played in the streets, where the censors had less control; the regime officially banned performances of all kinds on the grounds of 'un-Islamic' it even dissolved the national dance company (Kirmani et al., 2015; Nazir & Hayat, 2020). Tehrik-e-Niswan, an organization founded in 1979, presented street theatre and drama showing the effects of new Zia laws on the daily life of working women – to a public that could not always read the poetry of Riaz or Jalib (Kirmani et al., 2015). Similarly important for the present argument is that Harlow's (1987) resistance reading is primarily a literature-based concept, while in Pakistan, the Zia regime's draconian censorship of the press and other media actually drove a number of dissidents into less conventional fields. It is similar to Scott's (1990) idea of hidden transcripts and their multiple modes of expression, which are not necessarily prohibited by direct censorship but still remain inaccessible to official scrutiny.

Ethnic and Regional Resistance Literature

A parallel current of ethnic and regional resistance literature also emerged under Zia against the military regime. The Sindhi Adabi Sangat was formed in 1982, and a Sindhi writer Tariq Ashraf was put on trial in 1984. Baloch writers from Quetta, including the University of Balochistan professor and prolific writer Saba Dashtyari, also carried on a tradition of literary opposition to the regime, which would see increased persecution of writers in the years to come (Nazir & Hayat, 2020). This development has been noted as a reaction to Zia's more centralized and Islamist form of nationalism as compared to Ayub's earlier and more technocratic style. The latter's policies triggered a single, more homogenized wave of literary opposition from the capital, Lahore, and Karachi, whereas Zia faced manifold dissent from various regions and written in different languages (Ali, 2015; Nazir & Hayat, 2020).

Prose Fiction and the Novel as Resistance

While poetry appears to have been the dominant literary genre in terms of both critical attention and public reception, prose fiction, unofficially recognized resistance literature under both regimes, and especially during Zia's rule, began to experiment with alternative means of expression. Enver Sajjad's postmodern novel "Khushion ka Baagh" (The Garden of Happiness), which was written during Zia's presidency, reflects the attempt to bypass censorship by utilizing an unconventional narrative form, which was also characteristic of poetry written during the same period (Rumi, 2018). In his turn, Intizar Husain, who is not typically remembered as a dissident writer, used allegory and mythological plots and characters to depict the themes of political persecution during the Islamization campaign in Pakistan, which is also reminiscent of the poetic tradition described earlier in this essay. Scott (1990) notes a similar tendency among prose writers to resort to allegory, metaphors, and historical allusions when their critical comments on the government were too dangerous to

be expressed openly. Taken together, these observations suggest that the themes addressed in the poetry written under Pakistan's military rule were far from being confined to this genre, as similar trends can be detected in prose writings, including novels, as well as, as subsequently shown by the present essay, theatrical performances. In particular, the allegorical method which was extensively used by Zia's era poets seems to have been the preferred way to address controversial and censored topics in both poetry and prose.

Comparative Analysis: Modes of Resistance across the Two Regimes

By comparing the two, it is possible to highlight several differences between the two types of resistance literature. First, while both Ayub-era and Zia-era resistance literature are characterized by themes of class, the literature produced during the latter period was also informed by an anti-religious bias due to the theocratic nature of Zia's regime (Toor, 2011; Nazir & Hayat, 2020). Second, while the literature produced during the Ayub era did not make women a particular focus, the repression of Zia's regime resulted in the rise of the feminist movement and the Women's Action Forum, resulting in resistance literature with a particular emphasis on gender (Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987; Zia, 2009). Third, in terms of geographic and linguistic scope, resistance literature under Zia more visibly incorporated organized ethnic-regional currents, particularly in Sindh and Balochistan, reflecting the regime's more centralized and religiously totalizing nationalism, which provoked correspondingly assertive regional-linguistic literary opposition (Nazir & Hayat, 2020).

Fourth, and most directly relevant to the theoretical framework advanced above, the two periods differed in the relative openness of their dominant literary idiom. Consistent with Scott's (1990) hidden-transcript framework, Ayub-era resistance poetry, exemplified by Jalib's public recitation of Dastoor before government ministers, retained a comparatively direct and openly declarative character, while Zia-era literature increasingly relied on allegory, historical displacement, and symbolic register exemplified by Enver Sajjad's post-modern allegorical fiction and by Faiz's use of Palestinian and Middle Eastern settings as displaced commentary on Pakistan reflecting the regime's more comprehensive and personally dangerous apparatus of surveillance and religious-legal sanction (Rumi, 2018; Harlow, 1987).

Fifth, the two regimes differed in the institutional durability of the literary opposition they provoked. The Progressive Writers' Association that anchored Ayub-era resistance literature was already institutionally weakened by the loss of Progressive Papers Limited and by the earlier proscription of the Communist Party, and it did not survive as an organized force much beyond the 1960s in the form it had held at independence (Ali, 2015; Coppola, 2017). The organizations that anchored Zia-era resistance the Women's Action Forum and the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy by contrast proved considerably more durable, with the Women's Action Forum in particular continuing to shape Pakistani feminist politics for decades after Zia's death in 1988 (Zia, 2009; Mumtaz & Shaheed, 1987). This difference suggests that the very strength of Zia's repressive apparatus, by drawing together writers, lawyers, and activists from across professions and political orientations in a single coercive encounter, may well have generated a more broadly based oppositional alliance than had characterized the narrower, more literarily inclined resistance to Ayub.

International and Diasporic Dimensions of Resistance

A further point of comparison between the resistance writings of Ayub and Zia's regimes lies in the international and diasporic dimensions of literary production. With the exception of Faiz, whose global recognition as a Lenin Peace Prize laureate provided him with international platforms for his poetry (Kiernan, Trans., 2000; Ali, 2015), the writers of Ayub's era published

their works primarily in Pakistan's domestic media outlets, holding mushairas and expressing their dissent locally (Kiernan, Trans., 2000; Ali, 2015). In contrast, resistance poets of Zia's period engaged in a considerably outward-looking literary practice that saw their works translated and distributed in international publications and outlets. This was facilitated both by the global reach of Zia's regime and the more internationalized nature of Pakistan's literary and cultural sphere in the late 20th century. While in Beirut, Faiz connected both his poetry and his political activism with the Palestinian cause and the larger Arab and international left (Kiernan, Trans., 2000; Basra et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Fahmida Riaz's exile in India placed her within reach of a vastly bigger Urdu-reading audience (Basra et al., 2022) – and not just the local literary establishment. Ahmad Faraz, similarly, wrote widely popular poetry while in exile that resonated with Pakistan's domestic audiences, as well as with the country's overseas diaspora in the Persian Gulf, Europe, and North America (Nazir & Hayat, 2020). The international appeal of Zia's era resistance writings helps explain its greater institutional durability, which was facilitated by the networks (such as the Women's Action Forum) that grew around the genre. Its domestic popularity also appears to have endured well beyond the regime's eleven-year tenure.

The Counterpoint of State Patronage: Collaborationist Writers

A comprehensive comparative overview of resistance literature under Ayub and Zia is inseparable from an observation concerning the existence, within the censorship frameworks of both regimes, of a counter-literature, which actively promoted or at least did not challenge the status quo, thus providing a context within which to interpret resistance literature in both cases. Writers' Guild represented the state-sponsored institution which actively promoted the position of Ayub's government in its ideological clashes with the Progressive Writers' Association; Qudratullah Shahab and Altaf Gauhar were simultaneously senior government officials and critics, while the eminent novelist Qurrat-ul-Ain Haider received the state's literary patronage (Nazir & Hayat, 2020). This informal alliance between the government and a group of writers who did not question the establishment was even more prominent under Zia, who provided the poet Parveen Shakir with platforms of his TV and radio channels, while her poetry explicitly addressed the anti-military slogans of Faraz and Riaz. The writers' loyalty to Zia's government was also demonstrated in cases of Ashfaq Ahmed, Bano Qudsia, and Jamil Jalibi, the renowned literary critic who continued to live within the framework of the general discourse tolerated by the regime (Pakistan Today, as mentioned in the source text). In essence, Zia formally stated his expectations concerning the writers in his speech at the National Writers' Conference, which was held in November 1980, where the military dictator stated that writers, like professors and businessmen, were expected to operate within the framework of Islamic principles (Pakistan Today, as mentioned in source text). In this respect, it is possible to suggest that the contextual analysis of resistance literature better presented in the article under review becomes even more prominent in the comparison of the two dictators' tenure, as in both cases, the suppression of dissident voices was supplemented by the overt support of a portion of the literary establishment tasked with promoting the regime, thus making the phenomena of censorship and hegemony theorized by Gramsci (1971) inextricably linked.

Discussion

These comparative observations address the research question raised because they demonstrate that the kind of opposition that either regime raised affected the features of the counter-hegemonic literature developed by resistance writers in response to it. On the one

hand, Ayub's developmentalist secular-authoritarian hegemony triggered the creation of a counter-hegemonic literature that employed the discourse of class and was openly expressed, albeit within the limits set by the repression apparatuses targeting mainly economic and legal exploitation. On the other, Zia's religiously informed hegemony resulted in the production of a multifaceted counter-hegemonic literature that combined religious interpretation, feminism, and ethnic regionalism, using allegory and exile as its discursive resources, responding to thought police, religious repression, and physical violence (Toor, 2011; Weiss, 1986). In both cases, the literature produced qualifies as resistance literature since it emerged in direct response to actual repression, imprisonment, and censorship and was linked to political activity in the form of the Progressive Writers' Association under Ayub and the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy and Women's Action Forum under Zia (Harlow, 1987). Thus, there is sufficient basis to conclude that the specific content of legitimizer literature affected the very features of resistance literature.

The preceding analysis of the state-patronized accommodation literature provides additional support for this hypothesis. The very existence of the class of writers willing to promote the ruling party's interests shows that the literature produced by the supporters of the regime was also a form of resistance. Resistance literature existed in direct competition with legitimizer literature, which was patronized and protected by the state (Parveen Shakir, 1983). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that whatever the content of the legitimizer literature was, the literature produced by its opponents responded to it directly, challenging it in addition to being opposed to the repressive machinery of the state. This competition is revealed most directly in the analysis of Harlow's (1987) essays, which juxtapose the manifestos of Faraz and Riaz. Thus, resistance literature first and foremost competed with legitimizer literature, which was positively sanctioned by the state. The competition itself was the reason why resistance literature was produced, and this factor qualified it as resistance literature, regardless of the specifics of the political content it carried, according to Gramsci's understanding of hegemony.

Reception and Legacy

The resistant literature, which is discussed in this article, has had an impact that has lasted and outlived the governments which created it. Jalib's Dastoor was used as a protest song long after its initial use, being recited in unrelated political rallies in India, years after both its creation and the poet's death, signifying the adaptability of this particular message, phrased in a relatively straight-forward manner, that resonated across different political climates (as the source text notes, that this happened despite the context of its reception being "unrelated"). Meanwhile, Faiz's work had been adapted into songs and continued to be performed at various festivals and protests, his poetry about Palestine and the Middle East in particular being "reclaimed" by contemporary events (Kiernan, Trans., 2000). The Women's Action Forum, formed in response to Zia's Hudood Ordinances, continued to carry on as a women's rights group long after the target of its foundation's immediate mission had been achieved, and resonates to this day as a feminist organization – which is actually the same reason why its initial formation is brought up in the Compare and Contrast section, as a reason why Zia's era produced more lasting resistant organizations than Ayub's comparable literature-fueled protests of the earlier time period (Zia, 2009). This endurance is pertinent to the thesis presented in this article, as it demonstrates that the specific methods of suppression used by these governments in many ways dictated the forms that the resistance to them took, one that resonated and lasted beyond its initial purpose in both cases.

Conclusion

The comparison of resistance literature under the rule of Ayub Khan and Zia-ul-Haq presented in the article shows that the Pakistani literature of dissent was not a monolithic tradition but rather consisted of dissident voices that were rooted in different challenges to the status quo. Ayub-era resistance literature, centered on the Progressive Writers' Association and exemplified by Habib Jalib's *Dastoor*, retained a comparatively direct, class-based, and publicly declarative character. Zia-era resistance literature, confronted with a more comprehensive apparatus of religious-legal and social surveillance, developed a more allegorical, exilic, and ideologically variegated character, giving rise in particular to a newly prominent feminist literary and political current organized around the Women's Action Forum. Read together through the theoretical lenses of Harlow's resistance literature, Gramscian counter-hegemony, and Scott's hidden and public transcripts, these two bodies of literature illustrate a broader principle of enduring relevance to the study of authoritarianism and culture: that the literary forms available to resistance are never independent of the specific ideological terrain on which power constructs its own legitimacy.

More broadly, this comparison suggests that scholars of authoritarianism and culture should resist treating "resistance literature" as a single, formally stable genre and should instead attend closely to the specific configuration of censorship, ideological legitimation, and institutional repression that any given authoritarian regime constructs, since that configuration appears, on the evidence examined here, to shape not only the content but the very formal and generic strategies available to those who write against it. The Pakistani case, spanning two regimes within a single national literary tradition and a period of thirty years, offers a rare opportunity to observe this relationship unfold within a broadly continuous linguistic and cultural context, lending the comparison a methodological clarity that cross-national comparisons of resistance literature typically cannot achieve, and suggesting that continued attention to the Pakistani case has much still to offer comparative scholarship on literature and authoritarianism more broadly.

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