

MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GROWTH OF TELEVISION NEWS MEDIA IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN WITH REFERENCE TO JAMMU AND KASHMIR

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Abstract

The notion of globalization transformed the growth and trajectory of television news media where the growth in media systems in one country influenced the evolution in the neighboring country for providing a competitive discourse especially in times of mediatized conflicts. The role of media has been pivotal right from the beginning of the conflict between India and Pakistan on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir where the role of news media has transformed over the period of history and growth in one country exerted a considerable impact on the other where both the media systems have pushed other in a globalized sphere. The paper traces the evolution of television news media in India and Pakistan with a focus on Jammu and Kashmir in order to compare and contrast how television news media became central vehicle of information war and how the process of globalization effected the growth of television news media in both the countries.

Key words: India- Pakistan-Mediatization-Globalization-Media-conflict

Introduction

The territorial conflict of Jammu and Kashmir from its beginning has become one of the most mediatized issue which has been heavily discussed by television news media of both the countries involved in conflict i.e. India and Pakistan. The issue of Jammu and Kashmir right from the initial years of Doordarshan in India and its counterpart PTV in Pakistan to the rise of satellite television news media in both the countries the focus of news media has remained on Jammu and Kashmir because of the comprehensible news value of conflict (Cottle, 2006) and since the news worthiness of events increase during conflicts and the enormousness magnitude of problem between both the countries the mediatization of Kashmir conflict started early in 1959 in India and 1964 in Pakistan. The mediatization of Jammu and Kashmir conflict has is the question of maintenance of secular credentials for India whereas for Pakistan Kashmir is the question of its core ideological belief based on the notion of Muslim nationalism (Mattoo, 2003). The television news media has played an important part right from the growth of television news media in both the countries as the issue of Jammu and Kashmir became what Anderson (2006) termed as 'imagined communities'.

Growth of News Television in India

The television was introduced in India on the lines of notions of modernization and development of the nation initially seen in the year 1955 at an international fair held in Delhi in which All India Radio purchased the television equipment from Philips company. However the first experimental television started with the inauguration of Delhi Kendra on September 15, 1959 when UNESCO provided grant and assistance to the All India Radio. The television remained under strict control of ministry of Information and Broadcasting for a considerable period of time (Kumar, 2010). With the core notion of development and modernization Television until 1965 was extensively used for committee viewing and education as its major focus (Menon, 2007). The television services were extended beyond Delhi after a brief period of thirteen years as in 1972 the Bombay station of Doordarshan started functioning which was followed by the opening of Doordarshan stations in Amritsar in Srinagar which were followed by the stations in Calcutta, Madras and Lucknow in the year 1975. The fascinating feature of the growth of television in India is start of both the Amritsar and Srinagar stations so early in its growth trajectory. Although the Srinagar television also initially

started as an educational broadcast for schools and University (Rasool, 2012). The growth in television was followed with the SITE and Kheda projects and the advancement in the satellite technologies as argued by Singhal & Roger (2001). The initial years of television growth saw it being under the shadow of All India Radio and later in the year 1976 the two were separated from each other that led to the evolution of Doordarshan as an independent institution (Page & Crawley 2001). The television growth in India saw a transitional shift after 1970 as several other entertainment programmes, films, sports and educational programmes started broadcasting and with the broadcast of Asian games in 1982 the color television also emerged in India (Joshi 1986).

The basic difference of growth of television in India with its counterpart print media is its evolution in a free India despite its colonial legacy but despite that television largely remained under the clutches of government right from the Prime Minister ship of Jawaharlal Nehru (Jeffery, 2006). The news segments on Doordarshan maintained its state control throughout its history till emergency period where Prime Minister Indira Gandhi received heavy criticism for the misuse of television news as a state apparatus to control power (Menon, 2007). The Doordarshan was deliberately used by state to endorse personality cults and to eliminate any kind of opposition against the state (Singh, 1975). The news broadcasts were not allowed to be privately shared despite the commercialization of Doordarshan and the emergence of privately owned production houses with a fear that privately owned news broadcasters can use the news bulletins as an apparatus to create dissent against the government in power. The similar kind of fears were seen in the start of first live broadcast on DD where Prime Minister Narsima Rao cancelled the live broadcast citing the reason that live broadcast are a threat to the state monopoly as anybody can say anything against the ruling government on a live broadcast on television (Ghosh 2005, pp.189-190).

Emergence of Private owned satellite Television in India

The start of private television channels in India were always seen as a danger to the existence of the state control since the basis of television in India and the control of state on it has been a dominant element of the self-image of the state (Rajgopal 2001, p.78). The growth of satellite television channels in India as argued by scholars like (Chalaby, 2003; Volkmer, 1999) is the result of the process of globalization whose idea is based on the notion of global village as premised by McLuhan (1964). In comparison to that the proponents of political economy tradition of television scholars like Mcchesney (2000; Thussu 2003) argue that the growth of satellite television news media in India is the result of the economic forces with the emergence of the western players. With Just one television channels with news broadcast that too under strict government control until 1994 when first time private broadcasters were allowed a news slot by the name of 'The world this week' produced by New Delhi Television Ltd. (NDTV) with Pranoy and Radhika Roy as its pioneers. The initial license was only of thirteen days which later was extended to a 291 episodes from 1988 to year 1996 (Mehta, 2008). The news broadcast certainly revolutionized the notion of news in India as it was the first attempt of freeing the genre of news from the strict control of government in India (Saeed, 2012). The efforts followed the 'News Track' broadcasted by India Today group as its monthly magazine that also broke the shackles of the government control.

The most glaring event that transformed the news media sphere in India was the broadcast of Gulf war of 1991 that led to the entry of foreign news broadcast to India and the start of zee TV in 1992 and a Zee news channel in 1995 which was in comparison to serious NDTV news more entertainment driven (Thussu 1998) and then in the year 2000 India Today started AajTak first Hindi news channel and Sun TV in south India. However the first ever English news channel Headlines Today which was followed by news channels started by NDTV one English news channel NDTV 24x7 and NDTV India a Hindi news channel. The radical shift in the privatization

of television news in India forced Doordarshan to compete with private news channels and they started DD News in 2003 and the number has risen to 35 news channels and eleven regional satellite channels one even focusing on Jammu and Kashmir DD Kashir. The growth of television news in India was seen in the initial period as a force of democratization after years of strict government control but instead the political economy structure led to the 'CNNization' of news genre in India with the adaptation of US style Journalism (Thussu, 2003). The further corporatization of television news media in India saw the emergence of big corporate players with Times group, TV Today network also entering the race. The reliance network deal with network 18 that later brought Eenadu(ETV group) dominated the television news genre with a start of news channel focused on Jammu and Kashmir(ETV Kashmir) and several news channels emerged after that CNN-IBN(2006), Times Now (2009). The foreign news broadcasts like BBC, CNN, RTV, Al-Jazeera, WION also gradually started beaming on Indian television news sphere which Held & McGrew (2003) contends that notion of global in media landscape in India is the result of expanding capitalism in the world.

Growth of Television News Media in Pakistan

The trajectory of growth in Pakistan television news as compared to India started in the year 1964 as a state enterprise similar to India with the establishment of Pakistan Television Corporation limited. However the stark difference between the start of television in Pakistan and India is that as television in India started as a tool of development the Pakistan television started as a tool to promote the nation state identity and its shared Islamic identity. The initial years of PTV saw a variety of broadcasts including entertainment, musical shows, religious programmes and a news slot which was aired at 9 pm (Barracough, 2001). The initial years of Pakistan Television drew similarity with Indian television as PTV was also controlled swiftly by Ayub Khan with several press ordinance acts that helped the government to keep a tab on television news and its content. The draconian laws were initially implemented on media in Pakistan in order to find ways to pressurize and muzzle the media freedom in Pakistan(Niazi, 1987). The other major difference in the growth of television news in Pakistan is that unlike boom of satellite television news in India in 1990's this very boom in India effected the influence of PTV and broke its monopoly as the viewers in Pakistan started accessing the Star TV network channels and other Indian channels like Zee TV where PTV failed to provide competition to private owned channels booming in India (Kumar&Ashwin 2014, p.31). The glaring difference in the growth trajectory is that while in India growth in television was the result of process of globalization whereas growth in Pakistan television news sphere and breakdown of the monopoly of the state controlled television news was the result of boom in the Indian television and the inability of the PTV to compete with the style, presentation and content of the news channels beaming from the neighboring country India that ultimately led to the audiences in Pakistan questioning the credibility of the content broadcasted by PTV to its audience in Pakistan.

The other major difference in the media systems of both the countries was the evolution of satellite television in both the countries. The satellite television boom in India a result of globalization and market forces pushed the audiences in Pakistan to consume the content being produced by Indian and international television channels like Zee TV, Star TV etc. The government of Pakistan unlike India maintained its strict control in giving licenses to the private broadcasters and instead kept on relying on state controlled Pakistan Television (PTV) until 2000. The grant of licensing to operate private television news channel in Pakistan was attributed to the loss of Pakistan in Kargil war that ultimately led to the decision of privatizing the news media in Pakistan by General ParvezMusharaf as it was felt by Pakistan that PTV was insufficient in tackling the information war (Wahab, 2008).The decision of liberalization of the television news media sphere in Pakistan was

immediately taken after Pakistan Lost the information war with India and was shattered at international arena diplomatically where television news media of India played a major role and the constant denial of war by PTV (Mufti, 2007).

The apprehensions of not granting license to the private broadcasters in Pakistan has been identified by Barraclough (2001) who gave two major reasons the first is the clash of the ideologies and maintenance of moral and social values based on the Islamic ideological beliefs for which satellite television was seen as a major threat and the second is the alternative narrative and competition provided by the satellite television channels from across the border which were seen as a threat to the reliability of PTV as an institute (Wahab, 2008).

The Pakistan television news channels in during the earlier period of liberalization of news media in Pakistan capitalized by taking assistance from India as well as from international news media and within few years a total of 54 satellite television news channels started operating in addition to PTV's six channels catering to the different provinces of Pakistan (Wahab 2008). The growth of television news channels took speed and by the year 2010 there were more than 89 television channels in Pakistan unlike 800 plus in India. At one hand the role of media in a democratic set up was seen as a tool for development in India but privatization of Pakistan television was done in order to bolster the image of the Pakistan especially after Kargil war which was badly hit by the anti- Pakistan rhetoric and its diplomatic isolation by Indian television news media as well at international front. The only solution to tackle this problem was seen by both the government as well as military in Pakistan by privatizing news channels in Pakistan in order to counter the propaganda of cross border. The other reason for opening the licensing was seen as an effort to maintain and project to the world community that Pakistan believes in setting up of democratic institutions and opening licenses to private media was seen as a core step to project the ideals of democracy in Pakistan which was badly hit after Kargil War (Nadadur, 2007). However, the government in Pakistan played a role of a trickster wherein they immediately after privatization of television news media established Pakistan media regulatory authority (PEMRA) with authority of keeping a close watch on electronic media and providing it unconditional powers to keep check on electronic media and whatever freedom was granted by privatization has been curtailed by PEMRA (ibid.). The role of PEMRA in addition to keeping a tab on its content also extended to providing licenses to the television news media that automatically allowed PEMRA to control the mediatized public sphere in Pakistan as any kind of content that was not considered conforming to the ideological notions of the state has constantly being restricted by this regulatory authority. The other major control enacted was that the private news broadcasters were not allowed to become a part of terrestrial broadcast which state owned television maintained its monopoly in this sphere and provided more and more control of the state on news channels (Bilquees, 2008).

Television News and Jammu and Kashmir

The border line perspective and the geographical resonance of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan led to the early introduction of Doordarshan in Jammu and Kashmir as Srinagar station was launched on 26th January 1973. The arrival of television as a instrument to revolutionize the notions of space and territory as argued by Volkmer (2003) played its part in Jammu and Kashmir also as at that period television broadcast was terrestrial requiring only antenna and a transmitter to catch signals where Pakistan television signals were more accessible in Jammu and Kashmir than Doordarshan and unlike satellite television with several hurdles in terms of accessing as it requires the subscription charges to operate (Parker, 1995). The Srinagar Doordarshan station so early as the need was felt by the government of India with the inability of Delhi and Bombay broadcast to reach to larger parts of India and specially in border states where television signals from

neighboring countries were more accessible. The states where terrestrial signals were more accessible from neighboring countries included west Bengal, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir and since Jammu and Kashmir was strategically important and involved a territorial conflict the use of establishment of television station was seen as a necessity to counter any kind of propaganda coming from Pakistan (Menon 1997, p. 91).

The failure of Doordarshan in Jammu and Kashmir was not limited to questions of access and reach only but the magnitude of problem was much bigger and the Doordarshan reproduction and promotion of selected sets of languages, cultures, religions and regions were also a detrimental force in its failure (Mody, 1987). The other reason was the Hindi centric approach in a state with Urdu being an official language where PTV capitalized on its cultural and linguistic advantages and started beaming propaganda broadcast in Jammu and Kashmir aimed at instigating anti- India sentiments like 'Vaadi Ki Aawaz', 'Kashmir Nama' and also 'Kashmir Magazine' and several other broadcasts aimed at highlighting the human right issues of the people in Jammu and Kashmir and with the ground situation deteriorating with the emergence of armed rebellion in the 1990's the Doordarshan station closed that further allowed Pakistan television in increasing its popularity and propaganda in Jammu and Kashmir.

There were other reasons also connected with the failure of Doordarshan and the rising popularity of PTV in Jammu and Kashmir since the focus of Doordarshan was to create a solitary network where the role of television was seen as a way to generate a certain kind of Public opinion by creating a particular kind of discourse which was seen as an important tool for the perpetuation of politics of Hindu nationalism (Rajagopal, 1993). The censorship on local television news media in Jammu and Kashmir also led to the competition between both the television news media of India as well as Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir.

Conclusion

There is a difference in the growth of media systems in India and Pakistan as the evolution of privatization in India was a result of globalization in India whereas privatization of Pakistan news media was the result of reaction to loss of Kargil war both at battle ground as well as at information level. The growth of television in both countries effected each other as satellite boom in India changed the dynamics of television growth in Pakistan and the linguistic and accessibility barriers gave Pakistan television an edge in Jammu and Kashmir. The core reason for the privatization of television news in Pakistan is the Kashmir cause which Kargil war acted as a trigger for the decision. The other reason as argued by Kraidy & Khalil (2009) is the similarity of Pakistan television news sphere with Arab media where economic and political pressures played a major role in shift from state owned to transnational networks. Above all both the media systems have been competing for information war in Jammu and Kashmir and with slow growth of television news media and continued censorship in local television news media in Jammu and Kashmir the trajectory in the growth of news media in both the countries have heavily been impacted by each other as growth in Indian satellite television news media changed the dynamics of television news media in Pakistan and border line perspectives of terrestrial signals and access to Pakistan television in Jammu and Kashmir pushed for competitive narratives of cultural dynamics where Pakistan television news media provided rigid competition to national media of India signaling the power of globalization in a democracy and its implications on a mediatized conflict.

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