

Media in pakistan in 80's-90's

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Before Musharraf came to power, there was only one national television channel broadcasting from Pakistan, Pakistan Television (PTV). PTV was government owned. PTV showed news bulletin at 9 pm. That was half an hour of news from an entire day and was concluded with a weather report. Before Musharraf's time, media that tried to criticize the government were subdued, in one form or another. Most of the print media practiced self-censorship, especially related to sensitive topics such as the military, and there were only handful of truly independent column writers and opinion makers in the newspapers according to Shah, S. (interview, February 2014). This claim is also supported by Mahmood (interview, July 2013). In many regards, the situation for the Pakistani media had not changed significantly from earlier decades.

When Musharraf came to power in 1999, there was no concept of electronic media according to Mahmood (interview, July 2013). During the 1980's and 1990's the Pakistani people depended on international media for neutral news. Due to Pakistan's affiliation with Great Britain as a colonial power, BBC was popular in Pakistan. According to Mahmood (interview, July 2013) if there were any incident, the Pakistani people relied on international media, rather than Pakistan media for information.

In order to further look at the state of the media in and before 1999 one has to see the status of the media in context and relationship with the Pakistani society at the time. There is no doubt that in terms of democracy, government structure and social, political and economic factors Pakistan has had special circumstances.

Pakistan did not experience true democracy between 1947 and 1999. The democratically elected governments were corrupt, ineffective or authoritarian, or a combination of all. The media was either controlled or practised self-censorship, and the parts of the media that tried to raise their voice against the government were threatened. The newspapers were present, but saw upon the idea of freedom of speech as an advisory role towards the government (Soomro, interview, February 2014). Whatever the power the print media enjoyed to a large degree was also limited because of the high illiterate rate of the population, as well the high rate of poverty. This would suggest that the print media had limited power, and that the print media was able to influence a limited number of the population.

Even though Pakistani's were familiar with the concept of international media through the 80's and 90's, by the end of the 90's this international exposure was becoming ever more evident, especially through satellite television and Internet.