

Media after Interim Administration (December/2001) in Afghanistan

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Abstract

The unbelievable growth of media since 2001 is one of the greatest achievements of Afghan government. Now there are almost 800 publications, 100TV and 302 FM radio stations, 6 telecommunication companies, tens of news agencies, more than 44 licensed ISPs internet provider companies and several number of production groups are busy to broadcast information, drama serial, films according to the afghan Culture, and also connected the people with each other on national and international level. Afghanistan is a nation of 30 million people, and a majority live in its 37,000 villages. But low literacy rate (38.2%) is the main obstacle in Afghanistan, most of the people who lived in rural area are not educated and they are only have focus on radio and TV broadcasting. So, the main purpose of this study is the rapid growth of media in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime, but most of those have uncertain future.

Keywords: Traditional media; New media; Social media; Media law

Introduction

Media, in Afghanistan has over a hundred years of history but the path of media is still unstable and unclear. There were always media under the pressure of government for a long time, especially the latest civil wars (1989-2001) was the main reason for the destruction and damage of all infrastructures including media organizations in Afghanistan. During this period, there was no television and radio station; independent newspapers, press clubs or broadcasting centers did not exist to broadcast update information, report, and news to the audience. The people of Afghanistan were lived in that time with the dark environment of information and technology and they didn't know what is going on in country and outside of country. In that time, most of the residents of Afghanistan include popular journalists, artists, scholars, and celebrities migrated to neighbors countries. Most listeners, who could afford a radio set, could only listen the BBC and VOA Radio news and reports to update their information about country and world.

However, after a long time when Taliban came and took the control of Kabul in 1996, the media has mainly damaged and characterized by strict media laws. They Banned television and music in the country, they libeled them as ant-Islamic. They ran the only radio station, which was called Radio Sharia. This radio station was broadcasting only religious issues and news about their progress in the war. In 1998, they destroyed the Television sets and studios. Also anyone who get caught with a television or listening to music was subjected to imprison and punishment. During that, time most of the media organizations operated from outside the country. There were no independent media but in territory not under the control of Taliban in the northern of Afghanistan, people had their own Television services, which was called Badakhshan television. It was broadcasting the news and movies for its 5000 viewers for three hours in a day. So, there were no independent Afghan journalist, but few international correspondents based in Afghanistan until after 2001 [1]. Therefore the situation of Afghan media continued in censorship until the fall of Taliban government until late of 2001.

In addition, after the Taliban regime in 2001 international community identified a gape for new media to make and build connection for information in Afghanistan. So, in that time media become as a main point of new interim government and that era was called media explosion era of the communication and technology in Afghanistan. State and private television and radio stations aired their

programs and also a huge number of publications, mobile Networks, press clubs, newspaper, magazines, news agencies and internet were appeared at the field of information and technology. Now in Afghanistan social media like Face book, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram has great usage in the country and it is said most of users are youths.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is that to explore how media came to Afghanistan, which type of media has great usage among afghan users, and what is the background of Afghan new media after interim administration. Study stated from introduction, which include a brief history of afghan media in interior war, media in Taliban regime, and media after interim administration in Afghanistan. The study also has conclusion and ended by references.

Methodology

Methodology is subdivided into two parts: theoretical approaches and methodological approaches: The approach, which is used in this article, is archival approach, which is the part of theoretical approach. In this research data will be collected through different sorts of media and Ministry of information and Technology of Afghanistan. This documents include published books and articles, news articles, BBC reports and Afghan government reports, governments polices, government regulation regarding media from the official website of Ministry of information and technology Afghanistan.

Literature Review

Today, the situation of media in Afghanistan are developing rapidly but in past it faced many problems since last four decades; especially in the era of Taliban. Many author, examine the afghan media, most of them were foreign authors. Asst.Prof.Dr.Osman Koroglu was a lecturer of faith University, did the research on afghan media in 2011. He

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describes the afghan media in their research “Developing Afghanistan Media and Possibility of Citizen Journalism” [2], he explore that the content and publication of afghan media are usually originated from overseas. The country needs more visual and audio programs, print and online publications which reflect and transmit their culture and values than existing content and programs. So there are a gape about the real picture of afghan media after the interim administration. Therefore, I choose this topic and trying to fill the gap of previous research. My research title is media after interim administration in Afghanistan.

Media in Afghanistan

Media provides a true picture and stability of a country to the world nowadays. USAID supports media development in Afghanistan to promote the free exchange of information and ideas, vital to the democratic process and development of civil society. So, they provide the facilities to build the capacity of local, state and independent broadcasting media through technical support, upgrade and repair the equipment, provide trainings to young journalists on how to write accurate reports, and also development of an afghan media policy and regulatory framework [3]. Afghan media includes from print, broadcast and digital and mainly broadcast the information in Pashto and Dari, the official languages of the nation [4]. A major achievement of the interim administration period was a new and well-developed media among other reconstructions in Afghanistan for the last one and half decade, after the fall of the Taliban’s regime. The emergence of media in such a big number is a record in the history of Afghanistan. International community and western donors pledged millions of dollars to assist the development of media in Afghanistan [5]. So, in that time not only state media but also a dozen numbers of private media organizations emerged rapidly and become an intrinsic part of social life in Afghanistan [6].

Media Law in Afghanistan after the interim administration

After the fall of the Taliban’s regime, the first Media law was adapted in March 2002. However, due to ambiguity in the law, it has been revised and adapted for four times. In only eight years since the establishment of the interim government, a total of four Media Laws have been approved (March 2002, April 2004, June 2006 and August 2008 by the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament))overriding a veto by President Karzai [7].

However, Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) approved a new constitution for Afghanistan in January 2004.It declares that, freedom of expression is inviolable and every Afghan has the right to express his thought through speech, writing, or illustration or other means, by observing the provisions of the constitution. Also every Afghan has the right to print or publish topics without prior submission to the state authorities in accordance with the law [8].

Traditional media after the interim administration

Traditional media (television, radio, and publications) had already a few decades history in the filled of communication and information in Afghanistan. There were many Television and Radio stations, and publications, which broadcast and publish the information and other activities among Afghan people. However, the traditional media become in a new and wide range after the interim administration in Afghanistan. Now there are a hundred numbers of state and private Television and radio stations, and more than 800 publications.

The growth of Television channels after the interim administration

Radio and TV have become the most trusted sources of information for topics important to Afghans, with the exception of religion. Television broadcasting in Afghanistan has a four decades history. The first color television broadcasting appeared during the President Sardar Dawod’s period in 1978 [9]. After a short time of the TV broadcasting media fall in the control of Soviet influences during the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) from 1979 to 1992. So, from that time media become under the censorship. In addition, when Taliban took control over in Kabul the television stations banded and destroyed it, but they had one radio station, which was called Sharia Radio. However, after a long time of interior war in the period of President Hamid Karzi administration, again old television sets were recovered from repairing shop, opened now branches to sell new televisions sets and can help with people to see and know about the world [10]. In that time Afghan government owns on TV channel that called RTV (Radio Television of Afghanistan), which was the first TV channel after new interim administration build by the fund of USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). RTA has two AM radio stations and two TV channels in the country’s capital (Kabul). It also has branches in almost all 34 provinces, and its broadcasts reached to all over the country [11]. Beside of that, the rapidly growing of independent media in Afghanistan since 2002 is the greatest success. Today almost 1,000 media outlets are operating, compared with only 15 in 2000. Most of the TV and radio stations are private and almost 12,000 people are now working in the private media sector [12]. In addition, first private TV station (Tolo TV) came on air in 2004. Now 100 states funded and private TV Channels are broadcasting the information among afghan people in all provinces. (Tabasum Akseer, 2017) Some of the Private and state funded TV Channels which has a large number of viewers include:ITV, Afghan TV, Afghanistan National Television ANTV, ARZU TV, BTN, Hewad TV, Lemar TV, Negaah TV, Noor TV Afghanistan, Noorin TV, Rah-i-Farda (Farda TV), RTA Radio Television Afghanistan, RTA Nangarhar, Saba TV, Saba World, Sada-i-Afghanistan, Sepehr TV, Shamshad TV, Tamadon TV, Watan TV, Zhwandoon TV, Tolo TV, Ariana TV, Lemar TV and etc. (Koroglu, 2011) In addition many international news channels have local office in Kabul, including: CNN, Sky News, BBC, DD News and Aljazeera [4].

The growth of radio Channels after the interim administration

Until recently, radio was the only broadcast media available to most Afghans and second in the emergence of mass media in Afghanistan. Radio is the most widespread source of information in Afghanistan. For the first time, radio broadcasting came on air in the time of King Amanullah Khan in 1925. Radio Kabul was the first station. In the late of 1970 nearly every home owned at least one radio set, especially in the major cities. However, Arman FM Radio was the first private radios station came on air in 2003 (Money, Guns and Media: Afghan Journalism Faces an Uncertain Future, 2014),and now Afghanistan has 302 state funded and private radio stations with AM,FM and shortwave broadcasting which mainly offer their programs in Pashto and Dari languages. Although, BBC world service, voice of America, Radio Free Afghanistan, Deutsche Welle, Voice of Turkey and some others are the additionally sources of news, in both Pashto and Dari languages. In finally every province has both State and private Radio stations and broadcast the information among people.

Print Media/Publications after the interim administration

Print media has a long history in the era of afghan media. First

newspaper in Afghanistan was initially published by the name of Siraj-ul-Akhbar (Lamp of the News) on January 11, 1906 in Dari language. After publishing the first issue, its publication stopped, then it was again revived in October of 1911 by the hand of Mahmood Tarzi, who has the proud of 'Father of Afghan Journalism'. However, the environment of print media in Afghanistan was not so good. According to the Altai research, only 13% of afghan read the press, and those who do read are apparently doing so less and less. There were some main reasons about the declining of print media readers. Illiteracy is obviously the main factor of hindering print media consumption. Also excess to the press in rural areas, poor and not on time distribution, repetition of news, printing not many new news stories and republishing news stories already receive from other news organizations and some famous radio WebPages are the main factor to decline the readers of print media.

On other voice, Afghanistan has a low readership of print media, coupled with the low 38.2% literacy rate. For further information, Afghanistan has a male literacy rate variously estimated from 30 to 43 percent and female literacy rate of only one-third of that, most of information and news transmitted by TV, Radio and print media only a small part in the media scene. With low readership and low circulation, it is hard for print publications to survive. Estimations of the number, type, and frequency of print publications vary substantially, depending on whose numbers are cited. Nai's (NGOs) survey found that while about 800 print publication were registered with the government, only 215 private publication and 90 government publications were printed regularly. The principle daily newspapers are the state owned Anis, Arman-e-Melli, and privately owned Afghanistan Group of Newspapers which include, The Daily outlook Afghanistan (The first independent English Newspaper of Afghanistan) and The Daily Afghanistan, Cheragh, Eslah, Kabul Times, Khaama Press, Eradeh, Hewad, Ittefaq-e-Islamand, Shariat, Khedmatgar, Weesa, (Servant) Mandegar (Permanent) and Hasht Sobh (8 AM) dailies are rather more famous.

Printing press after the interim administration in Afghanistan

Government publications use their own printing press. Azadi Printing Press located in Macrorayan area in Kabul. It mainly publish four major government newspapers include: Anis, Islah, Hewad and the Kabul Times. In addition There are also several private printing presses located in major cities but some of these are very famous likes, Sultani, Bahir, Ahamdi, Nebraska and Fajer, Aina, Strengths, Haseeb and others in Kabul.

News Agencies

There are over 11 news agencies in the country, most of them located in Kabul. There has never been this amount of news agency in the history of Afghanistan. State news agency, Bakhter news agency (BNA), and private ones, such as Pajhwok news agency (PAN), Roz, Hindu Kush, Wakht, Mahal, Bost, Afghan Islamic press, Internews, Taglara Information and news agency, and Khama press news agency [13].

Production groups (companies)

In addition to the radio and television production, there are number of production companies too. Most of these company has own radio and TV Channel. The production group are producing programs, songs, advertisements and short serials for their own radio and TV stations and also for national and international organizations. The most famous production companies (Groups) in the country include: Ariana Television Network/AWCC, Kaboora (Moby Group), Saba Media Organization, Killid Group, Noor Television Network, Awa

Nama, Awaz, and Yak Production group. Above mentioned are the most famous media production companies in Afghanistan [14].

New Media after the interim administration in Afghanistan

The new media term refers to various technologies that emerged rapid growth on a global scale in the late years of 20th century. Those users who already have an internet connection, they are aware with some of the major types of this media, which are includes social networking sites such as Twitter and Face book, Blogs and videos sharing sites likes YouTube. This type of media is greatly advanced cellular communication in the last twenty years, through application that connect with the internet (Geek). However, after the providing of internet, media emerged rapidly in Afghanistan.

Telecommunication system after interim administration

Before the new interim government in Afghanistan, there were no telecom service in the country and Afghans were not able to communicate with each other. So, Afghan wireless Communications Company (AWCC) was the first private telecom company in Afghanistan emerged in April 2002. It was authorized to provide Mobile (GSM) services (Hamdard). Initially, it operated only in Kabul and were extremely Expensive. When established the Infrastructure of branches in all provinces, the cost of calls fall down [10]. However, there are now six active major telecom service providers companies including " The State owned fixed line operator Afghan Telecom; the local fixed service provider (LFSP) Wasel Telecom; and the four Mobile (GSM) operators AWCC, Roshan, MTN and Etisalat." (Hamdard).

On other voice, according to a national survey four in five adults (81.1%) have access to mobile phone. While roughly six in ten (62.2%) have personally mobile phone and other 18% have access to a mobile phone through someone personally close to them. This is the remarkable progress to campier with only 60000 active phone lines in 2002. In sum, according to the Ministry of Communications at the end of 2017 there were 25 million GSM active subscribers in Afghanistan [15].

Internet

By the arising of internet services, the media was bloomed up, while the growth of internet and data services in general has been relatively low compared to mobile services. Internet access is limited by the low speed, high price, constant war, insecurity, low technical environment, and no access in the rural area were the main reasons to decline the internet users. After some time when internet spurred by the low cost DSL and dialup services provided by Afghan Telecom, the users were increased day to day. However, the first ISP license awarded to Neda telecom in November 2004. So, in currant time there are 44 licensed ISPs in the country including the four mobile operators(AWCC, Etisalat, MTN, and Roshan) and the fixed-line carriers Afghan telecom and Wasel Telecom (Hamdard). In 2006, Afghanistan Ministry of Communications Approves a project amounting to 64.5 million USD, for laying optical cable across the country. At the end of 2011, there were over 1 million internet users, 80,000 fixed telephone lines and 134,000 CDMA users in country.

However, according to the Internet Live Stats, "Afghanistan is the number 100th country amongst 198 countries with the internet Users of 1,856,781 and the users' growth per year is 172,462. In fact Afghanistan's internet user growth rate is 10%, which is higher than USA, UK, China, France, Canada and many more countries" [16]. In addition, there are some famous and major ISPs Companies that

provide internet services to the all provinces in the country, they include: Neda Telecom, Insta Telecom, Rana Technologies, IO Globle, Ceretechs, New Dunia, Multinet, Netzone, Asix and Cyber. Services provided by these ISPs, include satellite-based VSAT solutions, Microwave (Point to Point), Wi-Fi, and dial-up and some of them also provide WiMax (Hamdard).

Social media in Afghanistan

Social media as an online platform, which allows people to create video and audio content, give comment to others' postings, and share it; because social media is very easy to use, and reach the audience rapidly, it is widely used in areas related to the environments of politics, technology and the entertainment industry [17]. According to Cromity the social media is mainly used in 22 aspects of people's life including business, advertising, education, news, entertainment, research, etc. [18]. However, Social media within Afghanistan is increasingly gaining popularity. In recent times, the use of social media through sites such as Face book and Twitter have been used as a medium to distribute a more reliable and accessible source of information for the general public within Afghanistan.

Whereas, social media is becoming an intrinsic part of urban life in Afghanistan. Most of the Afghan youth are increasingly use social websites and weblogs on internet for wider communication and entertainment. According to the Ministry of Communication and Technology, 8,6% of Afghan population utilize internet and over 2,400,000 users regular use social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and weblogs. (Manager, Bakhtar News, 2016). In addition, social media engagement in Afghanistan increased 43 percent last year and three million Afghans are now active on at least on social media Platforms. Now every App of social media is available over there but Facebook is the most widely used social app in Afghanistan, with three million monthly active users. Most of the face book users are male with 86 percent and only 14 percent of users are female in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Afghanistan has a long road ahead to rebuild its media system. Last four decades war tremendously destroyed every aspect of Afghans life including media and communication system. In that, time media faced many political, economic and technological challenges. Especially in the Taliban regime all types of media fell down except one radio

station (Radio Sharia). The TV station was destroyed and private media was banded. News, photography, movies and even music were prohibited in Afghanistan. After the Taliban regime, when the interim administration took place in December 2001 through the international coalition, establishment and rebuilding process was started towards the normal life including media and communication system. Now 302 FM radio and 100 TV stations, approximately 800 print media, a dozen number of news and information agencies, six mobile and telecommunications companies, and more than 44 licensed ISPs are regularly working in Afghanistan to inform and connect the people with each other.

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