

DOCTORAL THESIS

Container Politics in Pakistan since 1988: Opposition Tactics in Response to Changing News Media Imperatives

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes how tactics of two opposition groups have changed in response to the arrival of plural electronic media in an emerging media context. While recent literature on media-movement interaction has focused on the impact of cyberspace, this study also examines the role of 24-hour commercial television news which in some societies is a ‘new media’ that is at least as game-changing as the Internet. Two case studies of opposition groups examine tactical innovation in response to the prevailing media political environment. Focus is placed on mediation of protest tactics through news media and the analysis of the media’s commercial, political and professional imperatives. The two cases comprise of mobilizations against the government led by a mainstream opposition party, the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in 1992, and a similar campaign led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in 2014. The two campaigns were set in qualitatively different periods separated by media liberalization policies that were implemented in 2002. The thesis analyzes the tactics of these groups through the concept of a mediation opportunity structure that explains the many ways media and communication are relevant to protesters. Media imperatives are studied using a model of mediatization of politics which explains the relationship between various media logics and their consequences for political actors in differently democratic contexts.

Details of tactics are gathered from news reports, interviews with media experts, journalists, campaign planners of political parties and advertisers, and secondary literature. Media imperatives were studied through a content analysis of prime-time television news bulletins of state-owned Pakistan State Television (PTV) from 1992 and 2014, and commercially run Geo TV from 2016, as well as secondary literature.

The thesis argues that contentious politics in Pakistan have been transformed due in part to news media. It calls for increased recognition of mediatization of politics within the political process as an important influencer of protest tactics. It also invites more attention to be paid to the impact of commercial television news, and not just the Internet, in societies where broadcast media were once monopolized by the state. The thesis offers the concept of *mediatized performance innovation* which is a repertoire of contention that can extract political advantage through the media.

Key words: protest tactics, innovation, commercial news media, television journalism, political opportunities and mediatization of politics.

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