

Liberalization of Media in Pakistan: A Challenge to Democracy

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Abstract

Pakistan's electronic media has been under state control for five decades. The state had monopoly over television and radiobroadcasting, thus a gatekeeper controlling the information flow. However, in 2002, media was liberalized under the dictatorial regime of General Pervez Musharraf. This was against the popular belief that democratic regimes have media liberalization policy while it is in the interest of dictators to put stringent control over media. This study is an attempt to consider the reasons for this liberalization of media and to evaluate its impact on the socio economic and political environment of the country. The study follows the political economy methodology and analyzes the findings collected through secondary data, under the overarching theory of political economy of communication. Pakistan adopted liberal and deregulated policies because of the popular economic model based on neo liberal agenda of developed nations on whom it was dependent for aid and assistance. However, the liberalization of media does not only bring the overall economic growth but also the problems associated with liberalization. The media in Pakistan saw a boom in the market, where in one-decade television channels increased drastically from three to ninety, simultaneously giving birth to the five big media moguls who own major media outlets. This concentration of ownership brought in the problems of unequal distribution of wealth, class disparities, uninformed citizenry, commodification and marginalization of minorities. The current media liberalization has thus become a challenge for the democratic norms of the society. This paper provides basis for further research in proposing democratic systems for Pakistan.

Keywords: Neo liberalism; Media Cross-ownership; Democracy; Media liberalization; Political Economy

The relationship between politics and the media is a power one, and there are two dimensions to this: there is the power over the media – what gets shown or reported – and there is power of the media – what gets changed by the media. (Street, 2001, p. 4)

Introduction and Background

Since the independence of Pakistan in 1947, media has been under the control of the government. It is primarily since the country mostly remained under dictatorial regimes. Even the intermittent civilian rule kept media under strict regulatory regimes; consequently, there was limited number of publishing houses operating at the national level. The primary sources of independent information for the populace were either local newspapers or international radio channels. The only television channel available to the masses until the early 1990's was the state-owned Pakistan Television Network (PTV). In the early 1990's, after the culmination of another decade long dictatorial rule, the newly established democratic regime relaxed censoring policies towards media. Thus, the growth in both electronic and print media was observed in that era in terms of the content of news and entertainment. However, the decade long democratic rule kept most of the regulatory controls and the media policy did not deviate much from the path taken up by dictators. Ironically, the media in Pakistan was granted unprecedented freedom during the dictatorial regime of General Pervez Musharraf who overthrew a political government and ruled the country for almost a decade. This paradoxical and unique scenario raises a question that why, contrary to popular belief, media gained more independence under a dictatorial regime as compared to democracies? This paper is an attempt to explore the reasons for media liberalization in authoritarian regime.

The Pakistani media is a unique case in a sense that in one decade of dictatorial regime it has born, grown and become one of the largest industries in Pakistan. In one decade the country observed media grew so powerful that it emerged as a fourth pillar of the state and played a great role in the downfall of dictatorial regime (International Media Support, 2009). Currently, the media in Pakistan is seeing a rise of few media moguls; a scenario that political economists consider to be a result of liberalization under capitalist societies and thus a threat to democracy values. Moreover, the political economists argue that structural phenomena give rise to the related media problems of lack of content, diversification and localism and most of the companies end up fulfilling their economic interests rather than serving the public interest (McChesney, 2008; Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Bagdikian, 2004; Jhally, 1989).

This paper is an attempt to evaluate the media liberalization in Pakistan by utilizing the lens of political economy of communication. Liberalization of economy and trade are key components of free markets; that its proponents argue to be an essential part of liberal democracy. Thus, another issue being studied in this paper is the evaluation of current media products on offer for the last decade or so because of media liberalization; the role of this current media production; the revival of democracy in the country; and to what extent it transformed into a forum

for generating policy debates to help government in developing informed public policies. To answer these questions, this research study is divided into three sections. In the first section of the study, the literature on neo liberalism and political economy of communication is reviewed. The western world after 70's and especially in 80's and 90's had played great role in bringing the neo liberal and capitalistic policies in the third world countries. The developing countries were receiving grants and donations from the developed world for the infrastructure development of market and economy to increase the trade globally as under the neo liberal agenda. Thus, in the second section, Pakistan's political economic scenario has been discussed. The history of getting grants and funds during political and dictatorial regimes and along with that the acceptance of neo liberal agenda and policies is described. In the third section of the study, media liberalization in Pakistan is described and discussed that has happened because of neo liberal agenda, and how this liberalization has turned into media cross-ownership and has become a challenge to democratic values in Pakistan, as pinpointed by the literature of political economy of communication.

Neo liberalism and Political Economy of Communication

The Neo-liberalism doctrine advocates deregulation and associates the individual freedom to the pragmatism of market freedom (Holt, 2011). According to Holt (2011) the adoption of this policy by the US administration had huge impact that stimulated top-down imposition of increased transnational trade. He argues that the spread of global capitalism at the end of the cold war, expansion of communication and satellite technologies and the neoliberal policies accelerated the global commerce that is mostly originated from US and progressively deregulated.

In 1990s, the world, especially developing nations, pondered with a seismic shift of Globalization from Internationalization specifically in the communication sector. The technological revolution facilitated the wave of cultural and political transformation along with the neoliberal free trade policies (O'Neil, 1993). These policies facilitated the growth of media industries nationally and globally. Thus, as a result the media producers, distributors, and consumers increased in number dramatically, first in Europe and then in Asia, with China and India (Holt & Perren, 2009). The invasion of powerful conglomerates in the developing nations brought same trends of media industry mushrooming within the developing nations. Globalization diminishes media imperialism, and in Asia, media institutions attempted to be globalized in their practices adapted most of the creative and marketing strategies of foreign competitors that challenged the powerful conglomerates to flourish imperialism and they had to come up with media mergers and franchises with local and peripheral companies (Holt & Perren, 2009). Neo-liberalism, as a theory, proposes that living standards and human wellbeing can be improved by liberating the freedom and skills of individual entrepreneurs and

facilitating them with strong private rights, free markets and free trade within an institutional framework (Harvey, 2005). The theory further argues that the individual rights of freedom of action, expression and choice should also be extended to businesses and corporations. Privatization, deregulation and competition are important components of the theory as it posits that these characteristics flourish the entrepreneurship and business in the market. Furthermore, the elimination of bureaucratic red tape will not only improve efficiency, productivity, and quality but will reduce cost by providing cheap commodities and services and will also decrease the tax burden (Harvey, 2005).

Harvey (2005) points out that to flourish neo liberalism globally, the advanced capitalist nations of G-8 incorporated it with the World Trade Organization agreement so the barriers of exchange between states can be reduced and more synchronized structures can be developed.

However, neo-liberalism, according to political economists, is a big challenge for democracy. David Harvey (2005) criticizes neo liberalism as governance by elites and experts rather than government by democratic and parliamentary decision-making. Furthermore, it has resulted in monopolies and oligopolies that have brought wealth and power inequalities. In the absence of government intervention, the horizontal and vertical mergers have resulted in ownership concentration especially in communication sector that brings the issue of uninformed citizenry as the information flow is one sided coming from the owners of power and wealth (Harvey, 2005).

The political economists of communication and media criticized neo-liberal policies. McChesney (2004) has regarded neo-liberalism as anti-democratic drive for the communication sector and especially for the media. He argues that though the rhetoric about neo-liberalism commends small government, free markets, competition and entrepreneurial risk-taking, while large governments are distributing crucial contracts, monopoly licenses and subsidies to huge firms in highly concentrated industries. He further points out that the acceptance and enactment of this doctrine has damaged the very foundations of the US and democratic values (McChesney, 2004).

The emerging media problems of ownership concentration, localism and diversity, commodification of audience and vertical and horizontal mergers because of neo-liberal policies has been discussed and explicated by political economists. Mosco (1996) refers to the institutional extension of corporate power in the communication industry or the concentration of ownership as specialization. She indicated growth as the size of media firms that is measured by assets, revenues, profit, employees and share value. Furthermore, she posits that deregulation is a

regulation by the government that has been masked by the term deregulation and that every industry activity is a form of regulation. Mosco (1996) called commercialization, liberalization, privatization, and internationalization as the four state constitutive activities that originate from specialization and commodification (Mosco, 1996). Globalization addresses social change, but it is a wider movement of specialization. Political economists consider globalization as a “spatial agglomeration of capital” (Mosco, 1996: 205).

Jhally (1989) argues that wealth and power are unequally distributed in capitalist societies, where it is concentrated in the hands of a few that belong to the dominant social class and owns the means of production of the country. They use their power and wealth to control and influence the large groups of society. They do it in two ways: either by absolute force of military and police or by the consensus. He argues that they use media to legitimize their domination; to convince the majority to accept the present system of rewards and power. He further argues that media act as consciousness industry in which they make aware the audience through specific content that benefits the controlling class that rules the media and industry (Jhally, 1989). Media is a medium that is supposed to serve the public and public interest but rather only work for the interests of their owners. These owners are the private institutions and big corporations and not the public. Thus, these media industries ownership and control is not limited to the structural phenomena, but they are having big impact in the economic, political and social arenas of life. The companies have interlocking of directors that serve on boards of various companies and act as coordinators among various companies’ interests (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; Bagdikian, 2004; Jhally, 1989).

The structural changes in the media business have adverse impact on society (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). Vincent Norris (1990) discusses that political economy of communication deals with the polity, the economy, and the communication system, and prevailing relationships among wealth, power and knowledge. She further argues that it is not only about how power, and wealth affect the production and distribution of knowledge and how knowledge affects the production and distribution of wealth rather it also raises the normative questions that how in Good Society those issues should be dealt with.

The next section brings forth the case of Pakistan where the military government introduced neo liberal policies to bring democratic values in order to legitimize its regime, but resulted in a challenge to democracy as feared by the critics of neo liberal and scholars of political economy. This paper has taken the case of political economy of communication in Pakistan as a challenge to democracy.

INCLUSION OF NEO-LIBERAL POLICIES AND POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION: A CASE OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan, from its very inception in 1947, has been in political turmoil. In the 63 years of its existence, it remained under the rule of elected civil government for only thirty years and the rest of thirty-three years military ruled the country; it has been in power from: 1958–1971, 1977-1988 and most recently from 1999-2008. Ironically, Pakistan's economy spurts during all the three military regimes while the democratic regimes are marred by allegations of wide scale corruption, nepotism and economic instability. After the demise of Great Britain, the US has been one of the key players in the world politics (Mahmud, n.d.). Pakistan's political economy has always been influenced by the US as from the very beginning it signed Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) that guarantees that US would rescue Pakistan if its integrity is threatened by archrival India. As an ally, Pakistan supported United States during the cold war and allowed US policymakers to intervene in domestic policy decisions and economic development through bilateral military development and food assistance (Hussain, 2009). The induction of the US Harvard Development Advisory Service and the Ford Foundation in the policy and economic development played crucial role in changing Pakistan's economic thinking. Under these programs, many civil servants, economists and planners were sent to US universities for advance studies and they returned with training in economic and political policy making. This laid the basis for market-friendly, private sector led liberal, neoclassical model in Pakistan's economy (Hussain, 2009).

Sanctions

Pakistan off and on, in various regimes, faced aid assistance sanctions from the US governments and western world for not following their economic and political policies. However, the sanctions imposed in 1998 played a crucial role in changing the political and economic policies of Pakistan. In May 1998, Pakistan conducted a series of nuclear tests that resulted in aid suspensions by the US Clinton administration (Jordan, et al. 2009) and the rest of western world (Mahmud, n.d.). The military coup of 1999 by Musharraf resulted in additional U.S. sanctions against Pakistan (Jordan, et al. 2009).

Economic Crises, 9/11, Authoritarian Government, and Democratic Policies

During 1999–2002, Pakistan faced severe economic crises, aid sanctions and international pressure in the backdrop of 9/11. To deal with the economic crises, Pakistan needed a monetary jump-start that could be achieved by foreign aid and financial assistance that were stopped after 1999. One of the ways to regain that assistance was adopting the democratic policies and economic model adapted and prophesied by the West. Thus, during Musharraf regime, Pakistan pursued a

strategy of economic revival that consisted of four elements: macro-economic stability; structural policy reforms such as privatization, deregulation and liberalization; targeted poverty interventions and improved governance (Hussain, 2006). The support of Pakistan to the US after 9/11 resulted in the removal of economic sanctions; increased bilateral and multilateral assistance flowed in; bilateral external debt was restructured and re-profiled; workers' remittances multiplied several folds; foreign direct investment poured in large volumes and access to international capital markets was established (Hussain, 2009). The US government gave \$20.7 billion in military and economic development aid to Pakistan from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2011 (McDonald, 2011).

Liberalization of Media: A Case of Pakistan

Media liberalization was one of the major features of Musharraf's liberalization and market deregulation regime. According to Mosco (1996), in media liberalization, state increases market competition by intervening and expansion in the market and facilitate in increasing the number of participants in the communication services. Musharraf, to legitimize his position in the international community and to secure continuous supply of aid from the developed countries, adopted the policies of liberalization of trade and market, freedom of speech and liberalized media. International Media Support Report (2009) states that under Musharraf era, since 2002, Pakistani media has boomed; new liberal media laws ended the state's long monopoly over electronic media; TV broadcasting and FM radio licenses were issued to various private media outlets. Consequently, these policies, media grew in large proportion and resulted in the increase in number of television channels from three state owned channels to almost ninety, including six terrestrials and almost eighty private owned satellite and cable television channels. The radio channels have increased from one state owned radio broadcast to more than hundred. This mushroom growth of media certainly brought problems of media concentration of ownership, diversification of content, fulfillment of private interests over public interests (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). Mosco (1996) argues that liberalization though is popularly known for lower prices, services expansion, and innovation but its critics accuse it of encouraging private oligopoly where the prices, services and innovation mandates advance the agenda of oligopoly cartel and its privileged customers. This section discusses the case of electronic media, especially TV, as the liberalization policy towards television channels has significantly changed the media market structure in Pakistan. As TV viewership is almost 80% of Pakistan population, which is highest among all media outlets (BBC Survey 2008, 2010).

PEMRA

To liberalize media, the government established Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority - an autonomous body. Its objective is to deregulate and

liberalize electronic media in Pakistan to provide more choices to the people and in good interests of public and nation. (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance, 2002).

Media Policing Regulations

Liberalization of media certainly gave an edge to the Musharraf regime in international community as he provided a picture of democratic norms in the society; however, media was controlled by some policing regulations from time to time. As evident in literature, authoritarian rulers, while holding an office, prefer demobilizing and when necessary repress populations with a view by imposing social and political order (Gunther & Mughan, 2000). Though through policies he tames the media from time to time in his favor, but on the other hand introduces some lax regulations that favor the profit motives of media business industry. The relax regulation of media cross ownership resulted in a significant change in media structure and media power in Pakistan (Rasul & McDowell, 2012). The mushrooming of media and emergence of media giants has no stopping after that. Today, they are a big challenge to even the current democratic government. The next section of the paper discusses the media cross ownership regulation, its resultant product and challenge to democratic values of the country under the lens of political economy of media.

PEMRA Ordinance of Cross-Media Ownership

Pakistan Electronic Media regulatory authority, established in March 2002, defined cross media ownership as “ownership by one person or associated persons or associated undertakings of more than one of any of the following, namely print media, advertising agency, television broadcast station, or radio broadcast station” (PEMRA Ordinance, 2002). This regulation prohibits cross-ownership of media if it results in undue concentration of media ownership. The regulation defines “undue concentration” as, (1) both a newspaper and radio broadcast station; (2) both a newspaper and a television broadcast station; (3) both a radio broadcast station and a television broadcast station; (4) an advertising agency and a television broadcast station; or (5) an advertising agency and a radio broadcast station (Riaz, 2003). To ensure media liberalization to flourish and to have open and fair competition, PEMRA ordinance prohibited cross media ownership. According to Croteau & Hoynes (2006), cross media ownership allows media ownership concentration, while Riaz (2003) argues that the liberalization process which is in its infancy stage in Pakistan, will not flourish and will result in few media firms controlling and influencing media and information content if media cross ownership is allowed.

Cross Ownership of Media in Pakistan¹

Pakistani media, while in the infancy stage of liberalization, faced a trauma. PEMRA from the very beginning was under pressure from the existing print media firms in Pakistan for relaxing the cross-ownership regulations of media outlet. Due to this pressure of media companies, an amendment was submitted by the then Minister of Information, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on July 12, 2003 in the cabinet. The cabinet agreed on the ordinance amendment. However, according to Riaz (2003), the cabinet had already agreed in principle to award the first ten broadcast television licenses to the first ten applicants, and that included all major newspaper groups, such as *Jang*, *Nawa-I-Waqt*, *Khabrain*, Business Recorder, and the *Daily Times* (Riaz, 2003). Raza (2004) points out that on July 13, 2003 the minister announced the approval though it was not approved just a provision was announced of the amendment and the decision was greatly appreciated by the national newspapers. Riaz (2003) states that the newspapers' owners viewed the relaxation of rules as a great victory for which they had lobbied aggressively since PEMRA was established. Bagdikian (2004) states about this scenario as politics and media fulfilling each other's needs; big media firms can exert their influence and are able to change policies. Norris (1990) views it as, people in politics though are not in the business community but have control over wealth because of their political positions, and those in businesses exert power and influence government because of their control over wealth.

The concentration of the largest media owners results in many media problems: the commercializing of content; protecting their own political interest over public interests; stressing profit and material gains over societal norms; and can interfere with the goodwill of the government (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; McChesney, 2004; Riaz, 2003). Media cross ownership also results in decreasing information sources, as Riaz (2003) warns that the whole broadcast spectrum can be captured by few media giants and this can benefit the government also as because of few information disseminating sources, government can easily influence and manipulate public opinion with misinformation, or can easily silence the few media outlets from broadcasting issues. Pakistan is observing big structural changes and has moved towards media cross ownership and against liberalization indicators. According to International Media Support Report (2009), there were three dominating media moguls that have established their influence in politics and society through their dominance in both print and broadcast industries. However, the current media market is bringing 4 media moguls and some other media giants who own many TV channels thus, creating a huge impact on the provision of information to public. Ellick (2010) points out that Pakistan had only one TV news channel, currently it offers 26 news channels, half of which broadcast 24 hours a day; however, most of them hardly qualifies for rigorous, fact-based news. The talk shows follow a typical style of a roundtable discussion by middle-aged men

that are hashing out political conspiracies. US newspaper, provided the current landscape of media in Pakistan, pointed generally towards the mushrooming of media and specifically about Geo, the growing giant of the media that resulted in cross media ownership regulation. The newspaper points out that Pakistan owned one state broadcaster until media laws relaxed in 2002, and now one-third of Pakistan's population have access to 100 private channels through cable and satellite, among which Geo pioneered the television revolution. Geo claims to broadcast 70 of the top 100 programs and, with its newspaper Jang's various publications, they have one reporter stationed nearly every four miles (Brulliard, 2011).

International Support to Media Development/ Problems in Pakistan

After the Afghan invasion in 2001, the western world, specifically US and UK, have invested big amounts of money in the development of media independence in Pakistan for their political and economic interests. They wanted to have their voice reached to general Pakistani public, thus, they invested in community based radio channels, training of journalists and media lawyers training projects through US Aid programs. They are also investing in radio stations in the tribal areas of Pakistan to curb the extremists' community (Media Law Bulletin, 2004). In Pakistan, liberalization of media has not been only supported financially, but the adoption of free market economy model to liberalize economy of Pakistan has also given the problems of media of western world and specially US. In US, six big conglomerates control media, thus presenting issues of concentration of ownership and wealth in few hands that further in equalize society's socio-economic balance (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006; McChesney, 2004; Bagdikian, 2004; Herman, 1992). The next section brings forth the data about the media giants collected through secondary sources. The findings indicate media concentration in the hands of the few media giants that resulted through lax regulations of PEMRA.

Media Giants in Pakistan

Pakistan media market has currently four major moguls and few will become in the coming years. These media giants are among the first ten companies who were issued licenses for cross ownership on a provisional approval by the senate, even though the amendment in regulation was not passed.

Jang/Geo group

The group is owned by Independent Media Corporation that is owned by Mir Shakeel-ur-Rehman. His father Mir Khalil-ur-Rehman initiated the media business with Urdu daily named "Jang" before independence of Pakistan. The newspaper is one of the leading and nationwide read newspapers. This company is owned by Mir family that is currently in the top ten of the richest people of Pakistan list. Mir Shakeel-ur-Rehman is known for investing his money in stock exchange market.

Their media empire has significantly grown from print media to electronic media tycoons due to the relaxed media cross ownership regulation of Pakistan. The current list of their media outlets is:

Jang/ Geo group:

Dailies	Weeklies	4 TV Channels	Geo International	Radio	Net
Daily Jang (Urdu)	Akhbar-e-Jehan (Urdu)	Geo News (Urdu)	Geo UK	AAG	Jang
Daily Awam (Urdu)	Mag Weekly (English)	Geo	Geo USA	Radio	News
Daily Awaz (Urdu)	Fashion magazine]	Entertainment (Urdu)	Geo Canada		The
The News (English)	The News on Sunday (English)	Aag TV (Bilingual) English & Urdu/	Geo Japan		News
Daily Waqt (Urdu)	Jang Sunday Magazine (Urdu)	Music Channel	Geo Middle East		Geo
Pakistan Times (English)		Geo Super (Urdu/Sports Channel)			TV
Daily News (English)					

(Sources: Geo network .com, IMS, 2009/ PEMRA report 2011; Rasul & McDowell, 2012)

Geo network has also released some Urdu language films under Geo Films Banner. Future of Geo Network are to bring Geo kids and Geo English news. According to Gallup Pakistan (2011), the IMG has been on top in acquiring the most advertising revenues in all its media outlets including print and electronic. Also, this group earned highest revenues even more than the accumulative revenues of rest of the media companies in Pakistan (Sabir, 2009). Geo group is famous for its right wing extremist propaganda, and for using its all media outlets for its political ideology. Brulliard (2011) states that Geo-Jang Group, which is Pakistan's largest media company, is regularly criticized for promoting ideas of Islamist extremism, anti-Americanism and government loathing through its four domestic television stations and two top newspapers. He further criticized Geo for rumor-filled talk shows, sensational breaking news and dashes of progressive programming.

Nawa-i-Waqt Group

The company is in print media from 1942; they started with Urdu daily. The company currently is the second largest media company in Pakistan. Currently owned by Majid Nizami, the group is famous for its right-wing ideology.

According to Gallup 2011, the group has acquired 11% of the advertising revenue. Currently the group owns:

Dailies	Weeklies	Monthlies	TV Channels
Daily Nawa-i-Waqt (Urdu) The Nation (English)	Nida-i-Millat (Urdu) [Sunday magazine] Weekly Family (Urdu) Sunday Plus (English) Weekly Money Plus (English)	Monthly Phool (Urdu) [For children]	Waqt TV (Urdu)

(Source: *Nawaiwaqt.com, Gallup 2010; Rasul & McDowell, 2012*)

DAWN Group

Saigol families and Hameed Haroon own the third largest media company; both are among the 50-rich people of Pakistan. Dawn English Newspaper is one the oldest newspaper of Pakistan, founded by the country's founder in 1941. The chief executive of the Dawn group Haroon Hameed's younger brother is Pakistan's ambassador to the United Nations since September 2008, and was earlier speaker of the Sindh provincial assembly. The company chairperson Ms. Amber Saigol, daughter of famous politician and earlier chief executive of Dawn Media Group, is married to the rich industrial tycoon of Saigol family. Saigol family has a long list of textile and textile related factories. This group is famous for its liberal ideology and has maintained its monopoly in magazine journalism for many decades—both in circulation and advertising revenues (Rasul & McDowell, 2012; Sabir, 2009).

The Dawn media group owns

Dailies	Monthlies	TV channels	FM radio channels	Internet media
Daily Dawn (English)	Herald23 (English)	Dawn News (Urdu)	City FM 89 (music radio channel)	Dawn.com (a news web site)
Star (Eng evening)	Aurora (marketing & advertising based bi-monthly magazine) Spider (monthly internet magazine)			

(Source: *DAWN media group; Rasul & McDowell, 2012; International Media Support Report, 2009*)

Lakson /Express group

This group of media is a subsidiary of Lakson group (Century Publications), a UK based company, and has many foreign affiliations. The group has diagonal relations with other multinational businesses e.g. Colgate-Palmolive, McDonald's Corporation, Philips Morris International Finance Corporation (Rasul & McDowell, 2012), that presents a problem of joint ventures and interlocking of directorship that are controlling the politico economy of the country (Bagdikian, 2004; Jhally, 1989; Mosco, 1996). The group also claims to have the second largest read newspaper of the nation; it also acquired 11% of the advertising revenue in 2011 (Gallup, 2011).

Daily Newspapers	Weeklies	TV Channels
<i>Daily Express</i> (Urdu) <i>Express Tribune</i> (English)	Express Sunday Magazine (Urdu)	Express News (Urdu) Express 24/7 (English)

Daily Times Group

Another emerging company in media cross ownership is Media Times Ltd. The company was launched in 2002 and is owned by the late Governor Punjab Salman Taseer who was murdered by his own bodyguard in a controversial blasphemy case. His son Sheheryar Taseer now runs the company. The family has strong political and military ties. The newspaper advocates liberal and secular ideas. The company currently owns

Daily Newspapers	Weeklies	TV Channels
<i>Daily Aaj Kal</i> (Urdu) <i>Daily Times</i> (English)	Friday Times (English) Weekly WikKid (English) [For kids] Daily Times Sunday (English) AajKal Sunday Magazine (Urdu)	Business Plus (English) [Current affairs and business news] WikKid (Bilingual English and Urdu) [For kids]

ARY Group

This media giant not only owns various TV channels but is owned by one of the business tycoons of Pakistan, Haji Abdul Razzak Yaqoob. It is a family owned group. The family is in the top ten richest families of Pakistan. They also own various gold, real estate and trade businesses. The company currently has the network consisting of channels including: ARY Digital (Asia-Middle East-UK/Europe-USA) (Entertainment), ARY News, ARY Musik (Music), ARY QTV (Religion), ARY Zauq (Food), HBO, Nick, and many new ventures in the pipeline. Most of the networks in-house channels have their own specialized

programming catering to Urdu speakers living in Pakistan and abroad (ARY Digital TV).

Discussion and Conclusion

There is a common understanding that a strong connection exists between mass communication and democracy” (O’Neil, 1998, p. 1).

McChesney (2004) argues that during dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, people in power create a media system that facilitate their domination and minimize the possibility of opposition. These regimes not only manipulate the policy agenda but also use media as their “puppet” (Gunther & Mughan, 2000, p. 4). On the contrary, Musharraf being dictator did not keep the media as his puppet rather liberalized the media. However, his policies were very much dictated by the country’s political allies and were forced to coordinate with the major capitalist world political economic regulations. In the process Pakistan’s economic interest were also fulfilled with huge amounts of grants and aids.

The adoption of the hegemonic economic model though brought the economic growth, but the country also faced the associated socio-economic and political problems of the neo-liberal economic model. The growing concentration of ownership of capital in media sector is quite evident in becoming a challenge for society and politics of the country. The lax regulation of PEMRA towards cross ownership has resulted in the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the elitists of the country. Their control over information and knowledge is manipulating the thinking of common public. As Norris (1990), criticizing the enforcers of neo-liberal policies, argues that the founding fathers of libertarian principles intended that the polity should not influence the production and distribution of knowledge. That is not quite the case, however; government grants and other activities play a large role in determining what knowledge will be produced and who will obtain it. The licensing of broadcasting stations is an obvious exercise of governmental power in deciding who shall have the opportunity to say what to whom (Mosco, 1996).

Musharraf brought liberalized regulations to legitimize his regime in international community and projected democratic values to the common man. However, McChesney (2004) argues that when the government allocates lucrative monopoly licenses it is not regulation; rather it is portrayed as serious control and media policy in the name of public interest to society. Mosco (1996) argues that liberalization is state-constitutive regulation and is masked by deregulation. It seems that Musharraf regime, under the banner of deregulation, liberalization and privatization, enforced various policing regulations to stop media from criticizing his regime. Norris (1990) posits that in authoritarian societies, though knowledge

is produced and distributed by the wealthy and powerful who owns the private media, but this process is legitimized by the exercise of power – variously by regulations, licensing, censorship, confiscation, imprisonment, even assassination. The problem of news content is also evident in the cross-media ownership of Pakistan. According to International Media Support Report (2009), the news coverage ranges from sensationalism to company's propaganda of its own political ideology. The report further points out that the news coverage on the most popular private television channels mostly focuses on conflict and political stories, and reports covering social issue, minorities, marginalized groups, human rights and women rights do not get due exposure in the media. Altschull (1984) posits that newspapers, magazines and broadcasting outlets though have the potential to exercise independence but are not independent; rather the news media are the agents of those who exercise political and economic power. Moreover, the content of the news media reflects the interests of its financiers (Altschull, 1984).

PEMRA ordinance of 2009 revised the cross-media ownership or the horizontal integration of media companies' rule of owning 4 television channels still provides great leverage to the media companies to grow horizontally. In addition, the associated rule of mergers is quite relaxed and is dependent on the approval of PEMRA, which could be granted easily to any company based on personal and business interests. Thus, the big giants could soon shift the horizontal integration towards vertical ownership. As many small media firms are entering into the market, thus the big companies will start merging the small companies under their company banner to keep the profit concentrated in few hands, and to remain the market giants so they can influence the politico economic environment of the country (Bowls & Edwards, 1993).

Herman (1992) proposes that to have democracy in the country and media be part of it should be owned by grass root organizations, fulfill public interest, recognize and encourage diversity of content. Thus, a developing country like Pakistan should make new policies; adapt the Western politico-economic model according to its own needs and conditions based on its own requirements that can fulfill the needs of its public based on their socio-economic conditions. However, the strong international financial regimes and powerful states having their own interests may not allow this liberty to the developing world.

¹This study was conducted in 2012, thus all the data and numbers about media ownership in Pakistan are from or before 2012.

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