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Abstract

According to Wilbur Schramm (1964) mass media should perform at least three functions in developing countries; should serve as 'watchdogs', 'policymakers', and 'teachers' for change and modernization. In the wake of general elections 2013 in Pakistan, media played an important role to mobilize political behavior of the masses and the result was a remarkable voters' turn out up to 55%. However, media is facing multiple challenges for example, due to suicide bombings, target killings and deteriorating law and order situation, security of journalists is at stake which is impeding the functions of media. In 2011, Pakistan was ranked the second most dangerous country in the world for journalists by the Committee to Protect Journalists (FES, 2012, p. 6). FES¹ reports on its website, "In 2011, 12 journalists were killed. The death of eight was directly linked to their work." Decline of print media is another challenge. According to official facts and figures, newspapers and periodicals in Pakistan are decreasing day by day. In 2005 the figure was around 2000 and while it leaned to 749 in 2011. Media is obliged to look for other options. This paper reports challenges faced by media in post 2013 general elections in Pakistan and looks for options to cope with the challenges.

Keywords: Media challenges; Democracy and media; Pakistani media landscape; Security threats to journalists; Mediated democracy; Cyber sphere; Electronic colonialism

Introduction

Edmund Burke claimed press as 'fourth estate' because of its considerable importance. Raison d'etre of media is not just to update the masses about the

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¹ <u>http://www.fes-pakistan.org/pages/our-work-in-pakistan/media-development.php</u>. Visited on 23/03/2014.

latest occurrences: it has to work as a watchdog for national interest and formulate a vigilant public opinion. In the 21st century Pakistan has witnessed a tremendous growth and development in media sphere. The mushroom growth of television channels and FM radios is influencing attitudes and behaviors of general public. This significant increase drew attention towards media regulation, defining objectives and role of media for the development of Pakistan. Wilbur Schramm (1964) maintains that mass media should perform at least three functions in developing countries; media should serve as 'watchdogs', 'policymakers', and 'teachers' for change and modernization. As 'watchdogs' media should keep an eye on the activities of public institutions and report any anomalies and irregularities that impede the development. As 'policymakers' media should not only highlight the wrongs but also suggest how to correct it. It should help governments in making and implementing policies. Agenda-Setting theory explains how media agenda shifts agenda into public agenda and ultimately becomes policy agenda. As 'teachers' media should teach people how to contribute actively in the community for change, modernization and development. Knowledge and skills should be imparted through media so that people can play their new roles and responsibilities.

European Commission report on media policy suggests that "a modern democratic society cannot exist without communications media that; (1) are widely available and accessible; (2) reflect the pluralistic nature of such society and are not dominated by any one viewpoint or controlled by one interest group; (3) make available the information necessary for citizens to make informed choices about their lives and their communities; (4) provide the means whereby the public debate which underpins free and democratic societies can take place, means that the market will not necessarily deliver its own" (Report from the high level group on audiovisual policy, 1998; p. 9).

If we have a bird's eye view of media landscape in Pakistan, there is a tremendous growth in electronic media while a decline is observed in the case of print media (Eijaz, 2011).

Publicatio (dailies,	Electronic media scene								
monthlies	Television channels			Radio Stations					
language	number	%age	Level channe	of Is	Total	Туре	Number		
Urdu	251	70.9	National		National		72	Mid waves/ short waves	24
English	69	19	Regional		Regional		13	Commercial FM	114
Sindhi	27	7.26	Total		85	Non- commercial FM 24	24		
Punjabi	1	0.2				Total	162		
Seriki	1	0.2							
Pushto	2	0.5							
Balochi	1	0.2							
Gujrati	2	0.5							
Total	354	·							

Table 1: Media landscape in Pakistan in the 21st century

There are 85 television channels, 155 radio stations, 286 newspapers and 68 weeklies and monthlies in Pakistan. With this broad media landscape, challenges are also escalating. Among the challenges security issues, financial constraints, lack of professionalism and educational standards of journalists, lack of professional training, commercialization, mediated democracy, lack of accountability, ethical standards, media regulations and implementation are a few.

Lack of professionalism in media

Professionalism can be defined differently depending on the perspective, motive, function and application in a discipline. A working group on the definition of professionalism submitted their paper on 'Elements of Professionalism' in October 2001. The paper defines, 'professionalism as a personal characteristic is revealed in an attitude and approach to an occupation that is commonly characterized by intelligence, integrity, maturity, and thoughtfulness.' It further operationalizes the concept under the category

of building blocks of professionalism as, "scholarship; integrity; honor; leadership; independence; pride; spirit; collegiality; service; and balanced commercialism." Mass communication as a scholarship and discipline is well established and generally recognized. The rest of the elements are determined by the prevailing practices which can lead to grace or disgrace a profession.

Harold D. Lasswell (1948) has described three functions for mass communication: surveillance of the environment; correlation of components of society: and cultural transmission between generations. Entertainment as another function is added by Charles R. Wright (1960) and Dennis McQuail (1987) suggested mobilization as an important function of media. As far as Pakistani media is concerned, it is not giving quality coverage to issues of national interest, objectivity is ignored, balanced position and opinion is neglected, investigative journalism is underrepresented, official sources and information subsidies are not verified. Professionalism demands a sensible and responsible journalism. As stated by the Media Commission appointed by the Supreme Court, Pakistani media lacks maturity and professionalism. The final report (part II) by the Media Commission members comprising Senator (R) Javed Jabbar and Justice (R) Nasir Aslam Zahid submitted on May 31st 2013 states. "Lack of adequate, comprehensive training in print journalism and in broadcast journalism before persons are given the opportunity to become reporters, anchors, news readers, content controllers etc,"² is promoting nonprofessionalism. Professionalism can only be expected if journalists are equipped with proper training and education, and the media organizations clearly demark their roles and functions for the deputed portfolios.

Pakistan is a developing country with heterogeneous characteristics in terms of culture, language, land etc. The heterogeneity sometimes serves as an impediment in the national cohesion and integration. National integration and solidarity demands mature behavior of journalists. Due to mushroom growth of television channels, there is a cut throat competition to capture maximum viewers and grab a big market share. Because of interest in ratings, media outlets need to develop stories that engage audience fairly quickly. This race is promoting the trends of commercialization, sensationalism, unethical content, yellow journalism, and substandard infotainment on the part of media organization and cultivating bad tastes, and desensitizing audience on the other hand. Achieving and maintaining professional standards seems to be a difficult task. An increased focus on the laid down functions of media in developing countries can facilitate to meet this challenge.

² http://www.defence.pk/forums/seniors-cafe/264859-media-commission-report.html#ixzz2dBl0gslc visited on 23/03/2014.

Security Threats

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) conducted an extensive research to gauge media situation, environment and landscape in Pakistan and published a book titled Asian Media Barometer (2012). FES³ reports on its website, "In 2011, 12 journalists were killed. The death of eight was directly linked to their work. The total number of journalists killed in South Asia was 17 out of which 12 were Pakistanis. Since 1992, 42 journalists have been killed while reporting on terrorism and war." There have been different alarming figures about the killings, murders and deaths of journalists in Pakistan. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) ranked Pakistan the second most dangerous country in the world for journalists (FES, 2012, p. 6). Due to suicide bombings, target killings and deteriorating law and order situation, security of journalists is at stake which is impeding the functions of media. In an environment teemed with security threats, media cannot work as a watchdog.

According to CPJ's report 28 journalists have been murdered in Pakistan since 1992 to 2013. The researcher has accessed the list of the murdered journalists along with details from CPJ's database and has compiled the following table. The table shows statistical analysis in terms of percentages for seven different categories.

³ http://www.fes-pakistan.org/pages/our-work-in-pakistan/media-development.php. Visited on 23/03/2014.

		Job	Medium			Local/ Foreign		Suspected Sour Fire in M Cases	ource of Murder	Impunity in Murder Cases		Murder Victims	
Business	7%	Broadcast reporter	43%	Internet	7%	Local	93%	Criminal group	7%	Complete impunity	96%	Taken Captive	25%
Corruption	21%	Camera Operator	4%	Print	61%	Foreign	7%	Government Officials	11%	Partial justice	4%	Threatened	50%
Crime	21%	Columnist/ Commentator	14%	Radio	4%			Military Officials	18%			Tortured	29%
Culture	7%	Editor	11%	TV	39%			Mob Violence	4%				
Human Rights	11%	Photographer	11%					Political Group	50%				
Politics	57%	Internet reporter/writer	7%					Unknown	14%				
War	46%	Print reporter/writer	43%										

Table # 1: Statistical Analysis of the Journalists Murdered in Pakistan

Source: http://cpj.org/killed/asia/pakistan//murder.php

The table shows statistical analysis in terms of percentages for seven different categories. The categories include beats covered by victims, nature of job assigned to them as journalists, medium of the journalists, type of media, suspected source of fire in murder cases, impunity in murder cases and murder victims. It is also to be considered that all the victims are male. There is no protection extended by the government for journalists even then most of them are ready to work in any circumstances. Another report by CPJ shows a total of seventy two journalists killed in Pakistan since 1992 to 2013 in which fifty two fall in the 'motive confirmed' category and seventeen fall in the 'motive unconfirmed' category while three fall in 'media workers' category. In the light of above facts and figures it is very challenging for journalists to work for good governance in an environment where life is continuously at stake.

Financial constraints and job security

Financial constraints exist on individual as well as organizational level. Pakistani media is financially not as strong as the western media is. According to official facts and figures, newspapers and periodicals in Pakistan are decreasing day by day. In 2005 the figure was around 2000 and while it leaned to 749 in 2011. Due to limited resources, media organizations are obliged to depend on others for gathering information. This dependency is on local as well as on foreign sources. It also leads to imbalance information flows from west to east and from developed to developing countries. It is because of financial constraints that journalists are not sent abroad to get first hand information and directly cover the news of war fronts. Our media organizations usually depend on CNN, BBC, Reuters, AFP, AP and other international news agencies. Certain ideological biases penetrate through media content and time constraints let the content go. Information subsidies also facilitate a media organization to avoid financial burden but then it has to compromise on many a things including objectivity, professional standards and ideological leanings.

According to Media Commission Report (May, 2013), "Advertisers virtually dictate prime time content preferences by using a narrow, relatively non-representative, heavily urban and consumption oriented rating system to pressurize channels into cut throat competition and to a lowering of standards of content." This argument endorses Herman and Chomsky's position about the propagandistic nature of media. Herman and Chomsky (1988) suggest five propaganda filters for media content that include; media ownership and size; news sources; advertisers; flak; and anti-communism.

Financial constraints at individual level may lead a journalist to practice brown envelope syndrome and other malpractices. Reporters of the same beat do not bother to collect first hand information rather they make deals with other reports that ultimately results in the circulation of planted content. A committed,

honest and upright journalist is also sometimes forced to compromise due to financial constraints. It is also observed that some media organization appoint journalists without any salary package. Journalists are asked to make money through brown envelope syndrome, blackmailing, exploitation and other malpractices. Fear of unemployment, trends of downsizing and increased competition adds to the fear of job insecurity. Since majority media organizations are working in private sectors which have their own terms and conditions. Employment is usually contractual or on ad hoc basis therefore, job insecurity hovers on the minds of journalists all the time. In the given circumstances it seems quite difficult to accept the challenges posed by financial constraints and job insecurities.

The educational system of media employees

Systems and structures in Pakistan proved a legacy of colonialism. We have a polarized educational system and still not clear about content, syllabus, objectives, skills, medium and exam system from primary to higher level of education. Media related education is though being offered but there are certain lacunas in it. Teaching methods, contents, techniques, and system of English medium educational institutions 'encourage and facilitate analytical thinking as compared to the Urdu medium institutions that usually promote cramming and rote learning' (Eijaz, 2010. p. 68). That is why the attribute, style and characteristics of Urdu and English media organizations is contrary to each other. Banner headlines of Urdu dailies are usually based on statements and carry propagandistic style. Investigative reporting is almost absent in Urdu media. Even contents of advertisements are substandard and unethical. The two parallel trends are continually perpetuating and appear as a challenge.

Journalists working in Urdu newspapers are not as qualified as of English newspapers. Since they are less qualified, they are low paid and in some cases they are denied of any salary. Kalansooriya (2010, p.2) quotes the interview of Adnan Rehmat, country head of Internews, regarding educational standards and its impact of vernacular journalism in Pakistan. He says, "More than 80% of present print news desks are with youngsters who have less than three-year experience and they are between the ages of 20 to 22 years. Their academic and exposure background is in a pathetic condition in understanding complex issues. Thus, their own perception or bias creeps into their own stories."

Other than the regular degree programs in media education, there is a need of in-service refresher courses, training programs and workshops for working journalists. A liaison between media practitioners and academicians is the

need of the hour that can improve standards of media education and can initiate need-based academic programs.

Legislation, ethics and media

In an open liberal market the concept of free media must be accompanied by the concept of social responsibility. The private sector Pakistani media is owned by business elite who also control the editorial stuff and policy matters. Usually a business mind acts upon the policy of profit maximization at any cost without media qualification, journalistic perspective, and a sense of social responsibility. Though there are many media association working at different levels for achieving high professional standards and observing code of ethics. Some of them are formulated in private capacity like Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE), All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) while some are constitutionally established like Pakistan Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), and Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) etc. PFUJ, CPNE, and APNS were established in 1950s wile PEMRA and PCP are formulated in 2002. In spite of these bodies, media ethics and standards are deteriorating day by day as Media Commission Report 2013 bears witness.

In 2010, article 19A of the 18th constitutional amendment entitled 'Right to Information' ensures the right of citizens to access information. However freedom demands responsibility therefore the article explains, "Every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression, and there shall be freedom of press, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of glory of Islam, or the integrity, security or defense of Pakistan, or any part thereof, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or in relation of contempt of court, (commission of) or incitement to an offence." ⁴ After the promulgation of this amendment media seems to be more active and vigilant in its coverage on politics, military and judiciary. However, coverage of religion related issues is still a sensitive and controversial issue. The solution is not in the imposition of laws rather the issues must be resolved through better education. As Islam itself teaches to observe sanctity of other religions. Muslims, in retaliation do not make cartoons of any prophet or saint because of the teachings of Islam. There is a need for better understanding of Islam in order to be good citizens.

Democracy and media

⁴ Article 19, ' Freedom of speech', Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Government of Pakistan (2010)

Democracy presupposes a connection between political leaders and the people. Media plays a pivotal role to establish this connection. In the Habermas-Dewy-Lippmann perspectives on media and democracy, the perceived role of media is; to perform as an agent of deliberative democracy; to serve as a transmitter of objective, true and neutral information/realities; and to provide citizens a platform to exchange information and ideas (Glasser 1999). All the three perspectives contribute in the promotion of democratic processes. Splichal (1993) assumes four levels of relationships between democracy and citizens established through media. In the first level, media is supposed to provide information to the citizens in order to promote democracy. The second level assumes that citizens take interest in politics due to proper information supplies. In the third level, citizens voice their opinion and have equal rights to participate in the decision making. The fourth level assumes that all decisions are submitted to the public for discussions and deliberations. The effects of media that can be on cognitive, conative and behavioral levels are determined by the type of citizens' participation.

Pakistani media has unveiled many scams and corruption cases including Pakistan Steel Mills, National Insurance company, Hajj corruption, PIA and railway scam, ephedrine quota case, rental power projects corruption, NATO containers case etc. However the relationship between pluralist media and good governance is not established.

To cope up the above stated challenges, media may choose to apply selfaccountability, promotion of peace and security by playing a positive role, improving educational standards of journalists, implementation of code of ethics, promotion of citizen journalism, and flourishing democratic-participant media etc. In the wake of general elections 2013 in Pakistan, traditional as well as social media played an important role to activate and mobilize political attitude and behavior of the masses. As a result there was a remarkable voters' turn out compared to previous ones.

Media Commission Report (2013, para t, p. 103) cites, "A couple of media houses are reported to have received large grants in the form of advertising contracts from overseas sources. It is said that one such grant is £ 20 million. Some part of this amount may be for paid advertising or sponsorship of a program. The actual facts are not conveyed to the public or to PEMRA. It is also said that all, or part of this amount is received by an entity which is part of the media group and is used to sponsor non-advertising campaigns. Any attempt by PEMRA to probe such matters immediately leads to claims that there is an attempt to curb freedom of the media and there is always the recourse to obtaining a stay order if an inquiry is held." The programs referred

to are Geo campaigns 'Zara Sochiye' and 'Aman ki Aasha' for getting funds from foreign sources.

Media Freedom

Freedom of media is a widely acclaimed and cherished ideal. 'Freedom House' measures press freedom worldwide on a set of criteria founded on Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Freedom House measures the level of press freedom using four criteria which include; laws and regulations that influence media content; political pressures and controls on media content; economic influences over media content; and repressive actions. A free and plural media does not guarantee its integrity with the national cause and alignment with the national interests.

News on Pakistani Urdu media are usually very loud, sensational, scandalous, and stylized in infotainment packages. Pictures, colors, newspaper make up, sound effects, and production treatment are more of emotional type. For example the coverage of Salman Taseer's murder was guite different in English and Urdu media. Eijaz (2010) conducted a research on the coverage of blasphemy issue and concluded that, "In-depth analyses were missing in the Urdu newspapers especially the news items were loudly purveying conflicting opinions without analysis and interpretations. There was more space for headings than contents. Moreover, 'he said or statement news items' were in great number. Religion was taken as a sacred domain therefore debates were denied" (p. 68). News on terrorism and violence are presented in such a way that people are becoming immune and desensitized to such issues. The result is increased apathy and decay of moral values among masses. Proper professional training of the journalists can bridge this gap. Media has the potential to change ethical and moral outlook of a society. Media helps in creating mental schemas and psychological make ups. The sole objective of making money can erode ethics and can make people insensitive which will affect media as well.

With the promotion of citizen journalism media can offer open access for everybody, with unlimited carrier capacity where information is available to all and sundry, provides means of increased interactivity where co-presence of horizontal and vertical communication is possible. Modern technology has now made it possible for media outlets to make provision for the common people to have a say in media content through direct live calls, e-mails or indirectly uploading content on social media. Grassroots media recognizes citizens' right to relevant local information, and the right to give feedback. After 1960, micromedia and now social media enabled common people to use new means of communication for interaction and social action in small-scale settings of

community, interest groups or subculture. Pakistani people are also actively participating in the cyber sphere as well as through micro-media.

Conclusion:

A free and informed debate in society through mass media and the dissemination of objective information is necessary in order for citizens to make informed decisions. However, there are certain times when media has to leave the neutral grounds. According to Schudson (1991) there are three moments when the American newspersons willingly abandon the neutral ground. These happen when: tragedy strikes; public life is endangered and national security is threatened.

Democratic media is a challenge while media democracy is an option. Information management has become a large-scale industry which seems at times to threaten some of the basic rights of a democratic society. Media democracy rests on the idea that there must be a check and confinement on concentration of media ownership; normal and sensible media regulation; promotion of citizen journalism; and provision of micro-level/alternative media to government and public like Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria

Electronic Colonialism is a challenge while grassroots/proletariat media is an option. Increased concentration of media ownership and emergence of media giants control the information traffic and determine what realities are accessible to the general public. According to Thussu (2000, p. 66), "Developing countries know virtually nothing about events in neighboring countries that has not been filtered through the lenses of the developed media systems." Decentralized, alternative and community media can facilitate general public to voice their opinion and participate at various levels. However, disparities on the basis of education and economic status may hamper certain segments of society to participate on equal or realistic grounds.

Internet has created another sphere, based on virtual realities. In the last decade of 20th century, internet and mobile phone was considered as a luxury and a symbol of rich class in Pakistan. The dominant virtual communities hijacked cyber sphere because of their socio-economic dispositions which emerged as a challenge. Since the ideology of the ruling elite becomes the ruling ideology, the ruling elite are freely using virtual space. Media has been serving as the means of ruling power to produce and maintain the dominant ideology. Trans-border information exchange is now so blurred that it is becoming meaningless. Media organizations are now multi-national and global and with the new technological development, global journalism practices have been significantly changed both in information production and in information

consumption. However, the low cost technology produced by China to participate in the cyber sphere is helping to initiate pluralist ideas thus cyber space is becoming an option.

Media is like an industry which is dependent on its supply of raw material. The sources of information can manipulate reality. The willingness and ability of journalists to interrogate their sources and compare one source with another is itself a critical variable and may be constrained by the organizational contexts in which they operate. Sources themselves vary in scope, size, power and influence. Market-driven media has made the news as a 'commodity' that signify news as a cheap and readily available good. News can be purchased on demand as well as free of cost news is also available on satellite and other channels which has certain cultural/ideological leanings. Promotion of citizen journalism is a good option to cope up this challenge.

Cultural imperialism and media imperialism is a challenge for the developing countries. The import of Western and American media system and products by less developed countries resulted in the dominance of news flow, entertainment, communication technology and English as universal language. Schiller (1992) believed that further domination and dependency would come with further extension of the new information technology. Such phenomena gave rise to the term "media imperialism". The imbalance of power resources between the countries engaged and entangled with unidirectional cultural invasion through media contents and systems created media imperialism (Boyd-Barrett, 1977). The challenge of media imperialism can only be dealt with proper media policies. Development and growth of local and regional media systems to promote pluralist media can be of some help. Media has an important role in building institutions. In the developing countries where literacy level is very poor, role of media in the development becomes more crucial. Romano (2005) divided development journalism perspectives into the following five categories:

- (a) journalists as nation builders,
- (b) journalists as government partners,
- (c) journalists as agents of empowerment,
- (d) journalists as watchdogs, and
- (e) journalists as the guardians of transparency.

Contribution of media in building institutions is a challenge and resting upon any perspectives of development journalism is an option. Whatever perspective a Pakistani Journalist/media holds, it will further development and strengthen democracy.

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