

The Mediatization of Politics in Pakistan: A Structural Analysis

By Muhammad Atif Khan

More than eighty years ago, when Walter Lippmann, the father of modern communication, opined that the significant revolution of modern times is not industrial or economic or political, but the art of creating consent among the governed, it sounded utopian (Lippmann, 1954). He anticipated that “it is no daring prophecy to say that the knowledge of how to create consent will alter every political premise” (ibid, p. 248). Now at the start of twenty- first century that truth is not only self- evident, rather it has crossed the barriers to an extent that the media subvert or control the political process itself. The McLuhan metaphor of *global village* has not only become the cause of change in social and economic trends, but the information explosion also affected state decision making process. In Western democracies, the decade of 1980s and 1990s were of particular importance when the advent of private news channels, satellite transmission and then the cable system brought a revolution in the societal, cultural and political life. The growing influence of media in all these sectors compelled the western academia to establish a theory of the influence media exert on society, culture and politics in western liberal democracies, more particularly in USA, and to a lesser extent, in Western Europe. They eventually devised this mechanism as “Mediatization”. This term was first used by a Swedish media researcher Kent Asp who took mediatization of politics as a “process whereby a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics” (Asp, 1986, p.359) (Hjarvard, 2008).

Though there are a good number of media scholars who differed with one another on the exact definition of mediatization, yet this debate is out of limits for this study. Hence just for the sake of clarity we borrow, from the work of Darren G. Lillker, who defines mediatization as “a theory which argues that it is the media which shapes and frames the processes and discourse of political communication as well the society in which that communication takes place” (Lillker, 2006, p.117).

Mediatization so far is a western phenomenon. Studies of mediatization of politics and/or society in developing countries are largely absent. But this is a world of globalization. The complex interdependence culture in global issues is a major

determinant for diffusion of many Western ideas and themes, such as the trend under discussion, which is on move from developed Western world to developing countries. A significant example in this flow is the *Aljazeera* culture and its effects on Middle Eastern politics which would be unimaginable a decade ago, keeping in mind the history of closed and authoritative regimes in Arab world. This diffusion created a dire need to study this phenomenon of mediatization in politics of developing countries. India, Pakistan, South Africa, Brazil, Singapore, Malaysia are some of many countries from Asia, Africa and South America where the role of media is growing from an observer to an active player in political decision making.

‘In other parts of the world’, says Aasma Shirazi, a well-known Pakistani TV journalist, in an interview, ‘Free media emerges out of democracy, but here, in Pakistan, democracy is emerging out of free media’ (Hiel, 2008). The role Pakistani media played in the ouster of military dictator General Pervez Musharaf from the corridors of power, the reinstatement of deposed chief justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan, Justice Iftikhar Chaudry, are few examples which ask for a systemic study for the growing and dominant role media playing in the state decision making process.¹

A deeper insight into these developments reveals the fact that actually this is the advent of a stronger mediatization of politics where media is transforming itself into an independent institution and changing its status from a mere informer to a dynamic player in politics of Pakistan.

Being confined to a case-level study of Pakistani politics and media, one should not enter into the explanation and academic debate going on the phenomenon and process of mediatization. Rather, we start our study to discuss the factors which affected Pakistani politics to be mediatized. There are different developments that occurred in the structure and functions of contemporary Pakistani media which became the causes of this development. We will elaborate the most important of them in order to analyze the process of mediatization in politics of Pakistan.

One major variable in growing influence of media in Pakistan is, undoubtedly, the advent of private television news channels. The dawn of twenty-first century in Pakistan marked the beginning of media boom due to the permission, given by government, to establish private news channels and FM radio stations. Allama Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan, once used a beautiful metaphor to say that ‘*Pasbaan milgae kaabe ko Sanam Khane se*’, that is, sometimes such a variation occurred in the course of history that a polytheist came to guard the interest of *Kaaba*, the Muslim religious centre and a symbol of monotheism. One can happily quote this metaphor here to elucidate how the permission for a free, private broadcast media was not given by a democratic regime, as in all western democracies, but by a military dictator. Hence for a comprehensive study of mediatization

of politics in Pakistan, we shall elaborate, in the following paragraphs, different reasons for which the broadcast media succeeded to free itself from any political dependence and to become an active, independent player in the political stage.

The difference private news channels showed in their coverage, as compared to the previous performance of state-controlled channel, had a tremendous effect. They were more independent and their coverage expanded from the official corridors of the president's palace, PM House and ministries secretariat to small villages and ordinary towns in the country. People started to compare *Khabernama* vs. *Wazeernama*, and in this competition the former succeeded due to its coverage of the realpolitik and the issues of common masses.²

Cable system was introduced in Pakistan's major cities in 2004 and then prevailed all over the country.³ This arrangement again made an easy access to private channels. Before this system, it was considered a luxurious facility for elites to enjoy international channels by dish antenna. But this new cable system facilitated all the concerned parties. It gave extended and unprecedented access to private channels, it created thousands of new jobs as cable operators particularly in densely populated cities and towns, and it gave the common masses a cheaper and almost free access to national and international TV channels. In a nutshell it transformed all the daily life routine of the masses in Pakistan where earlier majority of viewers of Pakistan Television (PTV), state-controlled television channel, used it for only two hours, from eight to ten in the evening for a drama serial and a news bulletin. Private news channels started new and diverse programs for all age groups and thus people were glued to their TV sets almost all the day (Zehra, 2005). This gave a rise in popularity, reliability and trust of these TV channels in the eyes of common masses. On the other hand, political parties, even state officials became dependent to convey and defend their policies through the use of this new media.

The growing popularity of broadcast media also requires, as a prerequisite, an analysis of the Pakistani societal features. Prevalent illiteracy and rural culture are some of the basic characteristics of the Pakistani society. According to a UN data the literacy rate in Pakistan is 49.9 percent, this means almost half of the population cannot read newspapers. This was the main reason people were not able to have a direct access to new developments in politics. In a country which is sixth most populous in the world, had only 5 million news readers out of more than 160 million in total. Rather these large illiterate masses were dependent on the educated persons for obtaining knowledge about political developments. These educated masses in their respective circles were acting as opinion leaders. But the new TV culture changed everything. Now every person, literate or illiterate, had a direct and equal access towards political developments using this new facility. Table.1

describes this growing media culture in Pakistan by increasing number of private news channels.

Table 1: Mass Media at a Glance

Medium	1999	2009
Local TV Channels	2	71
Radio Stations	22	25
FM Radio Station in Private Sector	Nil	111 (121 Licensed)
FM Radio Station in Public Sector	Nil	10
Dailies	310	350
Readership of Newspapers	-	5 Million
Viewership of TV	-	35 Million
Cable Operators (licensed)	Nil	1600
Cable Subscribers	Nil	5 Million

Source: A) PEMRA. B) Ministry of Information and Broadcast.

The realm of “Political Pundits” is a reality in journalism since Walter Lippmann legitimized the profession of journalism in early twentieth century. Their sphere, what Nimmo and Combs refer to as the ‘priestly establishment’ was evolved and developed in to an important figure at the end of last century (Nimmo and Combs, 1992, p.6). They defined this establishment of pundits as ‘a loose collectivity of journalists, analysts, policy experts, and other specialists who voice their special knowledge in public forums’ (ibid. p.24). The journalist-pundit is someone who is accepted by reader or viewer as an authority on political affairs. Such a person becomes ‘a source of opinion -formation and opinion -articulation, agenda -setting and agenda –evaluation’ (Mcnaair, 2007, p.71).With the growing importance of broadcasting over print media, the former also hired a parallel class of experts in their news and current affairs programs. This new class of ‘Broadcast Pundit’ used the same tactics of policy-formulating, with some new and useful features of eye contact, drama, and visual effects.

This culture of Broadcast Punditry has an alarmingly enhanced proportion in Pakistani media as compared to the developed world’s free media. Despite going into the merits and demerits of this new trend, it is a ground reality is that their role

in public opinion making and their influence in politics of Pakistan are ever growing. This culture starts with the launching of some debate and talk shows on major private news channels. In these show the anchors mediate between the public and the politicians, or the rulers and the opposition leaders, and providing all concerned parties a platform to exchange and discuss their point of view in front of camera, so the general masses can formulate their own opinion on policy issues. Hence with the passage of time, and obviously due to the rising popularity of these programs and their hosts, these mediators and anchor persons developed themselves as experts, and started to give their own opinion on policy issues. They now move from a mediator into the role of active participant. Even in some much criticized programs, like *Jawabdeh* on Geo TV, these hosts tend to act as judges or police officers, in their tone and scripts, while the political leadership is presented there as a culprit. Despite all of its deficiencies, these programs are much popular in general viewers. The inability of larger illiterate masses to study relevant documents, books or research articles, the direct, cheap and easy access to these ready-made opinions on political issues, and the general reliability of these journalists and analyst in the eyes of common people, are some major factors behind the beginning of media-tization of politics in Pakistan by these TV journalist and experts. This culture in broadcast news clearly deviated from the ideal impartiality of news and in reality it contains what McNair proposed as ‘a deep structural bias towards the status quo’ (ibid. p.75).

The popularity and influence on masses in making public opinion of these new ‘broadcast Pundits’ is evident in last years of Musharaf era when military junta stressed the owners of TV channels to stop some very popular current affairs talk shows. *Capital Talk* by Hamid Mir, *Mere Mutabiq* by Shahid Masood, *Off the Record* by Kashif Abbasi, and *Live with Talat* by Talat Hussein were some of these shows whose relay was banned by Musharaf regime in the crisis regarding the suspension of Chief Justice. Hence news bulletins were on the run. But actual threat for government was these broadcast pundits who were the major determinants in making and then strengthening public opinion against military role and against suspension of Chief Justice (CJ) by General Musharaf. The situation was again raised on 12th of May 2008, when MQM threatened the cable operators to shun the famous Pakistani TV Channels in Karachi at the event of CJ’s arrival there. Interestingly the most critique of this dictatorial act, Pakistan Peoples Party, played the same tactic of suspending the transmission of some private news channels on 15th of March 2009, when opposition parties started a long march towards the capital, Islamabad, demanding reinstatement of CJ and other deposed judges. These similar acts of different regimes, authoritarian as well as democratic, reveal not only the

growing influence of Pakistani media from an observer to an active player in Politics, rather it also showed that the political leadership failed to comprehend the new power play of media and how to mold it, or tackle it in a democratic and professional way. The new scenario of Pakistani media and politics gave a clear picture of mediatization of Pakistani politics where media enhanced its role from an observer to an active player of political game.

Another important factor in this process of mediatization is the introduction of different visual techniques which are par excellence in their effects on viewers. Two of these techniques, used by Pakistani TV media in the politically turbulent years of 2007 to 2009, are worth mentioning here.

The sound bite culture is on rise in the western professionalized media, and Pakistani journalists followed this with drastic effects. We explain this technique, for the purpose of clarification, as a line or sentence taken from a longer speech or interview of a personality to use it as a hint line of the broadcast content. The sound bite has remained a major feature of news management in Western media since 1980s. When a political leader is interviewed, or when they give a speech or comment on any policy, sentences with news worthiness are extracted by broadcasters that fit within the framing and agenda of the transmitted report. The growing mediatization and a high level of journalistic intervention in Western politics resulted in broadcasting the sound bites of political leaders with less policy content and more attack-related and campaign buzz-related content (Esser, 2008). On the other hand, in Western democracies, inclusion of sound bite becomes a general feature of professionalized campaigns and communication to attract the reporters and to control coverage of political campaigns. There are exceptions to this, as the famous sound bite of US president George Bush, declaring the war against terrorists of 9/11 attacks, as a ‘new crusader’ on September 16, 2001, went wrong, and was deemed offensive in the Muslim world, compelled him to apologize and change the stance. Despite these rare exceptions, most political actors in western democracies appeared in control during interviews and intersperse their arguments with memorable phrases designed for posterity. The situation is in opposite direction, however, in Pakistani political culture. Political leadership, with a confined print media experience, was accustomed to give sentimental and offensive remarks and denying it thereafter, if it went wrong. But these political dodges proved to be a failure after the advent of TV culture. Now all of these sound bites with their visuals are undeniable. President Musharaf’s declaration of ‘Our power’ to the massacre of political workers and lawyers on 12 May 2007 in Karachi, the manhandling of a police officer to illegally suspended Chief Justice and pushing him in a police car, Benazir Bhutto’s desire in her speech to ‘hang over the flag of Pakistan on residence of Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudry, and more recently President Asif Ali

Zerdari's sound bite while giving an interview in a famous Pakistani Current affairs show that 'political promises and agreements are not holy religious things (neither *Quran*, nor *Hadith*) to be respected, became the much infuriated sound bites on the eve of the campaigns for restoration of judiciary. Hence in these episodes Pakistani media made a dual use of these sound bites as indication of the political leadership commitments for salvation of the political crisis, and as an alternative of print media's follow-ups, where these sound bites and their respective visuals remained on air hundreds of times during the turbulent political crisis. Particularly, the sound bite of President Asif Ali Zerdari (mentioned in last example), on the most popular Pakistani news channel, Geo News, caused such furor that it became the major reason for a *de facto* governmental order to suspend the transmission of this Channel at the peak of Long March Episode on March 2009. On the other hand it kept all doors closed for political lies in traditional domestic culture. Some commentators and analysts of political communication voiced their concerns for the use of these sound bites without being fully contextualized as unethical and professional deceit. Nevertheless the commentators note rise in the sound bite culture. Pakistan has, with all obvious reasons, have been no exception in the use of this journalistic technique against the political leadership that was deceiving the same media, in a print media milieu before.

The second equally important key factor in TV journalism is the introduction of live transmission in important political events. This live broadcasting in PTV, the official, government-controlled television, was specific for the cricket matches, where the viewers were kept informed on every ball as it was played in the grounds. But now the private channels used the same techniques in showing the Government vs. Opposition political matches. And the result is manifold. Millions of viewers, commonly from urban and middle class group, were glued to their TV sets. Though the DSNG (Digital Satellite News Gathering) vehicles, used globally for live transmission, still lack in number, and used only by two or three leading news channels.⁴ However this deficiency is covered by a domestic solution of IPT (Internet Protocol Telephony), used to provide a quick, quasi-live coverage of different politically-important events. Nevertheless the prompt visual effects are par excellence for formulating a public action in a speedy manner (Ahmed, 2009) (Weiss, 2008). The competition among the private channels was lessening their role as gatekeepers, and government is also helpless to control the flow of information by any coercive or communicative methods. The disadvantages of this live coverage are as well present there as the absence of editor's overview allowed, sometimes, the broadcasting of the visuals which are considered unethical in routine transmission. However regarding or disregarding the effects of live coverage of private Television channels, the ground reality is its popularity in these years of

political turmoil in Pakistan.

No study on mediatization can be completed without considering the effects of commercialization on media which is acting here as *raison d'être* of this process. Though the main purpose of the press, since its emergence as a mass medium, has been to produce information in commodity forms (McNair, 2007), yet the advent of TV journalism manifolds this motive due to its better advertisement and communication medium and the growing competition among new private television channels. As Greg Philo notes, “a simple truth underpins the everyday practices of the media institutions and the journalists who work within them—that they are at some level in competition with each other to sell stories and maximize audiences” (Philo, 1993, p.111). In western democracies this culture is so overwhelming that the media culture and consumer culture, or in other terms, mediatization and commercialization, have become intertwined. Stig Hjarvard, a well known Nordic professor of media studies clarifies this trend in media management by following; “A stronger market orientation has led media to focus more closely on servicing its own readers and audiences. This has been said to imply a greater measure of *receiver steering* of the media, in the sense that attention to receivers has taken precedence over deference to other social institutions. Newspapers, radio, television and internet still devote space and time to politics, the Arts and cultural life, but to a lesser degree on those institutions’ terms or from the perspective of ‘public enlightenment’. Other institutions have instead become the raw material for the product the media serve to their readers, viewers and listeners. Where media in early days were sender-steered, e.g., steered by particular interests in the days of the party press or by the terms of public service broadcasting concessions, as media institutions they are in large part steered by the interests of their readers, viewers and listeners, their market demand and purchasing power” (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 119)).

Coming back to the pavilion, in Pakistani media history, the print media was not as much commercialized. Its major resources were coming from government department’s advertisement and state officials, often, using this monopoly to control the editorial policy of the news papers. The paper that is ‘more pro-government will earn more advertisement’, was the rule of the game, throughout the independence of Pakistan in 1947 until recent years, when the advent of private TV channels changed the scenario altogether. Now the major clients of these new media are not state departments, but the corporate companies doing business in consumer’s goods. They want to give their ads to the channels, and even sometimes at the transmission time of specific programs, which are more popular in the public. They transferred majority of their advertisement and marketing budgets from print media and Pakistan Television (PTV), state television network, to these growing –popular private TV channels in order to get better access to the target audiences.

In Table 2 and chart 1 an attempt is made to explain this transformation with the use of data available which shows the latest proportion of advertisement revenue given to broadcast and print media respectively. As a consequence, this new trend changed the issue- based news management in to a market- oriented media. As a general rule in democracies, people are more critical of their elected representatives, and this public trend changed the *modus operandi* of new media where ‘more anti-government will earn more business’ is considered a basic key to success. That is why in prime time slot of these news Channels, which is, in Pakistani Broadcast culture, from eight to twelve in the night, they usually present the news bulletins and Talk shows which are particularly more critical of public policies and hence more popular in audiences. The advertisement cost per minutes in this prime time slot is charged manifold, by these private news channels in Pakistan, as compared to other time slots.⁵

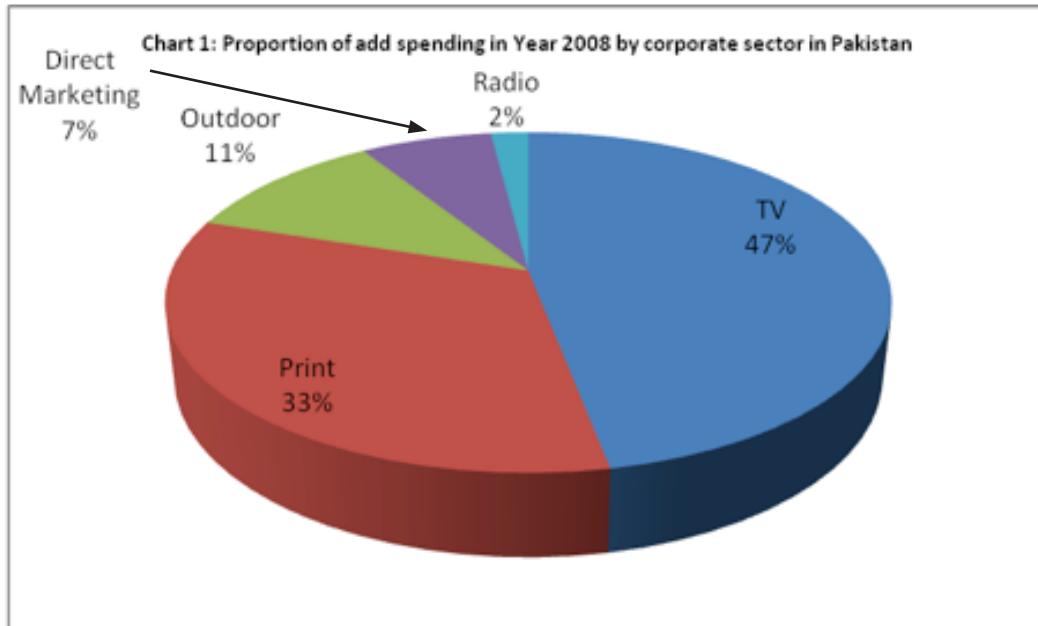
To a lesser account, this situation gives a negative impression to the performance of news management. Yet to a larger extent, it tends to get an effective watchdog role of journalism which is already much strong in Western liberal democracies, the US media performance in Watergate episode is only one example of this watchdog role of journalism. In Pakistani political scenario, we can safely quote ‘*Farah Dogar Case*’ here to indicate the extensive coverage where these media pundits revealed the corruption of ‘holy cows’ in Pakistan’s specific political culture.

Table 2: Comparative share of Advertisement revenue by Print and TV Media in Pakistan in Year 2008.

	Print	TV	Total	Print % Share	TV % Share	% Total
Gallup	Rs 8.16 bn	Rs 11.91 bn	Rs 20.07 bn	41	59	100
Mind-share	Rs 6.52 bn	Rs 10.98 bn	Rs 17.5 bn	37	63	100
Aurora	Rs 9.99 bn	Rs 11.7 bn	Rs 21.69 bn	46	54	100

Source: Gallup Survey of Pakistan. January 2009

Chart.1: Proportion of add spending in Year2008 by leading corporate sector in Pakistan



Source: Gallup Survey of Pakistan. January 2009

Though the recent studies on mediatization argue this phenomenon is related to a 'television era' (Lillker, 2007). However print media also started to revolutionize itself in order to cope with the media revolution. Pakistan's experience is also not an exception to this broad understanding, where the transforming role of media is on rise, from an observer to an active player in political game. Rather one innovative trend which came in Pakistani print media, parallel to popular TV coverage, is the introduction of investigative journalism. This new creed of investigative journalists can be declared, without the risk of exaggeration, as the Pakistani version of the 'Rottweiler Journalist'. In this regard the investigative unit of *The News*, a leading English daily, is worth mentioning here. This team of investigative journalists, led by investigative editor Ansar Abbasi, broke many invisible barriers which were considered before as 'no go areas' by mainstream media. They broke news about corruption of judges, generals, senior bureaucrats and top-brass political leadership. The main deficiency of this team was, however, their misplacement in English daily, keeping in mind that the readership of English newspapers is only five percent of total readership in Pakistan. This deficiency was soon recovered, by publication of the same investigative reports in its sister Urdu newspaper *Daily Jang*, which has the largest circulation in the country. These investigative stories,

though sometimes lacking in authenticity, are usually much popular in masses due to their scope and newsworthiness. Some observers and traditional journalists objected, however, on these reports as lacking media ethics or having violent nature. The fact is that in recent years of political turmoil, these investigative reports, despite all critics, were major stimuli in igniting the fierce political debates in leading talk shows of Pakistani Broadcast media.

Mediatization of Politics in Pakistan: A Structural Appraisal

Mediatization is no universal process that characterizes all societies. It is primarily a development that has accelerated particularly in the 1980s, in modern, highly industrialized, and chiefly Western societies, i.e., Europe, USA, Japan, Australia and so forth (Schulz, 2004). The end of the monopoly position of public service channels on the air waves, and the expansion of broadcasting services via satellite and cable created a more commercial and competitive climate in radio and television, in which market forces challenged television's identity and importance as a cultural institution (ibid).

In Pakistan, nevertheless, situation was completely different at this transitional period. As with many countries, emerging from colonial rule, the leaders of Pakistan's political establishment found it difficult to relinquish state control over broadcasting. Unfortunately something worse happened in Pakistan, as compared to other decolonized countries, in the form of martial laws, where army commanders took state control. These Generals, in particular were against independence of media, and especially the broadcast journalism. The Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV), state-controlled broadcast television channel, was established in 1964 by first Martial Law Administrator, General Ayub Khan. Since then PTV served as a medium of state propaganda. Parallel work had been done by another organization, that is, Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBS), which established Radio Channels all over the country, but again under strict state control. In the era of 1980s when the western world was gradually developing in to a *Media-Centred Democracy*, Pakistani society and politics was going in to, or suffering from, a ruthless military dictatorship under General Zia ul Haq. An interesting feature, worth mentioning here, was the maintenance of status quo by the democratic regimes in last two decades of twentieth century. These rotating democratic regimes between Pakistan Peoples Party, under the leadership of (Late) Benazir Bhutto, and of Muslim League under direction of Nawaz Sharif maintained state monopoly over broadcasting media. They preached freedom of media, campaigned on tickets stressing broadcast freedom, but could not bring themselves to practice it, when in

rule. Public broadcast system was, for them, a convenient inherited instrument of controlling news management.

At the advent of twenty first century, the politics and society in Western world was crossing the bridges of mediatization. In their academia a debate on post mediatization of politics has started due to the advent and growing influence of digital media and its effects on their polity (Cheffee and Metzger, 2001) (Flanagan and Metzger, 2001) (Lillker, 2006). At the same time a revolution occurred in Pakistani media and politics by the permission, given by the government, to establish private- owned radio and television channels. The government decision to set up a regulatory body, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) and its granting of license to private radio and television channels was a major step which started to change the media culture in Pakistan. Though was much late, as compared to the developed world, the credit of this development goes to an army dictator, General Pervez Musharaf, who liberated the broadcast spectrum from state control. The debut of this change was the transmission of Indus Vision, the first independent, private-owned TV in the history of Pakistani media and politics. This trend was followed by another channel, ARY Digital, started by a Dubai- based Pakistani business group in the same year of 2000. However these channels were not much effective due to their structural deficiencies and less experience in domestic media culture. The real change started to flourish when Jang Group of Publications, the largest print media tycoon in Pakistan started its own channel, Geo TV in October 2004.⁶ As they have a very firm base in domestic media culture, their program started to attain public attention. Afterwards the result was a rapid increase in private Television and Radio channels which is envisaged above in Table 1. Thus the universal growth of electronic media has unquestionably reached the world's sixth largest nation, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. And the possibilities that the new technologies will contribute to a transformation in the entire media landscape started landing (Weiss, 2008). "For so long print newspapers were the sole media channel in Pakistan", said Sami Abraham, a correspondent of Geo TV in Washington, "and because of the nation's high number of illiterates and rural residents, the news would just not reach the masses. But now, nearly everyone can watch or listen", he said. "And it is really mobilizing people" (ibid). So the first decade of twenty first century brought a revolution in Pakistan where media influence on politics and policy issues became an undeniable factor. This is the start of the mediatization of Pakistani Politics. Fahad Hussain, a leading journalist and analyst, locates the recent position of media as, "What we are seeing in Pakistan right now is a very silent slow revolution. In this revolution the people are taking power from the state. One of the channels through which it is happening is the news media. So, it happened as a gradual transformation of Pakistan society with the media being

the engine of change right now. That is happening in front of our eyes and we are going to start seeing the impact of this gradual silent revolution in the next few years to come” (Jahangir, 2009).

To say that the media have important cognitive and agenda setting effects in Pakistan’s political sphere, in contemporary scene, after the participation of media in recent political crisis, is stating the obvious. However, as we mentioned earlier, the process of mediatization cannot be categorized globally. Nevertheless an introduction of work on Mediatization by Jesper Strömbäck may help us to design an indigenous theoretical and structural framework for mediatization of politics in Pakistan. Strömbäck, a Swedish professor of media studies, in his research took a step further in this new domain and demarcated the process of mediatization in to four phases (Strömbäck, 2008). According to Strömbäck the mediatization is a multidimensional and inherently process-oriented concept and that it is possible to make a distinction between its various four phases of mediatization where media gradually develops itself in a state. Strömbäck devised a framework which divides the process of mediatization in to four phases, elaborated as follows:

- 1) In first phase, media constitutes the dominant source of information and channel of communication between the governors and the governed. The first phase—when politics has become mediated—should mainly be understood as a prerequisite for the successive phases of mediatization.
- 2) In second phase, the media becomes more independent of governmental or other political bodies and, consequently, have begun to be governed according to the media logic, rather than according to any political logic. This phase is also characterized by increasing journalistic professionalization and growing commercialization in media industry.
- 3) In third phase the media becomes more independent and important in a manner that political actors have to adopt the media, rather than the other way around. If media was semi-independent and politics had an upper hand in the second phase, then now its media who has an upper hand. This trend is opposed by the political powers as an inertia force, but in the later stage, they start to increase their skills in news management by professional methods like ‘Spinning’.
- 4) The fourth and last phase of mediatization is attained when political and other social actors not only adapt to the media logic and the predominant news values, but also *internalize* these and, more or less consciously, allow the media logic and the standards of newsworthiness to become a built-in part of the governing political processes. So this phase compels the political actors to start professionalization of politics to meet the needs of media.

Applying this organizational framework on our domestic scenario makes our study easier to comprehend theoretically, the process of mediatization in politics of Pakistan. Media, throughout the history of independence movement from British colonialism to the establishment of a nation-state, remained as a major source of information between the rulers and the public. However due to state control of broadcast journalism, a strict censorship on private print media, and inability of majority of population in Pakistan to get information from print media, due to prevalent illiteracy, were some basic characteristics due to which media was failed to deliver quality and trustworthy information of the public affairs and policy issues to the target audiences. A majority of population was relying on *BBC Urdu*, a radio service by British Broadcasting Company, which they considered more reliable as out of state censorship. However in late 1980s and early 1990s print media was getting more and more space in Pakistani politics by their quasi-independent editorial policies. But still they were in the first phase of mediatization of political setup in Pakistan.

At the start of twenty first century the advent of media revolution was there in Pakistan. The start of private news channel, their independence from state censorship and their liberal, reliable and popular coverage of major political issues were, in fact, a structural change of mediatization of politics from first to second phase, as devised by Strömbäck's above-mentioned model. The print media, henceforth following the parallel lines with broadcast media, managed to come out of political logic. Both print and broadcast media are now setting the news management, largely by the media logic and in order to gain more popularity in their respective audiences. Though this stage still lacks the professionalization of journalism up to a considerable term, however the commercialization of media industry is in full bloom. And media, particularly the broadcast one, is trying in all manners to enhance their resources by increasing popularity among audiences and viewers.

The performance of media in recent politically belligerent years in Pakistan was again showing, in theoretical term, a transition period. Their direct role in reinstatement of CJ and other judges, the failure of ruling junta to control the flow of information and to mold the public opinion, made by these media coverage, all shows that a gradual transformation of mediatization is taking place, from second to third phase. Though this phase is not completed, yet it is actively in action. The recent event of *Swat Girl Video*, showed an active transition where media logic is trying to take an upper hand on political logic.

This change in the media environment was appraised, generally, by all fractions of society and politics in Pakistan. Political leadership found an effective medium to communicate to the public at large. The ruling junta was, on every forum, proudly taking credit of this media independence. The opposition and leftist

elements are very happy to find themselves, no more *persona non grata* in visual medium of communication. There was a lack of critical evaluation of this change in media environment. Establishment, as well as the public at large thought that this is end of the story. Absence of any research-oriented studies on new development of media in Pakistani academia was, also, a failure to foresight of this development. No one knows that media development has still to cover more phases. So an opposition wave in some portions of society and politics occurred, particularly after the long march coverage and more recently in the episode of Swat girl video (Rumi, 2009). Journalists and analyst on every medium, particular in Print media, started to criticize the media free coverage, which was for them free from any past tradition or journalistic ethics. Any *ensemble* study of these critics showed that they, the critics, divided the journalists in two broad categories, that is, *Liberal fascists* and *Media Mujahidin* (Mir, 2009). Interestingly enough, no one talked about the media logic playing primarily in these coverage episodes. However in academic terms we may apply these critics to see the upgrading of mediatization in politics of Pakistan from second phase to third phase and the respective *inertia* opposition to this transformation. In an age of globalization, nevertheless, Pakistani media will have to see some more milestones in their destination to opt a western-based model of mediatization.

Conclusion

“As politics became increasingly mediatized”, Strömbäck concludes his research on mediatization, “the important question no longer is related to the independence of the media from politics and society, the important question becomes the independence of politics and society from media” (Strömbäck, 2008.p. 228). As the western academia started debate on the hypothesis of post- mediatization, the Pakistani academia, regrettably, is still lacking in framework analysis and theoretical studies on mediatization of politics at home ground. This creates a confusion in analysis of Pakistani media experts to elaborate the growing influence, media applying on all fields of society, religion, culture, economy and politics in Pakistan. This study, though tries to start the systemic analysis of Pakistani media, a lot remained here to be done in order to find a clear picture of media development in Pakistan. Growing influence of media is certainly a unmixed blessing for this nation,who, since independence, has remained in visible or invisible authoritarian regimes which deprived herself the basic rights of self-expression and determination. Pakistani media ,with its relative independence , has become, or is tending to become, a trend setter, for political and social discourse in the country. Nevertheless the situation in media industry is not as perfect as to conclude it a success story.

Hegemony of traditional journalists in the key positions of media industry and their inertia opposition to new developments, lack of professionalization in new heroes of broadcast media, and the inside or outside 'Flake' received by this newly independent media are some of basic reasons of its quasi-success story. Feed back system in media organizations in internal level, and the demand of globalization at external level, are very effective, nevertheless, for self-accountability and refurbishing process. One can expect, due to the presence of these two above-mentioned trends, to see a more professionalized media in the years to come.

Notes:

¹ Unfortunately almost all the work on Pakistani media, by Pakistani media scholars, has been done in descriptive narration of news media development. We cannot find a sufficient number of books or research papers on systemic and/or analytical study of Pakistani media. This study is designed to be just a first drop in the right direction.

² Wazeernaama is a slang word used often to describe the lengthy and undue coverage given to tiny and unimportant activities of the ministers, without any newsworthiness, in PTV's news bulletins.

³ Cable television is a system of providing television to consumers via radio frequency signals transmitted to televisions through fixed optical fibers or coaxial cables as opposed to the over-the-air method used in traditional television broadcasting (via radio waves) in which a television antenna is required.

⁴ An interesting factor, to be mentioned, at this point is that Geo TV, the most popular Channel in Pakistan has no DSNG System so far.

⁵ These channels do not provide publicly the rates they charge for advertisement. Yet the writer's personal experience, while working in the Geo TV, shows increase of rates in prime time slot from Rupees 5000 to 25000 per minute approximately.

⁶ Their test transmission started from 14th of August, 2004, but 1st of October, 2004 was their start of formal transmission.

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Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies Vol. 1, No. 1 (2009)

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