

## Review

# Does globalization affect media role in a democratic country? Bangladesh perspective

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**Based on reviews of secondary literature, the present paper intends to analyze the effect of globalization in determining the role of media in a democracy from the theoretical points of view. It is established through the findings that media can play a prominent role for the establishment of democracy and can act as a bridge between people and the government. However, in the globalized era, the role of the media has changed a bit since the power of globalization and the institutional change strike the media sector. The aim of the present paper is to focus on the positive and the negative effects of globalization especially in the media sector of Bangladesh. This paper also tries to investigate other factors apart from globalization which might have acted as hindrances to perform proper role for the media in Bangladesh. Finally, it suggests ways to minimize the problems of globalization to perform the democratic role of the media.**

**Key words:** Media, globalization, democracy and Bangladesh.

## INTRODUCTION

It is well established that mass media which constitute the backbone of democracy has a powerful role to play in the process of democratic development. Since liberal democracy [(Liberal democracy is that type of democracy where people should enjoy freedom and state's role should be constrained out of respect for individual freedom. Isaiah Berlin (1969) termed this type of democracy as 'the absence of impediment' (Berlin, 1969 cited in Street, 2001)] became a major form of governance throughout the world in 1980s with conquer of apartheid and colonialism and with the fall of Soviet Union, mass media have been claimed to stand for the people and to defend democratic principles not only in the Western liberal democracies but also in the newly-born democracies and in the least developed countries. This turn from authoritarian regimes to liberal democracy had been called by some scholars such as Samuel P. Huntington and John Keane (1991) and John Street (2001) as the 'third wave' (The wave of democratization is group of transition from non democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time. A wave also usually involves liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not development in Bangladesh. Moreover, an attempt is made to investigate other factors

apart from globalization which might have acted as hindrances to perform proper role for the media in Bangladesh. The paper is based on the secondary information which has been collected in the form of various published documents such as journal articles, paper articles, books, newspaper articles, reports and internet browsing.

### **Role of the media in a democracy: Theoretical point of view**

Mass media are the methods of communication to get to large number of people at the same time. For example, television, when it broadcasts, it goes elsewhere and the people of different places can watch it. In another way, mass media can be called as the function in communication that is apparent through a carrier of signals to multi point destination: such as, language, design, facial expression, print, radio, television, mobile phone, billboards and musical instruments etc. (Berger, 2002). In the broadest sense, the media squeezes the television and film entertainment industries, a vast array of regularly published printed material and even public relations and advertising. However, in the electronic age, some new tools of communication become prominent. It is called

'new media' e.g. the Internet, mobile phones, fax lines etc. Consequently, although complex and difficult to find out a universal definition, the term 'democracy' 'democracy' was coined by ancient Greeks in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. It means 'rule by the people' that comes from the Greek term 'Demos' (the people) and 'Kratos' (rule) (Class lecture from Dumisani Moyo). It is a system where people can alter their rulers in a peaceful manner and the government is given the right to rule because the people say it may. However, democracy means different things to different people. Berger in an article defines democracy as "the decision making power by the majority of the people exercised by way of a process that is based on equal rights of participants" (Berger, 2002). When all features like informed participants, freedom of expression, right to access to public information, rule of law, checks and balances of power, human rights, respects for minorities, respect for women, balance of resources are present, then it can be called democracy. As a backbone of a democracy, mass media can play a vital role in the political structure of each country through disseminating information, enlightening voters, protecting human rights, creating tolerance among groups and helping government to be transparent and accountable. Moreover, it also helps an individual to judge society and form opinions which are essential for the wellbeing of democracy. Theorists are happy to discuss the role of the media in a democracy from the following 2 perspectives.

### **Ideal role of media in a democracy**

In an article, Berger identified four conceptions of an ideal role of media in a democracy. (Four conceptions include liberal, social democratic, neo-liberal and participative) Frederick (1956) 'Four Theories of the Press' persuaded Berger to a greater extent in identifying these conceptions. These four conceptions offer imminent into the political facades of journalism and its association with media and media systems (Berger, 1999). On the other hand, Street (2001) illustrates the role of media from three perspectives-become fully democratic (Huntington, 1991). It tends to us to consider the globe as a unit and that in the long run gives the idea of globalization) of democracy. With the rise of liberal democracy, the pace of globalization of media and technology had also been extended. During this decade, solidarity movement in Poland, the 'Call to People Power' movement in Philippines and the student protest against communist government in China became a symbol of democratic struggle worldwide. Due to the globalization of television news, these events were circulated globally and helped international audience to witness what was happening and why and how it was happening (Shelley, 2001)? The 'third wave' also hit Bangladesh in 1990 when it got its democracy back after more than a decade from the military rulers. After then, Bangladesh (Bangladesh, a country of

South Asia is surrounded by India on three sides and Myanmar to the Southeast. The Southern coastline is shaped by the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh means 'Country of Bengal' although the precise source of the word 'Bangla' or 'Bengal' is unidentified. Bangladesh has the dubious feature of being the most thickly inhabited country of the world having a population of almost 142 million in its 55598 square kilometres of land. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of around two third of the total population. Muslim constitutes 88.3% of total population with 10.3% Hindus as the principal minority and devotees of Buddhism, Christianity and others account for 1.2%. Not more than 60% of total population can read and write although the actual figure is well below the figure. World Bank Report, 2005 suggests that the per capita income of Bangladeshi people is US dollar 420) also watched a 'media boom' with the rapid expansion of mass media such as newspapers, magazines and private TV channels. The mass media also played a prominent role in establishing democracy in the country.

Through offering information mass media shoulder the responsibility of making people think about an issue. Moreover, it can put an agenda in place in some cases. The new media communication [It includes the Internet, Multimedia and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)] is used to persuade active political citizenship. New media also offer new channel to access to the central operation of democracy, such as information provision, voting, deliberation, creating public sphere etc (Tambini, 1999). In the era of new media and globalization, mass media have the opportunity to carry out an effective role in a democracy. However, the question is to what extent media performs its role effortlessly in the globalized world? Taking this into consideration, this article intends to explore the role of media in a democracy and also tries to elucidate to what extent globalization can strengthen or threaten the role of the media in the process of democratic development in Bangladesh. Moreover, an attempt is made to investigate other factors apart from globalization which might have acted as hindrances to perform proper role for the media in Bangladesh. The paper is based on the secondary information which has been collected in the form of various published documents such as journal articles, paper articles, books, newspaper articles, reports and internet browsing.

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point destination: such as, language, design, facial expression, print, radio, television, mobile phone, billboards and musical instruments etc. (Berger, 2002). In the broadest sense, the media squeezes the television and film entertainment industries, a vast array of regularly published printed material and even public relations and advertising. However, in the electronic age, some new tools of communication become prominent. It is called 'new media' e.g. the Internet, mobile phones, fax lines etc. Consequently, although complex and difficult to find out a universal definition, the term 'democracy' 'democracy' was coined by ancient Greeks in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC. It means 'rule by the people' that comes from the Greek term 'Demos' (the people) and 'Kratos' (rule) (Class lecture from Dumisani Moyo). It is a system where people can alter their rulers in a peaceful manner and the government is given the right to rule because the people say it may. However, democracy means different things to different people. Berger in an article defines democracy as "the decision making power by the majority of the people exercised by way of a process that is based on equal rights of participants" (Berger, 2002). When all features like informed participants, freedom of expression, right to access to public information, rule of law, checks and balances of power, human rights, respects for minorities, respect for women, balance of resources are present, then it can be called democracy. As a backbone of a democracy, mass media can play a vital role in the political structure of each country through disseminating information, enlightening voters, protecting human rights, creating tolerance among groups and helping government to be transparent and accountable. Moreover, it also helps an individual to judge society and form opinions which are essential for the wellbeing of democracy. Theorists are happy to discuss the role of the media in a democracy from the following 2 perspectives.

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Media is liberated from political forces, owners, advertisers and other related interests. The watchdog role of the media can be implementing here. Media also assists government to be apparent and answerable to the people by circulating news and views (Berger, 1999) which offers a platform for interest groups to announce their anxieties and argues. For instance, some newspapers like the Prothom Alo (Prothom Alo is a leading and mostly circulated Bengali newspaper of Bangladesh which is published from the capital city 'Dhaka') in Bangladesh are trying to do this sort of job by organizing different round-table meeting on different important issues all over Bangladesh. However, the changing conditions, such as globalization, ownership pattern, commercialization, political pressure, etc. have made this role more intricate. The major problem associated with this type of democracy is that the participation is influential for the purpose of assortment of representatives. Benjamin Barber and many other critiques disparaged this model for accentuating individual liberty at the expense of the collective goods.

Consequently, citizens are believed to be involved in the public affairs in the direct democracy. It is such an ideal type which means the mutual apprehension of a common good, 'us' rather than 'me'. In direct democracy, the task of the media is described as the need to generate a sagacity of shared uniqueness and media becomes involve in fashioning a sense of community through exchange of ideas and providing a disciplining mechanism to sentinel against free riding (Street, 2001) that creates a anxiety between two roles because one desires open discussion and the other wants propaganda. For instance, direct democracy has resulted in the ascendancy of misinformation and the silencing of conversation in the former Soviet Union. To avoid these inadequacies, direct democracy has to emphasize media's discursive role with the state being expected to facilitate via subsidy and a regulatory framework that foster the coming out of relatively independent media. This revised version of direct democracy was pinched on early twentieth century which was called 'associated democracy' due to its' over prominence on increasing power to autonomous associations. In this reconfiguration of democracy, the key term dies down to power, propaganda and information. Although the ideal of this democracy have turn out to be central to Western political thinking, however, this has never been functional as a nation-state level. Deliberative democracy, on the other hand, is the thoughts of recent theorists. According to this type of democracy, citizen's sharing in the democratic process must be steered by shrewdness, voting, for instance, should not simply reflect the given preferences but rather follow on a process of all through interface and opinion construction. However, this type of democracy suffers from a serious crisis stemming from the problem of degree. But, mass media should address such problems of degree by facilitating deliberation. The media,

particularly new media such as the internet and mobile phone have been contributing to the deliberation system through for instance teledemocracy. Above discussion substantiates that media and democracy are undeniably strongly allied. In the process of democratization all media have a crucial role to play as bastion of democracy – the free flow of news and information is fundamental to the working of democracy.

### **Some metaphors to discuss the role of the media in a democracy**

Six metaphors have been discussed by the experts to understand the role of the media in a democracy. First one is the effective watchdog role which is crucial in fledging democracies where the institutions like legislature, judiciaries and other bodies are incapable against the potent or vacillating people. In such a situation, media remain as the only check against the exploitation of power. One of the burning examples of the media's watchdog function is the 'The Watergate Scandal' (A series of scandals occurred during the former US president Nixon administration in which members of the executive branch organized illegal political espionage against their perceived opponents to win the forthcoming election. It was revealed by two young reporters, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward who were working for the Washington Post began to dig deeper into the mystery which resulted to the resignation of the President Nixon) against former US president Nixon. We can refer an allegation of corruption against the former minister in charge of Gas and Mining Ministry in Bangladesh. Some leading newspapers in Bangladesh including The Prothom Alo and The Daily Janakantha (The Daily Janakantha is also a widely circulated Bengali newspaper in Bangladesh) reported the issue in January 2006. These newspaper sources were succeeded to find out linkage of corruption of the minister with leading oil and Gas Company which compelled the minister to resign from his post. Such role of the media can facilitate to diminish corruption and can strengthen democracy.

Second one is 'public sphere' in media which was coined by Hebermas. Habermas was thankful to Kuhn who described 'public sphere' as an 'institutional framework and set of practices which encourage wide and inclusive public debate about issues of social and political importance' (Randall, 1998). Moreover, Keane (1991) also defines public spheres as 'micro, meso and macro' levels. However, public spheres entails a multiplicities of voices that serves as a channel between governors and the governed and as an ground for public dispute that leads to more good policy and decision making. For example, the most recent case of 'Tipimukh dam' (A dam which is going to be built in Manipur, India. It is expected that almost 25 million people of Bangladesh will be affected adversely if it is built. The issue is a hot topic in mass

media of Bangladesh recently) can be sited here where every media irrespective of newspapers and TV are trying to build up a 'public sphere' through discussion by inviting experts, people from civil society organizations and political leaders etc on the utility or negative effects of building this dam in Monipur, India by Indian government. They have been successful to raise awareness among the public. Third metaphor is the role of media as 'Fourth Estate' which was coined by Lord Macaulay in 1832. He illustrated the term as 'the emergence of the press to rival the power of the other three great estates; e.g. the Lords both temporal and spiritual and the commons' (Randall, 1998). Since then, the press has been widely known as the 'Fourth Estate', a co-equal branch of government that provides the check and balance without which government can not be effective. For instance, we can refer to the initiative that was taken by the Government of Bangladesh in regards to implement changes in the system of education which was not accepted and supported by the educationists, civic society people and general people of the country. It was protested from all corners of the society. Media through several reports, views and opinions cautioned the government which resulted withdraws of the proposed system by the government.

Fourth one is that media is said to be a mirror of the society through which a society is seen like a mirror through which a man is seen. Now adays, media ensures availability of information on what is going on in the country as well as in each parts of the world. The development of new communication media makes this job more tangible and constructive. Everybody can set both positive and negative aspect of an issue. For instance, mass media helped the recent past government of Bangladesh in its anti-corruption move and helped identifying a good number of politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats who were involved with corruption. Therefore, it helped to ensure good-governance in the country. The fifth metaphor is the information superhighway which has opened up countless new channels for media. For instance, the internet offers some additional significance to the participative concept of media. Cyber journalists can acquire news agendas from audiences having engaged with them. They can facilitate to generate communities, make possible dialogue between representatives and the represented. The mobile phone helps people to contact another people of different place immediately through SMS (Short Message Service). In rural Bangladesh, many rural communities especially women are connected with village phone through Grameen Telecom (The leading mobile company of Bangladesh). With this service, local communities including women turn out to be more efficient and obtain benefit having direct link to job, weather and health information which helps them to be aware of everything (Norris, 2001).

The last one is that media can create a market of ideas which always make people familiar with different ideas.

With the initiation of satellite channel, this role of the media became easier. Now, people have the access to different programmes of different countries. Sometimes, they can use the success stories of another country to their community and can acquire advantage. It is now also possible to take part in any debate through Internet which, in a sense, can help people to be progressive and democratic.

Although above discussion signifies a prominent role of media for establishing democracy however, there has been a debate over the years regarding the role that media has been playing in the age of globalization. The following section will deal with the question how globalization affects the role of media.

### **How globalization affects the role of media in a democracy: Bangladesh experience**

#### **Positive effects**

'Globalization is a myth. It is just to see the world with one eye. It is the appetite of the privileged. It is the supreme myth of all that people invested their hopes and dreams in the expectation that the world would come together that was never been' (Professor Mosco, in a class presentation in the University of Oslo, June, 2006)). Probably Dr. Mosco is a skeptic. Like Professor Mosco, Hirst and Thompson (1996) alleged globalization as a myth. However, the globalizers [Globalizers are those who are in favour of globalization (Held and et al, 2003:1)] such as Giddens (1990) and Castells (1996) considered globalization 'as a central driving force behind the rapid social, political that are reshaping modern societies and world order' (Rantanen, 2005:5).

Although media and globalization are not always connected mutually however, both have some relationships. The acknowledgement becomes appropriate and visible when Marshall McLuhan made a connection by combining 'the medium is the message' with his 'global village'. It would be an imprudent exertion to disregard the term 'globalization'. Globalization has spread all over the world through media and communication which is referred as 'mediated globalization' by Rantanen (2005). In order to connect media and communication together, Tomlinson defines globalization in the following way:

"Globalization refers to the rapidly developing process of complex interactions between societies, cultures, institutions and individuals world-wide. It is a social process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in the time taken-either physically or representationally- to cross them, so making the world seem smaller and in a certain sense bringing human being 'closer' to one another" (Tomlinson, 1999 cited in Street, 2001).

In order to make out relationship between media and

globalization, it would be wise to discuss these relationships from political economy and cultural perspectives. First: It is essential to explore how media confront or manipulate existing class and social relation and how different factors such as ownership, advertising and government policies influence media behaviour and content. Second: It is necessary to look at how globalization makes the world a 'global village'. However, in stead of making detail elaboration about relationship among media and globalization, an attempt is made to have a rational discussion about how globalization can strengthen or undermine the role of media in a democracy. In doing so, discussion is made on the strength of globalization to carry out democratic role of the media.

From the cultural point of view global market reach worldwide due to the development of radio, TV, books, cinema, music and internet which has also brought people together. The global media are now able to exchange their ideas, culture, concepts which have reduced the world to a 'global village'. For instance, it is now possible to watch the live telecast of different issues, sports and also possible to have a look at the current events within few seconds from the least developed Bangladesh to developed USA which show the way towards democracy as everyone is receiving equal opportunity. For instance, Bangladesh is currently planning cricket match with West Indies (July, 2009) but every people of Bangladesh who have the access to view sports channels such as Ten Sports can watch the live telecast of the match. Consequently, globalization fabricates homogeneity which carries similar thoughts and principles, identical films and songs into all parts of the world (Street, 2001). In a democracy, all people should take pleasure in equivalent advantage. For instance, we can watch similar movies from Bangladesh and from the United Kingdom through different satellite channels. Moreover, it enhances ideas through Internet and mobile phones. It is now feasible to communicate ideas and information from one part of the world to another part. Internet augments two way communication and assist to share the ideas with virtual community. For instance, in Bangladesh, people having Internet connection can effortlessly share ideas with people staying other parts of the world. Moreover, it enhances communication inequality within and between nations (Herman et al., 2004). (We can refer another example in this regard. Although there are difference among China and Bangladesh in terms of GDP, but both the countries are experiencing same internet and mobile phone facilities. The number of users may vary in two countries, but the facilities are quite same).

Free press is necessary for the successful operation of democracy. Due to globalization and expansion of global media, it becomes a problem for every government to control media. In the past, every government especially government of the least developed countries strived to control media by imposing several restrictive laws. Before 1990, the government of Bangladesh tried to control me-

dia by imposing several laws (See section 5 for more details about the restrictive laws) but after the restoration of democracy in 1991 it turns out to be difficult for the government to control media and internet. Due to huge popularity, increase of viewership and growth of advertising sector (In Bangladesh, globalization opens up the horizon for businessmen to invest in industries. Therefore, they also spend money for advertising their products) have influenced the TV industries to become 'increasingly big business' (Curran, 2002). In Bangladesh, the number of TV channels has increased sharply from 1 in 1990 to 19 in 2007 (Rahman, 2007). These channels are now competing with each other for survival. In such a situation, overall standard of the programme is mounting. Due to constant pressure from the media professional, government is compelled to pass 'Right to Information Act' in the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2009 (Information Rights Law Effective in Bangladesh, 2009). It would give journalists the opportunity to get so called 'secret' information of the government which was unable to get under the disguise of 'Official Secrets Act, 1923'. Similarly, globalization increases competition among different media sectors and thus facilitates construction diversities of neutral programmes. Apart from that, nowadays, different political parties, ethnic and religious groups can set up a website and invite deliberation as well as can raise their voice in a particular issue which is one of the key features of democracy.

The development of media and communication in the era of globalization affects the traditional pattern of social interaction also. Thompson (1995) expressed his opinion in the following way:

"The development of new media and communications does not exist simply in the establishment of new networks for the transmission of information between individuals whose basic social relationship remains intact. Rather the development of media and communications creates new forms of action and interaction which has prevailed for most human history" (Thompson, 1995:8 cited in Rantanen, 2005:9).

Thus it helps to build up a good social relationship and helps to realize other people and can help to respect others which in a sense help to strength democracy. Moreover, globalization carries some values such as rights of women and minority. These messages may remain as hidden but this can help human causes and agitate customary roles. In Bangladesh, the Grameen Telecom has set up 'Village Phone' ('Village Phone' is one type of mobile telephone generally is given to women members of Grammen Bank for business purpose) service to the women of rural areas. The poorer women are getting the mobile phones and doing business. Their role in the society has now been changed from housewife to income generation. They have been taking their own decision regarding family (<http://www.zanzelia.com/amy/>

[txp/index.php?id=31](http://www.zanzelia.com/amy/txp/index.php?id=31)). Similarly, convergence becomes the new dimension of media in the age of globalization that can help make people aware about any event immediately. For instance, in Bangladesh, almost every daily news paper has its internet edition though which it offers news to the readers few hours advance than its paper version. In the era of globalization, mass media can be used to encourage active political citizenship. E-mail is used for electronic voting to organize people in some issues that mean it creates civic network (Tambini, 1999). For example, the White House offers people to send direct e-mail to the president's office in order to be acquainted with far-reaching information on government programme. This type of civic networking offers the clearest insights into the emerging patterns of political communication.

### Negative effects

Globalization enhances convergence and in the same way creates media conglomerates like News Corp, Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann and Viacom (Herman et al., 2004). Thus it creates global media market. It also creates uneven globalization in terms of economy and digital divide. The income gap between the rich and poor countries in 20 years has grown up from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 80 to 1 in 1995. Per capita income of this countries have fallen in more than 70 countries during this period. Half of the world's total population earn below 20 US dollar per day (Herman, 1999). In the point of digital divide, the picture is even worsen. In 2004, the developing world had 4 times fewer telephones than the developed world, 4 times fewer mobile subscribers per 100 and 8 times less Internet user penetration. (<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>) Moreover, 87% of people live online in the postindustrial societies (Norris, 2001). That is why, it can be said that less developed countries can participate in the world market not by them but by the delivery systems created and maintained by the global corporations (Malm and Wallis, 1993 cited in Street, 2001). Some experts such as Tambini (1999) claim that globalization of media and communication can create civic network. However, they criticize the role of civic network arguing that it can do nothing to stroke the real problems for political citizenship such as globalization and social barring. Moreover, they claim that the e-democracy would assist the computer and media firms who will simply take over control of new media (Street, 2001). Sometimes globalization undermines cultural identity and differences. In order to understand the point, Barber (1997) states:

"McWorld: 'With or Without resistance, nations with proud traditions of film making independence like France, England, Sweden, India, Indonesia and Japan are in fact gradually succumbing to the irresistible lure of product

that is not only predominantly American but, even still indigenous, is rooted in the glamour of the seductive trinity sex, violence and money, set to harmonizing score of American rock and roll" (Street, 2001).

It sometimes, squeezes out local culture. For instance, one of the programmes of MTV 'The Bold and The Beautiful' brought about a certain change in the youth culture in India (Street, 2001). Thus, in a long run, it becomes a bad force for democracy. Corporation control becomes another factor that can weaken the democratic role of the media. The rapid growth of information highway has opened countless new channels for media but also a few opportunities of those channels. Only few media conglomerates own the maximum channels and always try to make profit from that. For instance, Viacom estimated profit of \$105 million when it purchased Paramount in 1994 (Herman, 2004). The problem of profit is that they do special emphasize on entertainment rather than important issues. What is sold well – is the programme that they use to make. For example, Disney's 1994 'The Lion King' earned over \$300 million (Herman, 2004).

There are two categories of conglomerates;

- i) General
- ii) Communication.

First one has no direct relationship with media but this have more interest and the second one has direct relation with the media (Street, 2001). However, both have the common interest regarding profit and power. News Corporation may be perfect example of new conglomerates that dominates the mass media industry. It owns terrestrial television stations in the USA, Latin America, Europe, Australia and Asia. It has invested in films studios, newspapers and magazines in the USA and book publishing across the globe (Street, 2001). The media sector of Bangladesh has also been facing this type of problems. Moshaddek Hossain Falu (Moshaddek Hossain Falu was a Member of the Parliament in the seventh Parliament of Bangladesh who belonged to the opposition party (now), BNP) possesses ownership of two TV channels and one newspaper. Moreover, he has some business industry in the country. His main objective is to monopolize business through entrapment programmes and broadcast prejudiced news on politics.

Concentration of ownership is another problem for media to perform for democracy. Modern power structure of the media is that very few private corporations have possession of media. Only ten [Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Viacom, News Corporation, these five are 'first tier', Poly Gram, Seagram, Sony and General Electric- 'lower the first tier' and other is TCL (Herman et al., 2004)] corporation dominates the news, information, ideas, entertainment and popular culture world wide (Sussman, 1997). In a study conducted by World Bank in 2001 on 97 countries demonstrates that media mono-

polies exist throughout the world. (Coronel, Sheila S, "The Role of the Media in a Deepening Democracy", accessed from [unpan1.un.org/introdoc/groups/public/document](http://unpan1.un.org/introdoc/groups/public/document)) Indeed, the media owners are very much conscious of their private benefits and using newspapers and broadcast stations to promote their business interest, cut down their rivals and advance their political and business agenda. In Thailand, for example, former Prime Minister owned the only Independent TV Channel to have a monopoly of airwaves (Coronel, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN010194.pdf>). This is true in Bangladesh in case of private TV channels and print media. Private sector media entrepreneurs are known as industrialists or business tycoons in the society. The owners of maximum private channels are mostly business conglomerates as well as rich political leaders. For example, Boushaki TV, NTV, RTV are owned by an ex-minister and an ex-member of the Parliaments of the current opposition party. On the other hand, some of the newspapers of Bangladesh are published by gigantic business houses and therefore follow some sort of independent line. But their freedom is profoundly constrained as because of their financial obligation to the corporate authority that own and run the papers. For example, 'The Daily Prothom Alo' along with English Daily 'The Daily Star' are representing Transcom International, 'The Daily Jugantor' is representing Jumuna Group of Industries and 'The Daily Independent' is representing Beximco, another industrial complex in Bangladesh (Transcom International, Jumuna Group of Industries and Beximco are the leading and prominent business group in Bangladesh. The Daily Bhorer Khagosh, the Daily Jugantor is the names of leading Bengali dailies and the Daily Independent is an English daily). These owners are doing business and implementing their own agenda. Moreover, most of the owners have various stakes in government machinery. Therefore, they need to safeguard their stakes by imposing self censorship. Media bestows prestige to its owners along with bargaining power with government machinery and other parties. In some case, due to business competition, two rival business groups publish news items contrary to each other (Roy, 2006). Subsequently, the role of the media turns out to be a problem in the way of commercialization since most of the media have to depend on advertisement for their business. It leads to the crumple of journalistic standard. Packaged politics fits into the agenda according to the demand of the market. Sales and ratings for advertisers became important and thus hamper investigative reporting and increase the demand for accepting pre packaged materials thus increase the human interest and celebrities rather than serious analysis. In Bangladesh, advertisements are the main sources of income for most of the newspaper. The Grameen Telecom offers lots of advertisement to most of the newspapers. Although the call charge of Grammen phone is expensive, most of the newspapers remain si-

lent knowing the fact that it would reduce the possibility of getting advertisements which would create problems in the publication of newspapers. This type of role of media instigates to harm the reputation of the media as a whole and diminish confidence in the public sphere.

The above discussion allows to pronounce that globalization sometimes, has some good contributions towards strengthening the democratic role of the media, however, in most cases, it undermines this role. Moreover, it can be said that globalization is not the only factor that undermine the role of the media. There are several other factors which are discussed in the following section.

### Other factors

Apart from globalization, a political factor in the name of the control of the government is an issue of concern for the media of Bangladesh to play its own role in a democracy. Street (2001) states it as state control. This type of control appears from the government in the name of censorship, regulation, torture and harassment of the journalists, advertising, distribution of government advertisements and newsprints etc which is mostly evident in the less developed countries where government always remain terrified of the media. In some cases, control of media by the government is seen in the developed countries as well. Due to such tendency, journalists sometimes become afraid of bringing out investigative reports. For instance, few cases of government control are cited here from Bangladesh. The Constitution of Bangladesh pledges freedom of expression and press in clause 39(1) and also kept the balancing theory in the second clause 39(2) by saying 'subject to any reasonable restriction'. There are 25 restrictive laws to censor press freedom in Bangladesh which includes Official Secrets Act, 1923, Contempt of Court, 1973, The special Power Act, 1974 etc (Siddique et al., 2001). In Bangladesh, government still wields indirect influence over the press by way of retaining control over 'favourable lists' of newspaper for state-owned enterprises advertisements and newsprint quota. While BNP (BNP stands for Bangladesh Nationalist Party which is the second largest political party in Bangladesh) were in power (1991-9-1996), the government withheld advertisements of state-owned enterprises to 'Dainik Janakantha', 'Ajker Kagoj', 'Dainik Sangbad' and 'Bhorer Kagoj' within a broad definition of objective journalism in order to penalize these newspapers for criticizing their state policy affairs. (Dainik Janakantha, Ajker Kagoj, Dainik Sangbad'and Bhorer Kagoj are the leading Bengali news papers in Bangladesh) The incumbent Awami League (1996 - 2001) government ceased advertisements to 'Dainik Inqilab', 'Dainik Dinkal', 'Weekly Jai Jai Din' (Now becomes daily) and 'Weekly Evidence' on the basis of impartiality in reporting, coverage of development activities and attitude against the spirit of Bangladesh's war of liberation. In the game of

oscillate, the past four-party alliance government (2001 - 2006) (The present government belongs to Bangladesh Nationalist Party with the alliance from Jamet- e- Islam, Jatya-Party (one portion) and Islami Okko Jot) had ceased advertisements to 'Dainik Janakantha', 'Bhorer Kagoj', 'Ajker Kagoj' and significantly reduced advertisements to opposition newspapers. Moreover, attacks on journalists are a common phenomenon in Bangladesh. The following recent statistics notifies the trends of harassment of journalists in Bangladesh.

Due to the delayed judgments in the cases against journalists create a sense of impunity among the attackers. An executive editors of a magazine mentioned that political leaders and underground leaders frequently threaten them quite often if they report against them. These things happen due to the lack of protection of journalists against harassment (Roy, 2006: 40) (Media Professional Group (MPG) has carried out survey research on this issue).

Moreover, the rise of spin doctors (The men in the dark who sometimes can be an architects of political coverage. It is the people who controls what the media say (or do not say) about politics) becomes a serious problem nowadays in media and journalism. More frequently, journalists are depicted as the keen victims of the dexterous exploitation practiced by political spin doctors. The political important news sometimes appears to be a negligible rephrase of a press release. Sometimes, same stories are seen in other newspapers with the same phrases and approaches. Due to some sort of interests several journalists do this type of things which is totally depraved from the journalistic point of view (street, 2001). The spin doctoring was seen when Clinton was the president in USA. In Bangladesh, we have some journalists like spin doctors who did this thing quite frequently in order to get benefit from the government. Along with these, tabloidization of newspapers becomes a problem. The term is related to indignity too. In the tabloid newspapers, it is supposed to publish some sensational news, news of celebrities. It ignores the investigative and analytical news that the reader want to know. This is detrimental for people's right to information.

In Bangladesh we notice this trend in out only one tabloid newspaper called Dainik Manob Jami (This is the only one Bengali tabloid newspaper in Bangladesh). Moreover, there are several newspapers which are publishing news just to create sensation. Therefore, sometimes, some peoples are seen who are going to the court for filing defamation case against the newspaper authorities.

Another serious problem that the newspapers of Bangladesh have been facing is the weakness of professional journalism. First problem is framing which is a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events (Fog, 2004). Sometimes, without going in detail of the story, the reporter writes in such a way that the deep rooted problems are not mentioned. It is actually happened due to the lack of



journalistic education and training. In Bangladesh, we have Mass communication and Journalism Departments in three public universities (Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong) and seven private universities from where about 220 graduates come out every year. Apart from university based education programmes, there are tainting organizations and institutes such as the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) for print media and National Institute of Mass Communication (NIMCO) for electronic media (Roy, 2006). However, these are is not adequate for meeting demands in the emerging media market. That is why; the media groups are compelled to recruit unskilled journalists who are not capable of reporting well. For example, one of the executive of a private TV channel blame that due to lack of proper manpower, they have to use their reporters on diversifies issues. Desks are not allocated according to their likings, experiences and skills. Therefore, quality reporters are not ensured always (Roy, 2006). Second one is bias which entirely conflicting to objective and true reporting. Although Press Council of Bangladesh has set ethics for journalists to perform their duties based on UNESCO's Professional code of conducts for journalists (Roy, 2006) however, due to political affiliations and self interests the journalists do not follow it sometimes and write the story in such a way that does not expose the fact. It is a 'systematic favouring of one's position'. In Bangladesh, we experience several cases of bias reporting in some newspapers. For instance, Dainik Dinkal always publishes reports in favour of the ruling government and on the other hand, Dainik Bhorer Kagoj always favours the opposition (Dainik Dinkal and Dainik Bhorer Kagoj are two Bengali news-papers in Bangladesh) which is not helpful for democracy and media. Third weakness is political partisan which is almost the same like bias. Fourth one is the uses of official sources. Intelligence is one of the major pre-requisites for a man to be a journalist as he requires collecting in-depth information. In doing so, they entail to use official sources for information. For instance, if a journalist intends to accumulate information on corruption of a minister, he requires using officials associated with the minister. But if he fails to grip the sources; it is impossible for him to find out authentic information. Last one is self-censorship which is very important for modern day's journalism as general public desire to know authentic information from the journalists. It is upto the journalists whether he/she will present accurate and filled information or not. Sometimes, a journalist should be concealed towards truth and objectivity rather than suppressed by the government and owner. Lack of such quality among journalist may impede the role of the media in a democracy. It is because, since most of the owners of print and broadcast media in Bangladesh have either political affiliations or business entrepreneurs, they want their journalists to publish news for their own sakes (Roy, 2006).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Media can play a prominent role for the establishment of democracy in its true sense. Media can act like a bridge between people and the government (see ideal role of media in a democracy). But in the era of globalization, the role of the media has changed a bit. It is found in the above discussion (see positive effects) that globalization has some positive effects on performing actual role of the media in a democracy. It has already been proved that Bangladeshi media has exploded in the recent years and globalization has a positive effect on it. Therefore, media is trying to perform their proper role in the establishment of democracy in the country. However, it is also found in "Negative effects" 3.2 that globalization has some negative effects on media's role. But it is not the globalization which creates barriers to perform media's proper role in Bangladesh. Moreover, there are several other factors which are also acting as barriers for media to play a prominent role in a democracy (see section 4).

Due to perform properly in a democracy, the free press is necessary since media has several problems including the negative effects of globalization, the question come in the front how far it is possible for media to perform its perfect role for a democracy in Bangladesh? This article, in a limited way, suggests the following features that should be implemented to create such environment for performing media's proper role bypassing the negative effects of globalization.

- 1) Freedom of the press, speech and choice are necessary rather than regulation and scarcity;
- 2) Market monopoly should be reduced;
- 3) Media should be open to all for enjoyment as well as for information but not for the private gain or profit of business and political leader;
- 4) Public Service Media like BBC model should be set up. It would be a non-state media which both functions enduring prickles in the side of political power and serve as the primary means of communication for citizens living, working, loving and tolerating others within an indisputably pluralist society. It can be a non market and non state media institution;
- 5) Journalists should be free professional and should be self-censored;
- 6) The gap between information poor and information rich should be minimized.

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