

## **Impact of New Media on Dynamics of Pakistan Politics**

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### **Abstract**

Information technology has tremendously facilitated the communication phenomenon and mass media have emerged as pervasive and encompassing tools of politics. New media has initiated the process of democratization of information and has empowered the audience to be producers and consumers of information at the same time. Peters (2009, p.18) describes new media 'as emerging communication and information technologies undergoing a historical process of contestation, negotiation and institutionalization.' The Arab spring uprising initiated by the new media has grabbed the attention of scholars and researchers worldwide. Literature review suggests a positive relationship between usage of new media and political mobilization in the developed world. However, there is a need to conduct studies about the diffusion patterns, usage and impact of new media in the developing countries.

This study aims to explore the usage patterns of new media by political parties of Pakistan and its impact on the dynamics of Pakistan politics. The study partially focuses to explain the political content usage patterns of the University students on the basis of rural and urban population by selecting equal students from hostels and day scholars. The study suggests a quick adoption of facebook by rural respondents residing in hostels. The data indicates that facebook is the most popular social networking site among youth for the dispersion of political information as compared to other tools of new media including twitter, my space, blogs, and email etc. The respondents indicate the use of cell phones for political mobilization by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The study establishes a positive correlation between political mobilization and new media usage among educated youth. Keeping in view the overall literacy rate, internet penetration, recurrent load-shedding, and other peculiar socio-economic factors, the study suggests that the impact of new media in the political domain is limited as compared to the general perceptions.

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**Keywords:** New media; Democratization of information; Political communication; Techno-culture; Media conglomeration.

**Introduction:**

*“Societies have always been shaped more by the nature of the media by which men communicate than by the content of the communication” (McLuhan, 1964; 1).*

New media is used as a relative term and perceived differently by scholars and common people. Some have identified by enlisting modern information and communication technologies while others have tried to perceive the newness of the ‘new media’. However, the term refers to changes in media production, distribution and use. New media is defined as those forms that combine the three Cs: *computing* and information technology; *communications* networks; and *content* on digitized media (Miles et al., 1997; Rice, 1999; & Barr, 2000). This three Cs approach is furthered by adding another C for convergence by Flew (2002). He suggests that internet and World Wide Web is the representative of the convergence of three Cs while cable television and interactive television are related to the convergence of communications networks and media content. CD Rom and DVD are the result of the convergence of computing information technology and media content while mobile telephony is the outcome of the convergence of communication networks and computing information technology. Following illustration of Flew (2002) explains his point regarding new media.

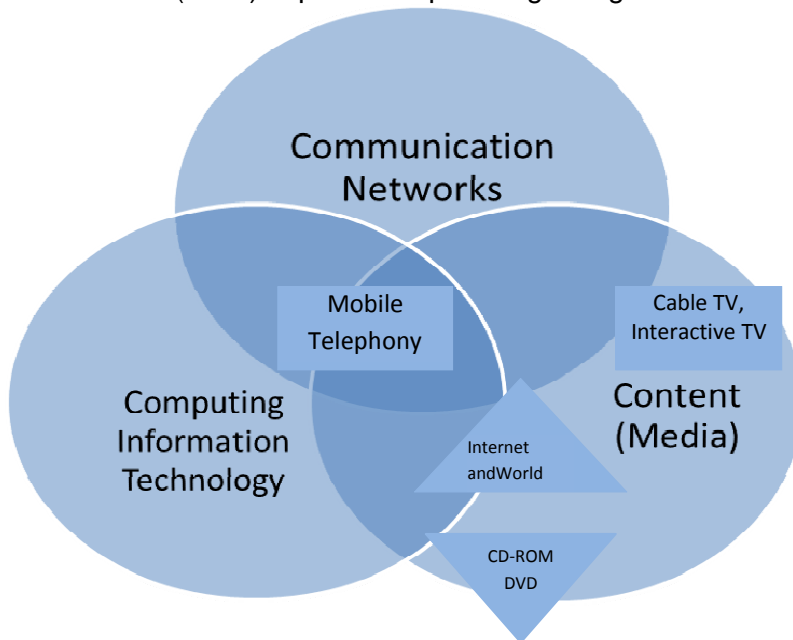


Figure 1.1 The three Cs of convergent media

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Lister et al., (2009) use the term 'new media' to denote the rapid developments that created a different kind of global phenomenon after 1980s. They present a schema that breaks down the term 'new media' into some manageable component. The schema refers to; new textual experiences; new ways of representing the world; new relationships between subjects (users and consumers) and media technologies; new experiences of the relationship between embodiment, identity and community; new conceptions of the biological body's relationship to technological media; new patterns of organization and production. The above mentioned components will essentially be found in one of the followings; computer-mediated communications; new ways of distributing and consuming; virtual realities; a whole range of transformations and dislocations of established media (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly, 2009, p. 12-13).

### **Literature Review:**

Technologies are continuously altering behaviors of individuals and ultimately affecting upon social structures and systems. With the invention of radio, the concept of all powerful effects of media emerged and propelled by magic bullet theory. Later on, television altered the consumption patterns and now internet has changed the scene altogether. An online survey conducted by Insight Express (2004) regarding media preferences reveal that internet is the most preferred media as 40% respondents preferred internet on all other media. Preferences for television, newspapers, radio and magazines are 39%, 8%, 4%, and 2% respectively. US people consider internet to be more informative as compared to the television that is perceived as a main source of entertainment and easiest to use.

Social networking has become a global phenomenon as after almost twenty years of its progression; it is still rapidly engaging people by evolving new and meaningful ways. There is an increased trend of using smart phone and tablet to connect to social media as well as new sites are emerging and expanding on line interactivity. According to Nielson's social media report 2012, top ten social networking sites used in the US include Facebook, Blogger, Twitter, Wordpress, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google+, Tumbler, My Space, and Wikia. On these sites 47% users are engaged in customer care services etc. The report brings forth that almost half of the users engage with social media for economic/business concerns taking care of the customers or as customers.

Every new technology in the field of communication has immediately generated serious concerns because of the popularity and resonance effects. Same happened in the case of radio, television and then internet. Graham (1999) suggests that the effects of a truly transforming technology are twofold, "the ability to serve recurrent needs better (qualitatively as well as

quantitatively) and having a major impact upon the form of social and political life” (p. 37). However, social media has the potential to invite too much involvement of the citizens that can challenge the concept of representativeness on behalf of the majority. (Castells & Sey, 2004).

Mansell (2004) explains how new media is becoming part of established power relations and conforming to the political economy of old media. Political economy of new media exhibits through the control of access, subscriptions, software production and development, copyright content, audience commodification in subtle ways, accumulating large traffics, walling off the spaces, etc. These factors serve as controlling mechanism and facilitate existing power relations. The result is increased inequality and widening gap between haves and have nots.

New media is creating information societies but the kind of information societies being established through it also needs to be explored. The question of who is giving information for whom needs to be considered. Proliferation of content along with a decline in media production and distribution costs is also distinctive. Dyson argues that content in itself is not as valuable as the ability to utilize content in ways that can capture users’ attention. Once users exhibit interest, the content leads to the generation of new and engaging content (Dyson, 1998, p. 177). On the one hand, new media is increasing informed citizens and political participation; on the other hand, this electronic democracy through new actors and new issues is deteriorating the quality of political debate day by day. Internet is facilitating the process of dissemination of political information but the question of gatekeeping, agenda-setting, and framing continue with the new media.

University of Southern California and the University of California, Berkeley carried out a research project to explore digital media usage patterns among youth. The major findings indicate that youth is mainly using online media to promote individual autonomy, friendship, particular interests and socialize by continuously being online. “They can be “always on,” in constant contact with their friends through private communications like instant messaging or mobile phones, as well as in public ways through social network sites such as MySpace and Facebook. With these “friendship-driven” practices, youth are almost always associating with people they already know in their offline lives. The majority of youth use new media to “hang out” and extend existing friendships in these ways” (Ito, et al, 2008, p.1).

Aday et al., (2010) suggest that new media tools promote freedom, expedite the process of democratization and empower activists to fight against despotic regimes. Blogs, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube as new media forms have played a major role in political conflicts particularly with reference to Middle East politics. ‘Arab Spring’ has popularized the notion of social media affecting

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politics. According to the World Internet Users and Population Stats, Egypt falls in the top twenty countries with the highest number of internet users.

Social media, as a transforming technology, is affecting Middle East in two ways. Communication needs are being satisfied in better ways; and social media is creating an impact on social as well as political life of the common people. Keeping in view the peculiar circumstances and demographic characteristics of the Middle East, social media has empowered the audience. However, it is not applicable on Pakistan as the circumstances and demographic attributes are quite contrary. Pakistani media is enjoying height of freedom and traditional media is already serving as a change agent. Pakistani television channels are already co-opting content from cyberspace and social media for example ‘flogging video’ of a girl in Swat, Pakistan uploaded on YouTube on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2009 was soon covered by all television news channels. After that many news items have been co-opted from cyberspace by Pakistani traditional media.

Nugroho and Syarief (2012) in their study about new ‘media and political process in contemporary Indonesia’ confirm the significant repercussions of the usage of social media on socio-political dynamics of the country. Facebook statistics show that Indonesia is the 4th largest Facebook nation in the world in 2012, after the US, Brazil, and India in terms of absolute users. In 2012, Indonesia was having 19.5 million twitter accounts making it the 5<sup>th</sup> largest Twitter user population of the world. Usage of social media is strengthening the civil society and the increased participation will lead it to serve “as civic guardian of the res publica” (Nugroho & Syarief, 2012, p. 100). New media is speedily and successfully imparting information among the online public sphere in Indonesia however, the challenge is to broaden this sphere into civic political participation.

In Pakistan social media is getting popularity especially among youth. According to Kugelman (2012) social media in Pakistan as a communication tool is used in five ways; breaking stories ignored by traditional media; mobilizing people for social and other campaigns; promoting and coordinating humanitarian aspects of issues and problems; activist for social causes; and accelerating communication between politicians and their publics. Since there is a mushroom growth of television channels in Pakistan and electronic media enjoy a great degree of freedom, audience usually gratify their informative needs from these channels. Social media is mainly used to socialize therefore the role depends upon its usage patterns.

It may be inferred that internet is creating an impact in the domain of politics by introducing easy ways to coordinate an event, make donations, and get information (Murray, 2005). In order to understand the phenomenon

scientifically, there is a need to conduct systematic in-depth, rigorously designed research in this domain.

### **Significance of New Media for Politics:**

Politics and media both are influenced by the social environment and influence upon the social environment. New media has caused wider kinds of social, economic and cultural changes including; a shift from modernity to postmodernity; intensifying processes of globalization; a replacement, in the West, of an industrial age of manufacturing by a 'postindustrial' information age; a decentring of established and centralized geopolitical orders (Lister et al., 2009).

Information technology has tremendously facilitated the communication phenomenon and mass media have emerged as pervasive and encompassing tools of politics. Simba (2009) in his study about Obama's political campaign concluded that Obama successfully engaged new voters by using internet and social media that fostered high support.

### **Politics Getting Global Through New Media:**

New media has become an integral part of the prevailing 'techno-culture.' Now the culture of technology is pervasive. According to Internet World Stats (2012) it took sixteen years to gain one billion smart phone users in the world from 1996 to 2012 however it is expected that the number will be double (2 billion) by 2015. The estimated internet users on June 2012 were 2,405,518,376 out of total world population i.e. 7,017,846,922.

Three developments have occurred with the interaction of new media and politics; globalization of political communication; communication of global politics; and politics of global communication.

### **Globalization of political communication:**

In the age of new media, communication has become more interactive particularly the tradition of computer mediated communication (Pavlik, 1996). Because of the new media, the orientation of mass media is transformed for serving one-to-many to many-to-many. As media has the potential to affect upon the foreign policy, new media has expedited this process. The Gulf war of 1991 was the flashpoint focusing political and military attention on the power of global television. Soon after the Kurdish issue was flashed on the television screen, 'US' intervened to create 'Safe Heaven' for the Kurds. As pointed out by Varis (1984, p. 152) that while new communication technology may provide additional means of dissemination of information, it may also lead to widen the gap between those who have access to information and those who do not have it. Information management has become a large-scale

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industry which seems at times to threaten some of the basic rights of a democratic society.

It is assumed that new media has initiated the process of democratization of information and has empowered the audience to be producers and consumers of information at the same time. The element of interactivity is empowering audience to initiate, mould and bend new political issues and concerns. Due to technological sophistications of new media, embedded journalists can easily do framing and agenda-setting.

“In a post 9/11 global environment where democratic rights of all kinds are sacrificed to the ‘war on terror’ and the intimate weave of communications technologies into the fabric of everyday life offers unprecedented opportunities for consumer and political surveillance” (Lister et al., 2009, p. 167).

### **Communication of global politics:**

It is not only the communication technologies affecting upon communication systems but also the human behavior evolving out of that system. The advent of instantaneous global technology has given the news media far greater influence in international relations than ever before. Observers of international affairs call it the ‘CNN curve’. It suggests that when CNN floods the airwaves with news for foreign crisis, it evokes an emotional outcry from the public to ‘do something’. Therefore Gans says, "The new media environment, however, is constantly in a chaotic flow, whereby journalists and institutions must negotiate different accounts and meanings."

An online web site ‘Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting’ (FAIR), co-edited by Normon Solomon puts it well: "When the mass media in some foreign countries serve as megaphones for the rhetoric of their government, the result is ludicrous propaganda. When the mass media in our country serve as megaphones for the rhetoric of the U.S. government, the result is responsible journalism."

### **Politics of global communication:**

Politics of global communication can be explained in the light of Herbert Schiller’s contention. He says that transnational corporations always try to get hold of rich offshore markets and cheap offshore labor for the maximization of profit that also expedites the process of media globalization in a particular direction. Schiller (1979) maintains that U.S. military-communication conglomerates have maintained a commercial, political, and military superiority. New media facilitates them to continue this legacy. Media organizations are now multi-national and global and with the new

technological development, global journalism practices have been significantly changed both in information production and in information consumption.

Conglomeration trends in the media scene are at increase. New media is also susceptible to these trends. As noted by Ott and Mack (2010, p. 42), “the gate keeping (filtering), agenda setting (focusing), and framing (structuring) function of the major media conglomerates consistently undermine democratic principles and ideals.” The following table illustrates how big five media conglomerates are also dominating new media.

Horizontal integration of the large media corporations for traditional media and new media

	<b>Print Media</b>	<b>Film and Sound</b>	<b>Broadcast Media</b>	<b>New Media</b>
<b>Time Warner</b>	Warner Books, DC Comics, People, Time, Sports Illustrated, In Style	Warner Brothers Studio, New Line Cinema, Atlantic Records, Elektra	CNN, HBO, TBS, TNT, Cinemax, Cartoon Network	AOL, Netscape, MapQuest, Compu Serv
<b>Disney</b>	Hyperion Books, Discover, Jane, Family PC	Walt Disney Pictures, Buena Vista, Dimension films, Miramax, Touchstone	ABC, A&E, the History Channel, E! Entertainment, ESPN, Lifetime	Disney Mobile, ESPN.com, ABC.com, Go.com, Movies.com
<b>Viacom</b>	Simon & Schuster	Paramount Pictures, Dream Works Studios, MTV Films, Famous Music	Comedy Central, MTV, VHI, BET, Nickelodeon, Spike TV, CMT, TV Land, CBS	IFILM, Atom Entertainment, Shockwave, Xfire, Rate My Professors.com, Harmonix



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<b>Bertelsmann</b>	Random House, Doubleday, Bantam, Fodor's Travel Guides	BMG Music, Columbia, Arista, Epic, RCA, Jive Records	RTL Television (Germany), M6 (France), Five (UK)	Arvato Mobile (Europe's leading mobile provider)
<b>News Corpn</b>	HarperCollins, Zondervan, TV Guide, New York Post, The Times (UK)	Blue Sky Studios, Fox Searchlight, 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Fox, MySpace Records	FOX, Network TV, FX Networks, BSkyB (UK)	My DirectTV, MySpace, Photobucket, Grab.com

(Ott & Mack 2010, p. 31)

In the perspective of technological sophistications, interactivity, increased control of audience, new media seems to be a discontinuation of the old media. However, the above table shows how new media is a continuation of the existing hierarchy of power structures and relations. The top ten online world wide web 'properties' in the UK are owned by a small number of major media conglomerates, communication and telecommunication suppliers, online retailers and software providers (Couvering, 2003).

**New Media, Democracy and Politics:**

Democracy claims to be a government of the majority working as their representatives. Media as an institution serves as a means of communication between the people and their representatives to develop and maintain the relationship of trust. However, with the improved means of communications this relationship has worsened. Nye et al., (1997) argues that in 1964, 75% of US citizens showed confidence in their government for representing them well most of the time but there is a significant decline in this confidence in 1997 as only 25% of US citizens showed trust in their government for representing them well. Similar trend for Europe is referred by Idid and Wok (2012, p. 5). They quote the findings of Eurobarometer survey of spring 2011 conducted across the European Union for increased distrust in their governments and media. "63% placed distrust on their governments and 60% distrusted their parliaments. In some other countries, (Portugal and the UK), there was significant cynicism towards their own political institutions. Again in the Eurobarometer 2011, 53% said they tend not to trust the press and another 45% said they had no trust in television."

## New Media Usage in Pakistan: Political Parties

According to Internet World Stats (2012) the statistics of internet usage, penetration percentage and population of Pakistan up till December 2011, there are 29,128,970 users of internet with 15.5% penetration of the total population that is 187,342,721. In the digital access index ranking (DAI) Pakistan falls in the category of low access countries with 0.24 index score. Impact of internet is 'incremental, contextual, and amplifying' for political processes in Pakistan.

A website of free social media monitoring 'www.checkfacebook.com' facilitates researchers with latest statistics about social media usage patterns all over the world. The Facebook statistics of 2013 about Pakistan show that Facebook penetration in Pakistan is 4.37% compared to the country's population and 27.66% in relation to number of Internet users. The total number of facebook users in Pakistan is reaching 8055680. There are 70% male users and 30% female users in Pakistan. The largest age group is currently 18-24 with total of 4009780 users, followed by the users in the age of 25-34.

In Pakistan the use of social media by political parties to interact and engage people and especially youth has increased tremendously. Political parties like PTI, PPP, PML-N, and others are operating their own networks on face book, tweeter, linked and social networking sites to communicate, and mobilize people to participate in political process. The following tables show people's engagement with Pakistan's political parties through social media up to 15<sup>th</sup> March 15, 2013.

### Political Parties and Face Book Traffic:

<b>Political Parties of Pakistan</b>	<b>Face Book Likes</b>	<b>Face Book <i>Talk1ing about this</i></b>
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	16,435	1,967
Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N)	151,340	22,446
Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q)	2,792	56
Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)	39,159	2,246
Mutahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM)	28,751	901
Jamat-e-Islami (JI)	3,405	982
Jamiat Ulma-e-Islam (JUI)	984	73

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Twitter statistics of the top Pakistan's politicians accounts from <http://www.socialbakers.com> for the year 2013 show that among the politicians profiles, Imran Khan has the most 'followers' on twitter. Currently, the top growing profile and twitter gainer is Imran.

### **Political Parties and Twitter Traffic:**

<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Tweets</b>	<b>Following</b>	<b>Twitter Followers</b>
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	10485	4641	78904
Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N)	3441	60	7,442
Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q)	0	105	45
Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)	5660	139	3009
Mutahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM)	3296	46	6806
Jamat-e-Islami (JI)	255	22	266
Jamiat Ulma-e-Islam (JUI)	0	0	2

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf, has been extensively using social media, writing blogs, tweeting and use of face book to upload activities on the social media. The footage of PTI rally is followed by over 30,000 viewers from across the globe.

### **New Media Usage in Pakistan:**

Social media usage in Pakistan as described by Kugelman (2012) is applied in the domain of politics as follows:

### **Breaking stories ignored by traditional media:**

Social media can break news stories ignored by the traditional media and sets agenda for other media. New media has introduced the concept of cyber sphere which is blurring and blending the demarcations of global and local. People can upload, share, produce, circulate, and reflect on political content from anywhere at any time. Attention seeking methods lead to the generation of new and engaging content that appear on other new media. For example news story on Malala Yousafzai successfully captured the attention of social media users and led to the generation of other related content on various media including Blogs, You Tube, Facebook, TV channels etc.

### **Mobilizing people for social and other campaigns:**

People are using new media for launching campaigns, motivating and mobilizing people to take desired action. Restoration of judiciary in 2009 is a conspicuous example of this mobilization. NICL, Steel Mills, Hajj Scam are a few examples that faced criticism and pressures from social media.

### **Promoting and coordinating humanitarian aspects of issues and problems:**

“The YouTube videos of soldiers engaging with the local population, playing football with children and saving a kidnapped Iraqi is an effort to humanize an inhuman war” (Karatzogianni, 2009, p. 4). During the catastrophes like earthquake of 2005 and floods of 2010, new media helped people to promote and coordinate humanitarian aspects.

### **Activist for social causes:**

New media technologies are enabling people to overcome the limits of space and time, ideology and identity. People can participate in political issues through new media that results in the expansion and coordination of political activities in a borderless world. Petitions and advocacy campaigns have been initiated by users of social media for different causes. Blasphemy issue, Dr. Aafia Siddiqi case etc. have been promoted through petitions and advocacy campaigns on social media.

### **Accelerating communication between politicians and their publics:**

Regarding political disagreements, Zaller (1999) compare the old dynamics of politics with the new ones. He writes, “In the old days, political disagreements were settled in backroom deals among party big shots... But in the new environment, disagreements are fought out in the mass media and settled in the court of public opinion. The weapons of combat are press conferences, photo opportunities, news releases, leaks to the press, and ‘spin.’ When the stakes are especially high, TV and radio advertisements may be used. Politicians still make backroom deals, but only after their relative strength has been established in the public game of media politics.” New media has expedited this process and provided maximum opportunities to people to participate in this game.

To evaluate the usage patterns of students from rural and urban backgrounds regarding political content, a sample of two hundred students from the Punjab University is drawn. An independent T-test is applied on the data collected. The following table shows that the urban students use social media more for political content as compared to rural students.

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**Table 1: Group statistics for day scholars and hostellites studying at the University of the Punjab**

PU	Students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Day Scholars	Urban	99	1.79	1.022	.103
Hostellites	Rural	100	1.14	.591	.059

Students are also getting political information and updates on their mobiles. The messages they generally receive are about their party membership, enrollment in voters list, participation in rallies and march etc. For the question of their participation in rallies, 70% responses are positive. 22.5% are writing blogs that is 45 out of 200 students.

**Table 2: Social media usage patterns for political content among students**

	Visiting political blogs	Writing political blog	Commenting on political blog	Sharing political blog	Subscribe political news	Writing comments on political group/ party /politician's wall
Yes	101	45	118	139	78	102
No	99	155	82	61	122	98

The above table shows students usage patterns for political content. More than 50% actively participate through social media by writing comments on political group/party/politician's wall. The data shows that social media is facilitating students to actively participate in political domain.

**Impact of New Media on Pakistan's Politics**

The very notion of democracy rests upon egalitarianism that flourishes increased participation, and free and open exchange of ideas by diverse publics. Old media evolved on the concept of communication flow from one-to-many as compared to the new media based on the concept of many-to-many. Aday et al., (2010) proposed to measure the impact of new media on five levels; individual transformations; intergroup relations; collective action;

regime policies; and external attention. The impact of new media on the dynamics of Pakistan politics is explored on the above mentioned five levels.

### **Individual transformations:**

Social media has provided the opportunity of increased interactivity at all levels with an ease. People are receiving messages on their mobiles by political parties. PTI introduced the concept of getting its membership through SMS. Election Commission of Pakistan is also using mobile to confirm entries in voter list. Smart phone enables its user to connect to the world in myriad ways and facilitates to be multi-tasking. People can watch news on television and can connect to social media at the same time. Information seeking patterns are more dynamic. Comments and reaction on political issues and events surface and circulate simultaneously.

### **Intergroup relations**

Pakistan is a heterogeneous country with horizontal and vertical cleavages. New media has served as a platform where people from diverse backgrounds and different ideologies can interact and reflect. Petitions and advocacy campaigns have been initiated by users of social media for different causes. New media has been accelerating communication between politicians and their publics.

### **Collective action**

People are using new media for launching campaigns, motivating and mobilizing people to take desired action. Restoration of judiciary in 2009 is a conspicuous example of this mobilization. Social media is facilitating the process of accountability. The corruption of National Insurance Corporation Limited (NICL), Steel Mill corruption case, rental power project corruption, malfeasance of funds by ministry of religious affairs (Hajj scandal) in 2011 are a few examples that show people's vigilant participation through social media. Blasphemy laws and related issues engaged many people to reflect and participate. Petition for Aafia Siddiqui on social media was signed by more than a million users.

### **Regime policies**

New media has empowered audience to report political issues and event which affect upon policy making processes. The agenda-setting theory of media suggests how media agenda shifts into public agenda and then affects upon policy agenda. With the new media, publics are more empowered and have the potential to affect on mainstream media agenda and policy agenda. Ashraf Chaudhry<sup>1</sup> wrote on facebook, "Can I burn Raiwind and Bilawal House

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and then pay rupees 2 lacs to Nawaz and Zardari? Rulers have zero shame quotients.” Social media sometimes breaks news stories and sets agenda for other media.

### **External attention**

New media has introduced the concept of cyber sphere that is different from Habermas’s concept of ‘public sphere’ and ‘private sphere.’ Cyber sphere is blurring and blending the demarcations of global and local; transforming local into global and global into local. Due to channel and choice oriented environment media clamor to seek audience attention. Whether it is ‘Lal Masjid’ or ‘drone attacks,’ ‘Salala check post’ or ‘Malala issue’ new media may invite the influence of global actors by the virtue of being ubiquitous.

### **Conclusion:**

According to UNICEF statistics (2010), 36% of the Pakistani population is urbanized and 60% is literate. There is a remarkable increase in load-shedding. By the end of 2012 there was almost 10 hours of average load-shedding on daily basis. Internet World Stats (2012) show that there is only 15.5% Pakistanis who have internet facility in the total population that is 187,342,721. Load-shedding serves as a constraint in the production and consumption of new media. Since Pakistan has a large number of illiterate people, they are unable to use social media directly. There exists many divides other than digital divide in Pakistan. New media and particularly social media have the potential to facilitate the political systems of egalitarian societies.

Pakistan is a developing country deemed with horizontal and vertical cleavages. Egalitarianism is mere an ideal. New media is making it possible for diverse and remote publics of developed countries to share and reflect on political issues but not for developing and poverty stricken countries. The assumption of people’s empowerment due to new media is a myth without the creation of an egalitarian society where everyone has equal opportunities and an equitable distribution of resources. Those who are suffering from certain deprivations and lagging behind cannot be producers and consumers of information at the same time. In such circumstances new media adds to widen the gap between information/knowledge haves and have-nots. However, with an increased literacy rate, improved infrastructure, and equitable resources, people can participate actively in the political process.

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