



E-ISSN: 2706-8927

P-ISSN: 2706-8919

www.allstudyjournal.com

IJAAS 2021; 3(2): 186-191

Received: 19-02-2021

Accepted: 21-03-2021

Najiburrahman Hadid

Ph.D., Senior Teaching Assistant, Department of Journalism, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Herat University, Afghanistan

Basir Ahmad Daneshyar

MA, Teaching Assistant, Department of Journalism, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Herat University, Afghanistan

Corresponding Author:

Najiburrahman Hadid
Ph.D., Senior Teaching Assistant, Department of Journalism, Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, Herat University, Afghanistan

Afghanistan commercial TV: For-profit approach, popular and challenging approach to expanding security

Najiburrahman Hadid and Basir Ahmad Daneshyar

Abstract

Commercial television began its working in 2001 after the foundation of the new political system in Afghanistan, but its presence and activity has been associated with numerous challenges. A few issues are related to the approaches and conditions of the media, and others are due to its execution and activities. In this paper, we study one of the important issues within the action of this media based on the situation and conditions of the country. This paper examines how commercial television operates conflict with the logic of "trying to expand security and reduce violence" in Afghanistan. In this paper, after a hypothetical clarification of the issue, we study international reports on the role of Afghanistan Commercial Television in "Efforts to Expand Security" and then by using the results of the focus group interview to objectify the findings of these reports. According to the findings of this study, the business approach has led to the expansion of production and promotion "popular" programs with "Violent" content, which may be in conflict with the component of "efforts to expand security" in the country.

Keywords: commercial TV, public goods, security, popular programs, violence

1. Introductions

1.1 Statement of the problem

It has been almost four decades since the arrival of television in Afghanistan. Since the beginning of the program in 1996, this media, as a propaganda of political systems, has always undergone changes in parallel with the evolving process of the country's political history so that different authoritarian, liberal and totalitarian Soviet have applied different media systems policies. These policies have focused more on government control over the ownership and operation of television, and thus, television activity has always had its own issues.

The political situation after 2001, influenced by the political and military presence of the West, especially the United States in Afghanistan, and consequently under the policies of libertarianism recognized the private ownership of television, but caused a new problem with previous issues was different. Nonviolent creation, foreign political and financial support for private television, established outside the natural rule of creating as needed, to advance specific political goals (Fraenkel *et al.* 2010) ^[7] or economic goals (Cary, 2012) ^[5]; The main reason for the current problem is the activity of private television in the country, which has led to the commercialization of this media and the "dominance of a for-profit approach to media content.

While in many communication perspectives "trying to expand security" is defined as one of the general tasks of the media, especially in war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, so national and international assessments show that the performance of the private media in Afghanistan does not follow this logic. For example, Fraenkel and his colleagues' (2010: 20) ^[7] assessment of the Afghan media shows that the rapid growth of private radio and television in the country has severely reduced government control over media law enforcement. Based on this assessment (Ibid, 22 and 23), regulators have warned that none of the media activities in Afghanistan are in line with the community development plan, and that the current approach to media growth in the country, given the state of the media and its large social context, Development will not help.

In addition, as assessed in the Altai Report (Devin *et al.* 2012: 128), the growth of private channels in Afghanistan is more in the form of entertainment programs. Also, according to the findings of the Asia Foundation survey (Akseer *et al.* 2017: 129) ^[1], watching TV has a

negative impact on citizens' sense of security and deprives them of their personal security. So, pure business performance and a for-profit approach to media information and content seem to be the main cause of the lack of alignment of private television with public development policies, and in particular (Efforts to Expand Security). This article theoretically explains the relationship between business performance and the overall function of television, and how the business performance of television can conflict with the policy of trying to expand security in the country.

2. Literature review

2.1 Commercial TV and public affairs

Today, with the advent of television, the world has entered our living room. Although this medium, as one of the most important visual sources, paints new ideas about the world around us and produces one of the most common visual texts of life (Howells¹, 2003: 199) ^[11], the general function of television, especially commercial television, has always been controversial. This controversy is exacerbated, especially when questioned about the role of commercial television in public procurement participation (Holcombe, 1997) ^[9]. The commodity, as defined by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2008: 17) ^[13], focuses on five main components: environment, health, education, security and governance. These five components are categorized in terms of development goals in the third millennium, that it is based on the definition of Samuelson (Holcombe, 1997) ^[9] have two characteristics of inviolability and non-competitiveness. While in many communication perspectives, its television broadcasting has always been considered a public good on the one hand (Weeds, 2013: 10; Allern and Pollack, 2017) ^[2, 17] and on the other hand, it is expected to cooperate with other sections of society in providing public goods. (UNESCO, 2001:7) ^[15].

The question is, with the definition of a commercial approach to private television in the communication and media literature, is it possible to rely on the media as a television based on the communication policy perspective and ignore its commercial aspect? Can private television be expected to participate in the provision of public goods with other sections of society with such an approach? Theoretically, the answer to this question is no, because the development communication literature defines the business approach as contrary to expectations for the supply of public goods. As is explicit in the literature of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2008: 17) ^[13], the private sector, with its for-profit approach, is unable to participate securely in the procurement of public goods due to its interests, and this requires the presence of the public sector. In the United Nations Industrial Development states that market performance is unsuccessful in some areas and leads to social inadequacy; One example of market failure is participation in the procurement of public goods (Ibid,7), and since commercial television is market-dependent, it follows the basic rules of the market.

On the one hand the experience of market media failure in the test of protection of democratic ideals, on the other and the profit-oriented rules of the market, has caused commercial broadcasting with concern and opposition from the outset. With the licensing of commercial broadcasting,

labor organizations, religious organizations, and scientific and educational organizations have always warned that the commercial use of television will lead society to collapse because commercialization will destroy the general aspects of the medium, including its educational aspect (Aufderbeide and Clark, 2008: 3) ^[3].

Commercial television turns to advertising to make money, and advertising companies tend to entertain programs to attract customers and the consumer market. As Van Dijk (2005: 23) ^[16] explains, there are several reasons why advertising can be an important revenue mechanism in the broadcasting industry. Including; Technical issues related to production and planning can increase costs or even make it impossible to provide, and therefore, in the absence of subsidies and other resources, advertising is the only source of legitimate income. At the same time, advertising may be far more profitable than other strategies.

The relationship between advertising and entertaining content can also be clearly studied in the approach of Herman and Chomsky's political economy (Hodkinson, 2017: 109) ^[8]. Herman and Chomsky in explaining the first filter; the (size, ownership, and profitability of the mass media) define this filter as the first powerful gatekeeper of media outputs that affect the social performance of the media. Accordingly, large communication companies are large business companies that are either controlled by wealthy individuals or managed by managers who are influenced by the pressure of investors to make more profit. So, economic reasons define many common interests for the media and commercial companies, and prevent television from covering programs that are economically and commercially devoid of profit.

They also in the description of the second filter; «Advertisements; License to be activate) explain that advertisers apply their power by purchasing television programs, thereby being considered as subsidiaries that enable the continuation of media activity. Hence, the media compete with each other to attract advertisers, and by attracting their attention, the programs actually serve commercial purposes, and these goals take over the management of television content (Ibid)

This filter indicates that advertisers as a whole are not only reluctant to provide programs with "serious" themes, but also seek to remove them from the television broadcast schedule. Because the broadcast of these programs is in conflict with the "shopping spirit" and the advertisers are trying to support programs that are "entertainment" and "light" and are in line with the "shopping spirit". Accordingly, the efforts of TV channels are aimed at increasing the number of viewers during the main airtime or golden time, in order to guarantee an increase in the amount of commercials and their income. With this approach, programs with cultural themes are not allowed to be broadcast, and instead, the broadcast of "light entertainment" programs is still the focus of attention (Ibid) Thus, the literature of United Nations Development (UNDP, 2004: 5) ^[14] has always emphasized the promotion and establishment of public media because the public media has the capacity to play a decisive role in realizing the public's right to access uncorrupted information and independent views. These media can work to contribute to a sense of national identity, the growth of democracy and other important social values, and the growth of the quality of awareness and education. The literate of United Nations

¹ Richard Howells

Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2008: 13-18) ^[13] also states that the procurement of public goods requires a coordinated public social response and therefore the private sector is unable to secure its procurement due to the pursuit of private interests. Thus, the public broadcasting system is defined as the only reference for accompanying the public interest, because

neither the commercial nor the state media have an incentive to accompany it (Table 1). Using the public broadcaster, everyone has the opportunity to comment as a citizen. Public broadcasting encourages and strengthens participation in public life; it develops knowledge and broadens the horizons of people to see themselves better than the world and other people (UNESCO, 2001: 7) ^[15].

Table 1: Performance of three models of power based, market based, and service oriented media ownership

	Power-based	Market-based	Service-based
Description	Government authority has direct oversight of rules, content, and planning	Private property is governed by a number of government regulation	A media system is defined by a legal framework in which the media is publicly owned but independent
Independence of performance	Planning is associated with political interests	Programming is associated with business interests	Programming is associated with public interests
Audience	Citizen	Consumer	Citizen
Sources of income	Citizens' Tax	Private investment, advertising	Consumers or listener funding or advertising

(Source: UNDP, 2004: 8) ^[14]

2.2 Commercial TV in Afghanistan

To understand the position of commercial television in Afghanistan, we first need to look at the evolution of private television in the country. Private television in Afghanistan is the product of the political developments of the 2001. This media has been created in connection with international action (especially the United States) to change the political situation in Afghanistan and in the form of cultural measures such as the promotion of free, independent and pluralistic media. At the same time, the privatization of the media has been hailed as part of a US strategy to change the political situation and extend democracy and human rights in Afghanistan. This policy is part of the larger concept of media pluralism, which calls for the abolition of the government's monopoly on media ownership, especially radio and television, and the participation of all social, cultural and political groups and other citizens active in social development and growth.

The Altai report (Devin *et al.* 2010: 51) shows that the establishment of private channels in Afghanistan has grown by up to 20% annually. According to this report (Ibid, 52), private channels in the country can be classified as follows:

- Category 1: Global private channels that cover their monthly expenses by broadcasting commercials;
- Category 2: Global private channels with specific audiences that are almost ²monolingual;
- Category 3: Private channels run by former jihadist parties;
- Category 4: Religious channels;
- Category 5: Local and non-global private channels.

At the present, out of, about one hundred television channels in the country (Akseer *et al.* 2017: 123) ^[1], only four are state-owned and the others are owned privately. Meanwhile, as the Altai classification shows, commercially-funded channels are at the top of the list of private channels.

Thus, according to the issues raised in the research literature, it can be argued that neither the reason for the existence of commercial television nor its approach to media content is consistent with the logic and supplies of public goods. According to the logic of public procurement, television should provide citizens with access to services such as governance, security, education, health and the

environment, while the for-profit approach to commercial television should be for the private benefit of investors.

3. Research methods

In this investigation, in order to study the performance of commercial television in Afghanistan, first the reports of international institutions have been studied and then the method of interviewing the focus group (Rubin and Babei 2011) ^[12] has been used to objectify these reports. In this method, since the members of the focus group should not be selected by probabilistic sampling method, two variables of literacy and gender are considered as two characteristics for the participants. The interview was conducted with eight citizens and lasted about two hours. In this interview, the most important findings of the research were shared with the participants in the form of interview questions. Since in this type of interview, group members tend to continue the discussion with the thoughts and experiences of others, participants share their personal and family perspectives and experiences watching channels. They shared their views and implications, and since it is not possible to present all of their experiences in this article, their views, especially on the role of television in "trying to expand security," have been intensively evaluated.

4. Research questions

According to the theoretical issues, in this study we are looking for an answer to the question of how the business approach conflicts with the logic of "trying to expand security" in the country?

5. Result of investigation

5.1 Afghanistan commercial TV performance in international reports

Many international reports on media activity in Afghanistan have criticized the performance of commercial television. These criticisms are both focused on revenue sources and focused on the activities of this media. As mentioned in the research literature, various factors in Afghanistan have led to a for-profit and commercial approach as the dominant approach to private television in Afghanistan.

While in many communications perspectives, advertising is defined as the main driver of commercialism on television, it seems that the dominance of commercial television in Afghanistan does not depend solely on advertising revenues,

and advertising has only a complementary role to cover part of the secondary media costs. Because, as stated in the Altai report (Davin *et al.* 2012: 20) ^[6] the most important reason for the growth of these channels is related to foreign financial support. At the same time, the existence of foreign investment and the presence of multinational media companies have been confirmed in this sector (Cary, 2012) ^[5].

On the other hand, the position of television among Afghan audiences and their interest in television also seems to have contributed to the growth of private television. Reporters without Borders' assessment (BBG, 2014)³ ^[4] shows that although radio is the most accessible media in Afghanistan, television is the most popular media outlet among Afghans. Urban dwellers watch more television than rural dwellers (92% vs. 55.1% per week). These statistics have remained almost the same in recent years, but what has changed in recent years is the increase in the number of TV viewers compared to listening to the radio compared to previous years in the country (Akseer *et al.* 2017: 123) ^[1].

Asia Foundation Research (Hopkins *et al.* 2012: 174 and 175) ^[10] shows that 54% of women in Afghanistan watch television compared to 47% of men. The results of this study also show that the dependence of watching TV on electricity and monthly income are among the factors that prevent all citizens from accessing this media. The findings cite television as the second source of information among Afghans (after the interpersonal network), which 48% of people use to obtain information.

Despite the popularity of private television among the public, the performance of this media has always been opposed by national institutions and social activists. Various social institutions are concerned about the negative consequences of programs on various cultural, political and economic spheres. Because, as the Altai report (Devin *et al.* 2010: 128) shows, the growth of private channels in Afghanistan is more in the form of entertainment programs. The focus of private channels on the production and distribution of entertainment programs has led to the failure of these channels in areas such as education and development (Ibid: 141 and 157). Also, Fraenkel, and colleagues (2010: 20) ^[7] assessment of the media in the country shows that the rapid growth of private radio and television in the country has reduced government oversight of media law enforcement. Based on this assessment (Ibid: 22 and 23), regulators have warned that the current media approach in Afghanistan will not help Afghan citizens achieve their development goals.

So, it seems that the operation of private television in Afghanistan is not focused on participating in the procurement of public goods and, consequently, "trying to expand security in the country." Because, participation in the procurement of public goods, requires an approach other than the business approach and the expectation of equipment and conditions different from what is defined as the conditions of operation of commercial television. The topic of general merchandise and the description of its characteristics, which are discussed below, will help us to better understand these terms and conditions.

5.2 Findings from the focus group’s interview

Focus group interview participants, especially issues of violence and disregard for psychological security, shared on

commercial television as part of their shared experiences and savings from watching commercial channels (Table 2). The findings of this interview are explained based on the participants' shared experiences and their views on the consequences of commercial broadcasting.

Table 2: Summary of interview findings with the focus group

Shared experience	Cases of protest	Consequences
Watching social programs	Most of the entertainment	Ignorance of education
Watching news	Focus on war news	Deprivation of psychological security from citizens
Watching serial	Violent content	The spread of violence and delinquency
Watching serial	Hidden violence	Deprivation of peace, consumerism, disturbing the balance in social relations

Focus on war news

The findings of the focus group interview show that, in the view of the participants, private channels focus only on news of the war as the current reality in the country and ignore the reflection of other realities of society, including news related to development. These findings show that focusing on war news has led to deprivation of citizens 'psychological security and, consequently, deprivation of citizens' motivation and hope for the future (Table 3).

Table 3: Participants' views on the consequences of focusing on war news

	Views	Topic	Consequences
P1	"The media pays less attention to the mental health of the people for economic gain. News on television networks worries the public mind. Our media focuses more on news of war and violence, and less on news that is good for the people, such as progress. "It's being noticed."	Focus on war news	Despair of the future
P2	"You turn on the TV first thing in the morning; he says five people have been killed in the incidents. What hope do I have to get out of the house? The hopes are suppressed first thing in the morning. "What hope does a young man living in this land with a thousand and one miseries get out of his house in the morning?"		
P3	"I'm not against freedom of expression, but I'm saying that as a citizen, every time I watch TV, I lose hope for the future."		

Violent content part

Focus group interview findings also show that participants find the content of many private television programs violent. According to these findings, private channels benefit from the broadcast of mafia and stressful serials and action and thriller movies to attract the audience, and this has led to an increase in violence in society and the emergence of social anomalies (Table 4).

³ BBG (Broadcasting Board of Governors)

Table 4: Participants' views on the consequences of violent content distribution

	Views	Topic	Consequences
P1	"We are not saying for the last fifteen or twenty years, we did not have abductions, but this was seldom done by some very big gangs groups, which were very few in number. By promoting kidnapping specially in Indian serials that show all the stapes of abduction everyone dared to simply form a group of at least two people, he can easily carry out the plan to kidnap another person."	Disseminate violent content	The spread of social crime. The spread of violence
P2	"We used to have phenomena called abduction or, for example, less divorce. But with the performance of these televisions, when one sees in a series that one person easily abducts another, they abduct by imitating and being inspired that this is an easy thing to do."		
P3	"In the family, We rarely try to let our little brother see a children's program, but in kindergarten he learns the same movements that happen in cartoons from his peers. For example, a child uses the pencil for drawing but he uses it as a knife and threatens his friends with it."		

Thus, the findings of the interview with the focus group, in addition to international reports on the activity of commercial television in the country, confirm the conflict between the for-profit approach and the logic of "trying to expand security in the country" as a component of public goods, not only does this practice or address this public duty but conflict with this logic, can lead to the spread of insecurity and especially the feeling of insecurity among citizens.

6. Conclusion

Given the issues raised in the research literature, the rationale for the existence, activities, and policies that support commercial television are inconsistent with the logic of participation in the public good, and in particular the "effort to expand security." This is because participation in the procurement of public goods is based on a non-profit approach to media content and should be supported by national policies within the framework of national conditions and needs. The rationale for participating in the procurement of public goods dictates that paving the way for access to important services, such as "security", on which the public good of society depends, requires the operation of a system that is free of economic and private interests.

In view of the above, it can be concluded that commercial distribution in the country is not only in line with the demands of media policy, but also focusing on popularity and entertaining genres, the performance of this media in opposition to these demands and thus in conflict with the logic of public procurement. For example, while "security" is one of the basic characteristics of public goods, the focus of commercial broadcasting on "violent" programs leads to the deprivation of citizens' psychological security, and on the other hand, the expansion of social crimes deprives society of public security.

Therefore, according to the international reports and the views of the participants in the focus group interview, in response to the question of this research, it can be concluded that commercial television, on the one hand, focuses on war news, war coverage and broadcast time. This news, and on the other hand, popular content, based on entertainment and creating tension, is aimed at attracting more audiences to the spread of "opposite and conflict" and "creating excitement and tension".

Thus, according to the findings of the interview with the focus group, focusing on war reporting and covering the moment-by-moment spread of insecurity in the country, especially in the morning news series, deprives the audience

motivation and hope and hinders mobility and social activity. At the same time, showing the contradictions of love triangles, the struggles of mafia groups and criminal activities, has increased the presence of criminal gangs, including kidnapping groups, and the spread of other social crimes in society and in the end, by these cases, the performance of commercial television is in conflict with the logic of "trying to expand security in the country."

7. References

1. Akseer, Tabasum *et al.* Afghanistan In 2017: A Surney of The Afghan People, Kabul: The Asia Foundation 2017.
2. Allern, Sigurd, Estern Pollack. "Journalism as a public good: A Scandinavian perspective", Journalism 2017. DOI:10.1177/1464884917730945: Sage.
3. Aufderbeide, Pat, Jessica Clark. Public Broadcasting & Public Affairs, Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harward Unversity 2008.
4. BBG. "Media Use in Afghanistan". Gallup: Broadcasting Board of Governors 2014.
5. Cary, Peter. "An Explosion of News: The State of Media in Afghanistan", Washington DC: Center for International Media Assistance 2012.
6. Davin, Eric *et al.* "Afghan Media in 2010", A Synthesis report: Altai consulting & USAID 2010.
7. Fraenkel, Eran *et al.* Afghanistan Media Assessment: Opportunities and Challenges for Peace building, Peaceworks, No. 68: United States Institute for Peace 2010.
8. Hodkinson, Paul. Media, Culture and Society; an introduction. Second edition, Los Angeles, Sage publication 2017.
9. Holcombe, Rander G. "A Theory of Theory of Public Goods". Review of Austrian Economics, No. 1 1997.
10. Hopkins, Nancy *et al.* Afghanistan In 2012: A Survey of the Afghan People, Kabul: The Asia Foundation 2012.
11. Howells, Richard. Visual Culture, Cambridge: Polity 2003.
12. Rubin, Allen, Earl Babei R. Research Methods for Social Works, Book Cole, Cengae Learning 2011.
13. UNIDO. "Public goods for economic development". Viana: UNIDO Publication 2008.
14. UNDP. "Supporting Public Service Broadcasting, Learning from Bosnia and Herzegovina experience", UNDP: Bureau for Development Policy, Democratic Governance Group 2004.

15. UNESCO. "Public Broadcasting: Why? How?", Paris: Sector of Communication and Information, Division of Communication Development 2001.
16. Van Dijk, Machiel *et al.* "Does Public Service Broadcasting Serve The Public? The Future of Television in the Changing Media Landscape", Discussion Paper series nr: 05-13, Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute: Utrecht School of Economics 2005.
17. Weeds, Helen. "Digitisation, Programme Quality and Public Service Broadcasting", in "Is there Still a Place for Public Service Television?", Edited by Robert G. Picard and Paolo Siciliani, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism: University of Oxford 2013.