Global Media Ownership & Political Power: problems and solutions

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Rupert Murdoch once said …

“monopolies are a terrible thing – unless you have one.”
Murdoch – the Wizard of Oz
Murdoch – the Wizard of Oz
Here, there and (almost) everywhere

Most ‘umble

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvcHbfcVlmw
The Wizard revealed ...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZR64EF3OpA
When Dave and friends met the Wizard and friends
### Team Cameron and Team Murdoch ‘Declared’ Encounters 2010/2011

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### Meeting other newspapers chiefs 2010/11

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<td>BBC Director General</td>
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The Power of News

“The power of the media resides in the perception of experts and decision makers that the general public is influenced by the mass media not in the influence of the mass media on the general public. That is to say the media’s political appeal lies less in its ability to bend minds than in its ability to convince elites that the popular mind can be bent.”

Michael Schudson 1995: 121
The Murdoch Empire

The ‘Murdoch Formula’

- Controls (or did control) 40% of UK readership
- Multi-media empire
- Globalised empire
- Ideologically in tune
The ‘Murdoch three-card trope’

- Right wing but promiscuous
- The man of many masks
- The ‘ocker’ against the world
The political harlot

“The secret of Murdoch’s power over the politicians is, of course, that he is prepared to use his newspapers to reward them for favours given and destroy them for favours denied.”

Harold Evans
The anti-elitist

“For fifty years British television has operated on the assumption that the people could not be trusted to watch what they wanted to watch, so it had to be controlled by like-minded people who knew what was good for us....Much of what passes for quality on British television really is no more than a reflection of the values of the narrow elite which controls it and which has always thought that it's tastes are synonymous with quality - a view incidentally, that is natural to all governing classes.”

Rupert Murdoch, McTaggart lecture 1989
The future..

- End of Murdoch abuse of power (probably)
- Less arrogance by all proprietors
- New system of press regulation
- Journalists’ more confident to defend media freedom
- Greater public awareness of media misbehaviour
The View from Africa: same problems, different solutions
Fair Media, Fair Elections
“The Nigerian elections of April 2007 were judged by most observers to fall a long way short of the standards for credible, free and fair elections and to be the worst in Nigeria’s post-independence, electoral history. Thus far, elections have served the interests mainly of the powerful elite and have had little, if any, significant impact on deepening representative democracy, let alone transforming people’s socio-economic livelihoods in a positive manner. ... This is not to say that the elections had no redeeming features. Most reviews mention that the media and civil society showed an increased effectiveness”

UK Department for International Development
The role of the media in a democracy

- Relay the information that enables citizens to make informed judgments.
- Report politics day-to-day as well as during elections.
- Seek to act as a check on government and an inhibitor of the abuse of political power.
- Give a voice to as wide a range of interest groups as possible.
The role of the media in a democracy

- Give politicians a space to respond to public concerns and to set out their policies
- Provide the main forum within which the public debate is held.
- Crystallise the debate
The Pre-requisites

- Government that recognises ‘value’ of opposition
- Public media free to criticise government
- Strong advertising market to sustain private media
- Effective laws on media freedom
- Strong journalists’ and media organisations
- Spirit of tolerance and freedom
Nigerian media

- Over 100 newspaper titles
- 134 radio stations
- 61 television stations
Nigerian Election Workshops 2011

- Training workshops between February and March in the federal capital Abuja as well as the regional centres of Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and Enugu. 102 broadcast and print journalists working with private and state media in 28 of Nigeria's 36 states participated in five of the workshops. The sixth was for 38 student journalists and 4 Lecturers from the University of Lagos Mass Communication Department.

- Although women are under-represented in Nigerian journalism, IWPR/IPC worked to ensure that at least 40% of the trainees were female journalists.
Workshops objectives

To improve the skills of the journalists as follows:

- Focus on issues & electors NOT parties & personalities
- Conflict-sensitive election reporting
- Basic techniques of radio reporting and social media
- Reporting, fair and independent as possible
- Personal safety.
Workshop issues

- Media ownership
- Self-censorship
- Skewed coverage of politics, parties and candidates
- Corruption and compromises
- Intimidation
- Nationality and religion
Journalists’ challenges

- Awareness of codes & laws
- Using new media technology
- Equal opportunities and access
- Ensuring media credibility and trust
- Making coverage relevant to audience
What are the key challenges for journalists in Nigeria?
Graph shows the percentage of respondents mentioning each challenge

- Threats to safety/life: 49%
- Censorship by media owners: 38%
- Poor remuneration: 30%
- Bribery/gifts from politicians: 18%
- Lack of information/access to information: 16%
- Lack of modern tools: 20%
- Lack of training: 10%
- Reporting objectively and equitably: 6%
- Politicians' lifestyle/unfriendly: 4%
- Hostility from public: 4%
- Lack of education of electorate: 8%
- Having to report political stories that may cause dissatisfaction: 6%
- Lack of insurance: 3%
- Self-censorship: 3%
To what extent do you feel owners of media influence editorial content?

- not at all
- a little
- a lot
In which circumstances do you feel is appropriate to accept money?

- in no circs: 53%
- sometimes: 41%
- any time: 6%
When is it acceptable?

- When financially handicapped journalist have no choice.
- When it comes as a gift.
- When the politician is an aspirant and not yet a candidate.
- When the issue is not strong enough [to justify a story] but the politician insists.
- When it is just an appreciation that does not stand to influence professional judgment/reporting.
Key Issues for Journalists

- Power supply
- Security of lives and property
- Education
- Health care
- Transportation (Roads)
- Rural infrastructure
- Women and children
- Food security & agriculture
- Youth unemployment & job creation
- Development of Nigeria’s science & technology base
Professional Trainee Feedback: from the 'Fair Media, Fair Elections' Workshops

- Completely agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Completely disagree

- The training helped me identify key issues in an election: 57, 29, 0, 0
- The training helped me deal with politicians: 41, 11, 1, 3
- The training helped me know what info to give to the public: 67, 20, 0, 0
- The trainers knew their subject well: 65, 24, 15, 0
- Group exercises gave me ideas to improve election coverage: 73, 38, 2, 0
- There was plenty of chance to participate: 49, 43, 4, 0
- Participants received satisfactory answers to their questions: 49, 37, 10, 0
- Expectations of the session were fulfilled: 50, 35, 6, 0
- Time-keeping was good: 46, 24, 6, 4
- After the training, I am able to cover the elections impartially: 62, 24, 6, 4
- News stories gathered from freelancers via email
- Stories selected (up to six) re-written and voiced in Lagos
- Uploaded to website as text and audio service
- Journalists phoned via IVR and offered stories
- Journalists go to website to download text and audio
20 April 2011 Health workers demand polling units near hospitals

Health workers have called for the location of polling stations within hospital premises to aid their participation in the current elections. They said this will make it possible for them to exercise their civic duty while staying close to their patients.

Polling stations are not currently located in the premises of many government hospitals.

Medical Director of State Specialist Hospital, Akure, Ondo State, Dr. Bolu Adeboye, said health workers will not have to go too far if polling units are located around the premises.

Dr. Adeboye said this will also facilitate quick attention for emergency patients who could be at risk if left un-attended to for long.
Over the life of the project (Feb – June 2011)

- Uploaded over 500 audio and text stories
- Made a total of 115,359 calls to journalists across Nigeria.
- Received 34,229 hits (from launch in March to end on 16th June
- Employed more than 30 freelancers
Perhaps more importantly

- Gave journalists both income and an outlet for stories
- Provided ongoing support in raising standards
- Suggested new ways of reporting elections that led to new reporting initiatives
But the real result will come in 2013 and beyond ...
Contacts

ivorgaber@gmail.com