

Owning the Crisis Narrative: A Scoping Review of Media Ownership, Editorial Framing, and Democratic Accountability in the Global South

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Abstrak

Krisis politik meningkatkan ketergantungan publik pada jurnalisme sekaligus memperkuat upaya pemerintah, partai politik, pemilik media, dan aktor komersial dalam membentuk penafsiran terhadap peristiwa. Tinjauan cakupan ini menganalisis bagaimana kepemilikan media memengaruhi pemingkaian editorial selama pemilu, protes, kontroversi korupsi, konflik geopolitik, dan transisi demokrasi di Global South, serta implikasinya bagi akuntabilitas demokratis. Dengan mengikuti prinsip tinjauan cakupan dan PRISMA-ScR, penelusuran dilakukan melalui Scopus dan Web of Science menggunakan istilah yang berkaitan dengan kepemilikan media, produksi editorial, pemingkaian, krisis politik, serta demokrasi berkembang atau transisional. Tiga belas studi inti dipetakan berdasarkan konfigurasi kepemilikan, mekanisme pengaruh, bingkai krisis, dan dampak terhadap akuntabilitas. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa pengaruh kepemilikan bersifat kondisional, bukan otomatis. Media yang berafiliasi secara politik, bergantung pada negara, atau terkonsentrasi cenderung menekankan stabilitas, legitimasi petahana, ketertiban publik, dan keselarasan geopolitik. Sebaliknya, media independen lebih sering menonjolkan legitimasi protes, kegagalan tata kelola, akuntabilitas, dan perubahan politik. Pengaruh tersebut bekerja melalui tekanan pemilik, kontrol editorial terpusat, ketergantungan pendanaan, alokasi sumber daya, lemahnya regulasi, risiko profesional, infrastruktur bersama, dan ideologi organisasi. Kepemilikan asing dalam beberapa kasus melindungi otonomi editorial, tetapi juga dapat mendorong depolitisasi komersial. Tinjauan ini mengusulkan model terpadu yang menghubungkan konfigurasi kepemilikan, pengaruh editorial, pemingkaian krisis, dan akuntabilitas demokratis.

Kata kunci: *kepemilikan media; pemingkaian editorial; krisis politik; akuntabilitas demokratis; pluralisme media; Global South*

Abstract

Political crises increase public dependence on journalism while intensifying efforts by governments, parties, proprietors, and commercial actors to shape event interpretation. This scoping review examines how media ownership influences editorial framing during elections, protests, corruption controversies, geopolitical conflicts, and democratic transitions in the Global South, and considers the implications for democratic accountability. Following established scoping-review and PRISMA-ScR principles, Scopus and Web of Science were searched using terms related to media ownership, editorial production, framing, political crises, and developing or transitional democracies. Thirteen core studies were charted according to ownership configuration, mechanisms of influence, crisis frames, and accountability outcomes. The findings indicate that ownership effects are conditional rather than automatic. Politically affiliated, state-dependent, and concentrated media frequently emphasized stability, incumbent legitimacy, public order, and geopolitical alignment. Independent outlets more often foregrounded protest legitimacy, governance failure, accountability, and political change. Influence operated through owner pressure, centralized editorial control, funding dependence, resource allocation, regulatory weakness, professional risk, shared infrastructures, and organizational ideology. Foreign ownership sometimes protected editorial autonomy but could also encourage commercial depoliticization. The review proposes an integrated model linking ownership configuration, editorial influence, crisis framing, and democratic accountability.

Keywords: *media ownership; editorial framing; political crises; democratic accountability; media pluralism; Global South*

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INTRODUCTION

Political crises are critical information environments. Elections, protests, corruption scandals, coups, geopolitical conflicts, and democratic transitions increase uncertainty and heighten the consequences of journalistic selection. News organizations do not merely report these events; they define the crisis, identify legitimate actors, assign responsibility, and make particular responses appear necessary. During Indonesia's 2024 election, partisan ownership, centralized editorial authority, commercial competition, and weak enforcement contributed to

biased electoral communication.¹ A comparison of iNews TV and Metro TV likewise found different candidate-favoring patterns associated with their political affiliations.²

These relationships are especially consequential in the Global South and transitional media systems, where formal liberalization often coexists with concentrated ownership, politically connected business groups, state dependence, fragile advertising markets, and uneven regulation. During Bangladesh's July 2024 uprising, pro-government newspapers applied the protest paradigm more strongly than independent and anti-government outlets.³ In Malaysia's fifteenth general election, mainstream media emphasized stability and continuity, whereas independent outlets foregrounded accountability, governance failure, and political change.⁴ The democratic significance of ownership therefore lies not only in legal proprietorship, but also in the relationships linking owners with political elites, editors, regulators, advertisers, and audiences.

In this review, media ownership refers to legal, financial, political, organizational, or infrastructural control over news production and distribution. It includes state, private commercial, family, conglomerate, politically affiliated, foreign, community, nonprofit, and digitally mediated arrangements. Influence may be direct, but it often operates through funding, appointments, resource allocation, access, regulation, professional risk, and newsroom routines. In Ghana, owner affiliation, government pressure, financial insecurity, restricted access, threats, and self-censorship constrained anti-corruption and investigative reporting.⁵ Ownership

¹ A. B. Sulistijanto et al., "Broadcasting in the Shadow of Power: Regulatory Challenges and Political Violations during Indonesia's 2024 Election," *Frontiers in Communication* 10 (2025), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1682232>.

² Y. Darwis and M. A. Muqsith, "Media Independence in Indonesian Broadcast Television News: A Comparative Case Study of iNews TV and Metro TV during the 2024 Presidential Election," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 41, no. 3 (2025): 449–70, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2025-4103-24>.

³ Z. R. Arman et al., "Manufacturing Legitimacy: Media Ownership and the Framing of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh," *Journalism and Media* 6, no. 3 (2025), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia6030148>.

⁴ S. A. N. B. Ismail and W. N. W. M. Ghazali, "How Was General Election 15 Framed in Malaysian Media: Exploring the Role of Framing and Political Narratives," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 42, no. 2 (2026): 443–56, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2026-4202-24>.

⁵ S. Danso, "Media and Politics: Investigating Government Interests, Ownership Influence and Media Independence in Combating Corruption in Ghana," *Cogent Social Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2025), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2483391>; R. Andoh, "Unmasking Corruption in Africa: Understanding the Challenges Investigative Journalism Faces in Reporting Political Corruption in Ghana," *Afrika Focus* 38, no. 1 (2025): 31–58, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1163/2031356x-20250103>.

therefore operates within an institutional ecology rather than through explicit commands alone.

Editorial framing refers to the selective organization of news through problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, source selection, tone, prominence, omission, and proposed remedies. These choices produce recurring frames of stability, legitimacy, public order, national interest, accountability, and political change. In coverage of the 2017–2018 Iranian protests, Xinhua emphasized preservation of the status quo, whereas privately operated agencies in democratic systems gave greater attention to political change; protesters were also absent from state-owned-agency reporting.⁶ Reporting on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) similarly varied according to ownership, funding, and geopolitical alignment.⁷

Ownership effects, however, are not automatic. *Republika* changed its source structure and newsroom coordination between 1999 and 2021, but its pro-Palestinian orientation remained stable, suggesting that readership identity, professional routines, and organizational ideology may outlast ownership change⁸. In South Africa, ownership diversification after apartheid did not necessarily produce substantive content diversity because new ownership remained embedded in elite-centered market structures.⁹ Foreign ownership may also be ambivalent: it initially insulated Bulgaria's bTV from domestic political networks but also encouraged commercial depoliticization.¹⁰ Cross-national evidence further shows that ownership interacts with press freedom, corruption, editorial autonomy, and professional role orientation.¹¹

⁶ O. Adegbola et al., "Reporting Bias in Coverage of Iran Protests by Global News Agencies," *International Journal of Press/Politics* 27, no. 1 (2022): 138–57, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220966948>.

⁷ M. U. Sahibzada and W. Jia, "CPEC in the Shadows of Fifth Generation Warfare and the Dynamics of Propaganda Model," *Review of Economics and Political Science* 10, no. 3 (2025): 239–60, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-07-2024-0032>.

⁸ B. Setiawan et al., "Media Ownership and Its Role in Shaping News: Analysing *Republika*'s 1999 and 2021 Coverage in Light of the 2024 Gaza Genocide," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 40, no. 3 (2024): 281–96, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2024-4003-16>.

⁹ P. Govenden, "The Power of Neoliberalism: Transformation, Neo-Elitism, and Class Continuities in the Post-Apartheid Media," *TripleC* 20, no. 1 (2022): 101–20, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.31269/triplec.v20i1.1301>.

¹⁰ D. Sarelska, "News with a Human Face in a Copycat Fourth Estate—The Americanization of Television News in Post-Communist Media Systems: The Bulgarian Experiment," *Journalism and Media* 7, no. 2 (2026), Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia7020074>.

¹¹ B. I. Hamada and D. Vallesi, "Determinants of Journalists' Trust in Public Institutions: A Macro and Micro Analysis Across 67 Countries," *Journalism Practice* 19, no. 2 (2025): 282–303, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2023.2187861>.

Democratic accountability is understood here as the capacity of citizens, journalists, regulators, civil society, and political institutions to monitor, question, expose, and sanction power. Public or private ownership does not automatically guarantee this capacity.

Despite growing scholarship, the literature remains fragmented across political economy, journalism studies, framing research, media capture, regulatory studies, and digital governance. Studies often examine ownership, newsroom processes, framing, or democratic outcomes separately, use inconsistent definitions, and focus on single countries or events.

This scoping review therefore maps how media ownership shapes editorial framing during political crises in the Global South. It examines the ownership configurations studied, the mechanisms connecting ownership and framing, the frames that recur across crisis contexts, the reported consequences for accountability and autonomy, and the remaining conceptual, geographical, and methodological gaps.

The review advances the proposition that politically affiliated, state-dependent, highly concentrated, or patron-dependent ownership is more likely to align crisis narratives with elite interests. However, professional norms, market position, regulatory insulation, platform structure, and crisis type condition this relationship. The review contributes an integrated model linking ownership configuration, mechanisms of influence, crisis framing, and democratic consequences.

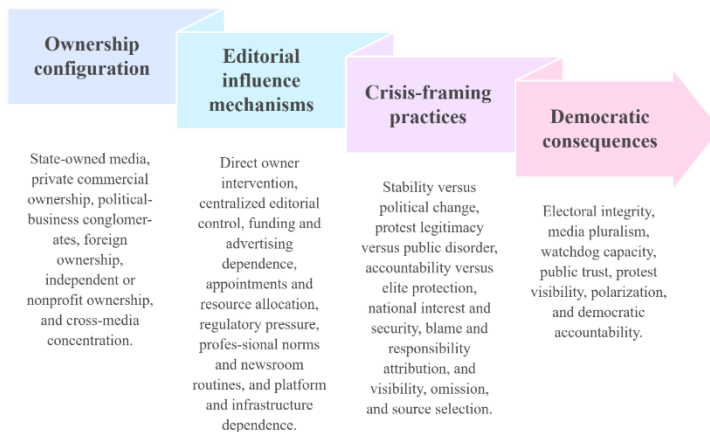


Figure 1. Media ownership, political-crisis narratives, and democratic accountability.

Ownership configurations shape editorial production through organizational, economic, political, regulatory, professional, and technological mechanisms. These mechanisms influence crisis framing and democratic outcomes, while journalistic autonomy, regulatory resilience, market structure, platform architecture, crisis characteristics, and political context moderate their effects.

METHOD

Search Strategy

This study used a scoping review design to map a heterogeneous literature on media ownership, crisis contexts, media platforms, and research methods. Scoping reviews are appropriate for clarifying concepts, describing an evidence base, and identifying research gaps rather than estimating pooled causal effects.¹²

Reporting followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR), Joanna Briggs Institute guidance, and relevant PRISMA 2020 recommendations.¹³ The review used the Population–Concept–Context framework. The evidence domain included news organizations, journalists, editors, media owners, regulators, and recognized news platforms. The central concept was the relationship between media ownership or concentration and editorial independence, newsroom decision-making, or framing indicators such as tone, sourcing, prominence, omission, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and proposed remedies. The context covered Global South, developing, transitional, hybrid, post-authoritarian, and postcolonial media systems.

Scopus and the Web of Science Core Collection were searched. The search log recorded 318 Scopus records and 525 Web of Science records before filtering. Limits for publication years 2022–2026, social-science indexing, English language, article type, and open-access status reduced the results to 39 Scopus and 57 Web of Science records.

The search combined terms for ownership, including “media ownership,” proprietorship, concentration, and “ownership structure”; editorial production, including editorial, framing, agenda-setting, gatekeeping, and “news production”; and political crisis, including election,

¹² Hilary Arksey and Lisa O'Malley, “Scoping Studies: Towards a Methodological Framework,” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8, no. 1 (2005): 19–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616>.

¹³ Andrea C. Tricco et al., “PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and Explanation,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 169, no. 7 (2018): 467–73, <https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0850>.

conflict, protest, democracy, and politics. Supplementary terms covered state-owned, politically affiliated, foreign-owned, captured, and independent media, together with Global South regional and country terms.

Eligibility Criteria

Peer-reviewed empirical studies were eligible when they examined media ownership in relation to editorial production, political-crisis framing, journalistic autonomy, or democratic accountability. Qualitative, quantitative, computational, comparative, longitudinal, survey, interview, and mixed-method studies were considered.

Studies were excluded when ownership referred to nonmedia subjects; framing was examined outside journalism or political communication; issue ownership referred only to political parties; the study concerned entertainment, advertising, or other non-news communication; bibliographic information was insufficient; or Global South findings could not be separated from broader comparative results. The criteria were piloted before formal screening.¹⁴

Screening, Selection, and Methodological Assessment

Records were exported, merged, and examined for exact and near duplicates. Titles and abstracts were screened against the Population–Concept–Context criteria. Potentially eligible studies were then assessed for four elements: an ownership-related variable, an editorial or framing outcome, a relevant political-crisis context, and a usable empirical contribution.

The available source material did not preserve verified counts for deduplication, title-and-abstract exclusions, full-text retrieval, or reason-specific exclusions. These values were not estimated and must be verified from the original review-management records before submission. The evidence-charting file contained 13 core studies.

Methodological characteristics informed interpretation but were not used as automatic exclusion criteria. The assessment considered the clarity of research questions, sampling transparency, validity of framing measures, operationalization of ownership, comparative logic, reflexivity, treatment of alternative explanations, and consistency between evidence and conclusions. Because no formal appraisal instrument or scoring procedure

¹⁴ Mai T. Pham et al., “A Scoping Review of Scoping Reviews: Advancing the Approach and Enhancing the Consistency,” *Research Synthesis Methods* 5, no. 4 (2014): 371–85, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jrsm.1123>.

was documented, this process is described as a structured methodological assessment rather than a formal risk-of-bias evaluation

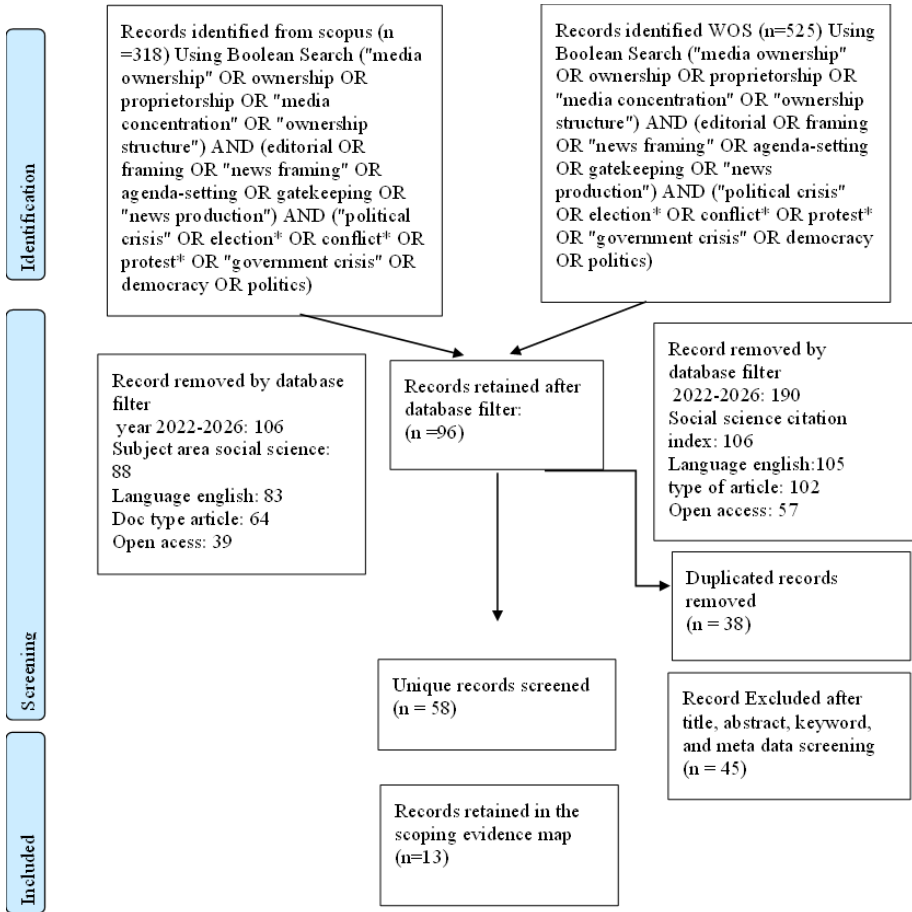


Figure 2. Provisional PRISMA-ScR flow diagram based on the supplied search log.

The diagram be finalized only after the numbers of duplicates, screened records, full texts assessed, exclusions, and included studies have been verified.

Data Charting and Analytical Synthesis

Data were charted using a piloted form that recorded the full reference, publication year, country or region, political-system context, crisis type, media platform, outlet or sample, ownership type, political or commercial affiliation, theoretical framework, study design, sample or corpus size,

framing variables, mechanisms of editorial influence, regulatory conditions, autonomy indicators, principal findings, democratic implications, limitations, and unresolved research gaps.

The charting process was designed to preserve an audit trail and support iterative refinement, consistent with recommendations for rigorous scoping-review practice.¹⁵ The use of piloted forms, calibration procedures, descriptive mapping, and narrative synthesis was also aligned with practical guidance for conducting scoping reviews.¹⁶

The synthesis combined descriptive mapping with thematic analysis. Studies were coded across four linked analytical levels:

1. ownership configuration;
2. mechanism of editorial influence;
3. crisis-framing practice; and
4. democratic-accountability consequence.

Comparisons were made across state and private ownership, politically affiliated and nominally independent outlets, domestic and foreign ownership, and concentrated and plural ownership structures. The synthesis also compared legacy and digital platforms and examined elections, protests, corruption, political transitions, and geopolitical conflicts.

Contradictory, null, protective, and mixed findings were retained rather than forced into a single directional interpretation. This approach allowed the review to distinguish direct owner intervention from indirect organizational, economic, professional, regulatory, ideological, and technological mechanisms. Decisions made during coding and synthesis should be documented transparently, particularly when the analytical framework was refined after initial charting.¹⁷

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Political Economy of Media Ownership and Editorial Control

Critical political economy views journalism as a product of ownership, capital, market competition, regulation. Critical political economy views journalism as shaped by ownership, capital, markets, regulation, labor, and political power. Ownership may influence editorial priorities directly

¹⁵ Helena M. L. Daudt et al., “Enhancing the Scoping Study Methodology: A Large, Inter-Professional Team’s Experience with Arksey and O’Malley’s Framework,” *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 13 (March 2013): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-13-48>.

¹⁶ Danielle Pollock et al., “Undertaking a Scoping Review: A Practical Guide for Nursing and Midwifery Students, Clinicians, Researchers, and Academics,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 77, no. 4 (2021): 2102–13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14743>.

¹⁷ “Best Practice Guidance and Reporting Items for...: JBI Evidence Synthesis,” Ovid, <https://doi.org/10.11124/JBIES-21-00242>.

through intervention or indirectly through appointments, resource allocation, advertising dependence, access, and professional risk. Within the journalistic field, ownership represents one source of economic power among organizations and professionals competing for legitimacy, autonomy, audiences, and resources. Political clientelism further explains why formally private outlets may remain dependent on state advertising, licensing, patronage, or elite access, particularly where regulation is politicized and professional autonomy is weak.¹⁸

Framing theory connects these structural conditions with editorial output. Frames make selected aspects of reality salient by defining problems, attributing causes, making moral evaluations, and recommending responses.¹⁹ Ownership and organizational power are most directly involved in frame-building, although public effects depend on exposure and interpretation.²⁰ Frames may be issue-specific or generic, including conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility.²¹

Framing research includes cognitive, constructionist, and critical approaches and uses inductive, deductive, manual, and automated methods.²² Journalists may reproduce frames promoted by influential actors or interpret events more independently.²³ Frames should therefore be treated as organizing principles embedded in institutions, routines, and professional cultures rather than as isolated textual devices.²⁴

Ownership can shape both issue selection and interpretation. Agenda-setting theory explains how issue prominence affects perceptions of

¹⁸ Daniel C. Hallin and Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, "Political Clientelism and the Media: Southern Europe and Latin America in Comparative Perspective," *Media, Culture & Society* 24, no. 2 (2002): 175–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344370202400202>.

¹⁹ Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>.

²⁰ Dietram A. Scheufele, "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects," *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 1 (1999): 103–22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/49.1.103>.

²¹ Holli A. Semetko and Patti M. Valkenburg, "Framing European Politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News," *Journal of Communication*, ahead of print, 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2000.tb02843.x>.

²² Paul D'Angelo, "News Framing as a Multiparadigmatic Research Program: A Response to Entman," *Journal of Communication* 52, no. 4 (2002): 870–88, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02578.x>.

²³ Michael Brüggemann, "Between Frame Setting and Frame Sending: How Journalists Contribute to News Frames," *Communication Theory* 24, no. 1 (2014): 61–82, <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12027>.

²⁴ Stephen D. Reese, "The Framing Project: A Bridging Model for Media Research Revisited," *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 148–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00334.x>.

importance²⁵ (McCombs and Shaw 1972), while indexing theory suggests that news often reflects the boundaries of elite debate, especially when journalists depend on official sources during crises.²⁶ In protest coverage, diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames define problems, propose remedies, and justify action.²⁷ Ownership-aligned newsrooms may amplify, modify, or suppress these frames, although audience responses remain conditional on credibility, prior beliefs, knowledge, and exposure to competing interpretations.²⁸

This review integrates these perspectives through a four-stage framework. First, it distinguishes formal ownership from effective control, including beneficial ownership, political alliances, state-advertising dependence, informal patronage, cross-media networks, and platform dependencies. Second, it identifies direct, organizational, economic, regulatory, professional, and infrastructural mechanisms of influence. Third, it examines editorial outcomes such as source selection, prominence, omission, tone, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and proposed remedies. Fourth, it links these outcomes with democratic consequences, including accountability, pluralism, public trust, legitimacy, participation, and polarization. The framework also recognizes feedback processes that may generate demands for transparency, regulatory reform, stronger public-service safeguards, and support for independent journalism.

²⁵ Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176–87, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2747787>.

W. Lance Bennett, "Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States," *Journal of Communication* 40, no. 2 (1990): 103–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1990.tb02265.x>.

²⁷ Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611–39, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/223459>.

²⁸ Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "Framing Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 10, no. Volume 10, 2007 (2007): 103–26, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.

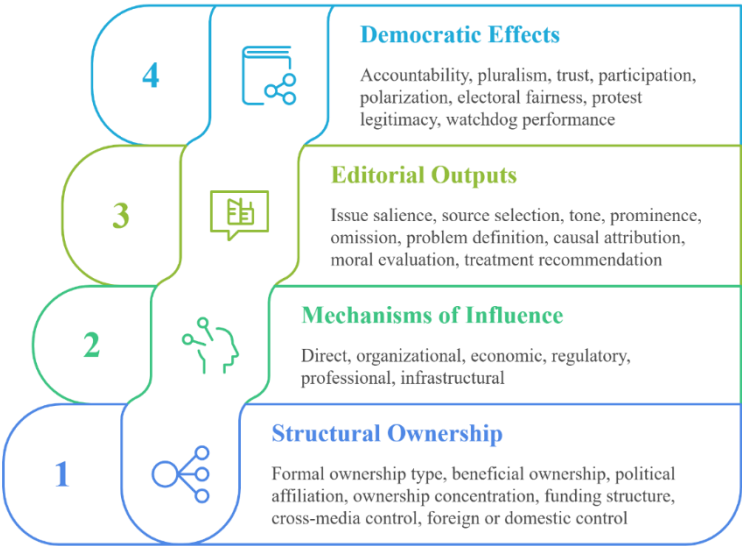


Figure 3. Integrated theoretical framework linking media ownership, editorial influence, crisis framing, and democratic accountability.

The framework distinguishes formal ownership from effective control and traces how direct, organizational, economic, regulatory, professional, and infrastructural mechanisms shape editorial framing. These framing practices may influence accountability, pluralism, public trust, legitimacy, participation, and polarization, while feedback processes may generate demands for institutional reform.

Evolution of Ownership–Framing Relations in Global South Media Systems

Media ownership in the Global South did not evolve through a simple shift from state control to private pluralism. Colonial information systems, postcolonial state-building, elite press traditions, and public broadcasting created durable links between media institutions and political authority. Later liberalization expanded private ownership but often strengthened conglomerates and politically connected proprietors rather than creating fully autonomous markets. Formal press freedom may therefore coexist with clientelism, regulatory dependence, and political parallelism. Because journalism cultures also differ in interventionism, market orientation,

objectivism, and professional values, similar ownership categories do not necessarily produce similar editorial conduct.²⁹

These historical conditions become visible in framing practices. Headlines, leads, source order, narrative structure, metaphors, and rhetorical emphasis form interpretive packages that define causes, consequences, and moral judgments.³⁰ Owners, political actors, social movements, and journalists compete to make particular packages dominant. Even where ownership appears plural, the public sphere may remain narrow if outlets reproduce similar elite frames. The influence of competing frames depends on repetition, accessibility, credibility, and cultural resonance.³¹

Digital transformation has expanded ownership to include control over data, platforms, audience analytics, content-management systems, distribution, and monetization. These infrastructures can centralize production without explicit editorial intervention, while digital activists and small online outlets may generate counter-frames outside legacy media. Professional mediation nevertheless remains important. Watchdog, loyal-facilitator, interventionist, civic, service, and collaborative roles may coexist within the same media system.³² Role-performance analysis therefore helps connect professional ideals with observable relationships to power and audiences.³³

²⁹ Thomas Hanitzsch, “Deconstructing Journalism Culture: Toward a Universal Theory,” *Communication Theory* 17, no. 4 (2007): 367–85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00303.x>.

³⁰ Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, “Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse,” *Political Communication* 10, no. 1 (1993): 55–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963>.

³¹ Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, “A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Elite Environments,” *Journal of Communication* 57, no. 1 (2007): 99–118, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00331.x>.

³² Thomas Hanitzsch and Tim P. Vos, “Journalism beyond Democracy: A New Look into Journalistic Roles in Political and Everyday Life,” *Journalism* 19, no. 2 (2018): 146–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916673386>.

³³ Claudia Mellado, “Professional Roles in News Content: Six Dimensions of Journalistic Role Performance,” *Journalism Studies* 16, no. 4 (2015): 596–614, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.922276>.

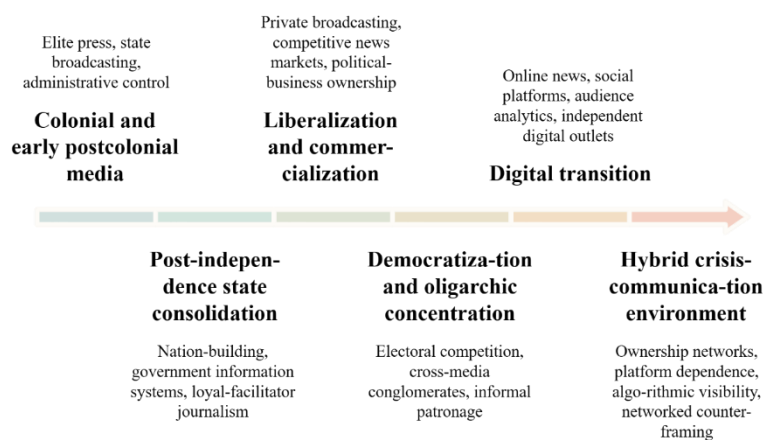


Figure 4. Evolution of ownership–framing relations in Global South media systems.

The figure illustrates a historical sequence from colonial and early postcolonial systems characterized by elite newspapers and state broadcasting, through liberalization and democratization, to a digital and hybrid crisis-communication environment. Across these phases, formal diversity may increase, but political, economic, and technological control often persists or changes form through patronage, market concentration, platform power, and infrastructure dependence.

Contested Pathways from Ownership to Editorial Influence

Three debates shape the relationship between ownership and editorial framing. First, direct interference differs from structural influence. Instructions, censorship, and politically determined appointments are more visible than resource allocation, employment insecurity, shared infrastructure, audience metrics, and anticipatory compliance. The absence of reported intervention therefore does not necessarily indicate editorial independence.

Second, similar content may result from common ownership, but it may also emerge from comparable revenue models, technologies, routines, and assumptions about audience demand. Framing research must therefore connect textual patterns with the organizational processes that produce

them; otherwise, it may identify content differences without explaining how power operates in news production.³⁴

Third, bias must be distinguished from legitimate editorial judgment and partisan pluralism. Electoral strategy and game frames do not necessarily result from direct owner instruction, and studies have operationalized them inconsistently (Aalberg et al. 2012). State-owned and foreign-owned media also vary in legal mandates, funding, institutional insulation, and professional culture. Foreign ownership may protect newsrooms from domestic pressure but may also encourage commercial homogenization, cultural dependency, or geopolitical influence.

This review therefore treats ownership effects as conditional. Ownership creates potential mechanisms of influence, but editorial outcomes depend on professional norms, regulation, market structure, political opportunity, platform architecture, and crisis characteristics. These interactions become visible in source selection, prominence, tone, omission, causal attribution, and proposed remedies. This approach recognizes the structuring role of power while allowing for professional resistance, negotiated autonomy, protective ownership, and counterintuitive outcomes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ownership Configurations and Political Alignment

Table 1 shows that ownership was rarely treated as a purely legal category. In Indonesia, centralized private broadcasting and political affiliation were associated with partisan content, while regional stations and regulators had limited authority over nationally produced material³⁵. In Bangladesh, newspapers were classified as pro-government, anti-government, or independent because political proximity shaped the treatment of protesters.³⁶ Malaysian studies similarly distinguished mainstream from independent media on the basis of editorial orientation.³⁷

African evidence emphasized the material and institutional conditions of ownership. In Ghana, political affiliation interacted with weak funding,

³⁴ Rens Vliegthart and Liesbet van Zoonen, "Power to the Frame: Bringing Sociology Back to Frame Analysis," *European Journal of Communication* 26, no. 2 (2011): 101–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323111404838>.

³⁵ Sulistijanto et al., "Broadcasting in the Shadow of Power: Regulatory Challenges and Political Violations during Indonesia's 2024 Election"; Darwis and Muqsith, "Media Independence in Indonesian Broadcast Television News: A Comparative Case Study of iNews TV and Metro TV during the 2024 Presidential Election."

³⁶ Arman et al., "Manufacturing Legitimacy: Media Ownership and the Framing of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh."

³⁷ Ismail and Ghazali, "How Was General Election 15 Framed in Malaysian Media: Exploring the Role of Framing and Political Narratives."

restricted access, intimidation, and pressure on editorial decisions.³⁸ In South Africa, ownership diversification through Black Economic Empowerment coexisted with elite and class continuity in news content.³⁹ Cross-national evidence further showed that ownership interacted with press freedom, corruption, editorial autonomy, and professional role orientation rather than operating independently.⁴⁰

Other cases revealed similar variation. News-agency ownership interacted with national interests in coverage of the Iranian protests⁴¹, while reporting on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor varied according to ownership, funding, and geopolitical alignment.⁴² Changes in *Republika*’s ownership altered newsroom organization without displacing its ideological relationship with Muslim readership.⁴³ Foreign ownership of Bulgaria’s bTV initially protected the newsroom from domestic political networks but also encouraged commercial hybridization.⁴⁴

Overall, formal ownership, effective control, political affiliation, funding dependence, and institutional position should be analyzed separately. Similar ownership categories may produce different editorial conditions depending on regulation, market structure, political proximity, and organizational autonomy.

³⁸ Danso, “Media and Politics: Investigating Government Interests, Ownership Influence and Media Independence in Combating Corruption in Ghana”; Andoh, “Unmasking Corruption in Africa: Understanding the Challenges Investigative Journalism Faces in Reporting Political Corruption in Ghana.”

³⁹ Govenden, “The Power of Neoliberalism: Transformation, Neo-Elitism, and Class Continuities in the Post-Apartheid Media.”

⁴⁰ Hamada and Vallesi, “Determinants of Journalists’ Trust in Public Institutions: A Macro and Micro Analysis Across 67 Countries.”

⁴¹ Adegbola et al., “Reporting Bias in Coverage of Iran Protests by Global News Agencies.”

⁴² Sahibzada and Jia, “CPEC in the Shadows of Fifth Generation Warfare and the Dynamics of Propaganda Model.”

⁴³ Setiawan et al., “Media Ownership and Its Role in Shaping News: Analysing *Republika*’s 1999 and 2021 Coverage in Light of the 2024 Gaza Genocide.”

⁴⁴ Sarelska, “News with a Human Face in a Copycat Fourth Estate—The Americanization of Television News in Post-Communist Media Systems: The Bulgarian Experiment.”



Figure 5. Typology of media ownership configurations and political alignment in crisis-coverage systems.

The typology positions media organizations according to ownership concentration and political alignment or institutional insulation. Independent and nonprofit outlets tend to be less concentrated and more insulated, although financial vulnerability may constrain autonomy. Political-business conglomerates and state-controlled outlets are generally more concentrated and aligned. Public-service and foreign-owned media remain conditional categories because their performance depends on legal mandates, funding, governance, political insulation, and commercial pressure.

Table 1. Ownership configurations, political affiliations, and crisis contexts in the included studies

Reference	Country or region	Crisis context	Media sample or	Ownership and affiliation	Principal relevance
Sulistijanto et al. 2025	Indonesia	2024 general election	National and regional television broadcasters	Predominantly private commercial broadcasters ; some associated with partisan interests	Centralized national control and weak regional authority were associated with biased content and premature campaigning
Darwis and Muqsith 2025	Indonesia	2024 presidential election	iNews TV and Metro TV	Private outlets within politically connected media groups	Different affiliations corresponded with different candidate-favoring editorial patterns
Arman et al. 2025	Bangladesh	July 2024	Five major newspapers	Pro-government, anti-	Political proximity shaped tone,

Reference	Country or region	Crisis context	Media sample or	Ownership and affiliation	Principal relevance
		mass uprising		government, and independent alignments	protest credibility, and protest-paradigm reporting
Ismail and Ghazali 2026	Malaysia	Fifteenth General Election and coalition formation	Mainstream and independent media	Exact legal ownership categories were not detailed	Mainstream media emphasized stability, while independent media emphasized accountability and political change
Danso 2025	Ghana	Political - corruption reporting	Politically affiliated and other media organizations	Some owners had identifiable political affiliations	Journalists reported pressure to align editorial decisions with proprietors' political interests
Andoh 2025	Ghana	Investigative reporting on political corruption	Investigative journalists and employing outlets	Ownership examined in relation to independence and financial stability	Funding dependence, interference, access barriers, and threats affected investigative depth and continuity
Adegbola et al. 2022	International coverage of Iran	2017–2018 Iranian protests	AP, Reuters, AFP, Xinhua, and TASS	State-owned and privately operated agencies	Ownership and national interest were associated with protest visibility, source inclusion, and proposed remedies
Sahibzada and Jia 2025	Pakistan, China, and wider geopolitical contexts	CPEC controversy and information	Media content from different geopolitical regions	Varied ownership and funding arrangements	Ownership, financing, and strategic communication shaped

Reference	Country or region	Crisis context	Media sample	Ownership and affiliation	Principal relevance
		ion conflict			competing CPEC narratives
Setiawan et al. 2024	Indonesia; Israeli–Palestinian conflict	<i>Republika</i> coverage in 1999 and 2021	<i>Republika</i> newspaper	Ownership changed across the two periods	Production structures changed, but the newspaper’s pro–Palestinian orientation remained stable
Govenden 2022	South Africa	Post-apartheid transformation, 1994–2014	Print front pages and editorials	Diversified ownership shaped partly through Black Economic Empowerment	Formal ownership transformation did not necessarily produce substantive content diversity
Sarelska 2026	Bulgaria	Post-communist media transition	bTV	Foreign commercial ownership at launch	Foreign ownership initially buffered domestic political pressure and enabled partial editorial autonomy
Hamada and Vallesi 2025	Cross-national, 67 countries	Democratic governance and institutional accountability	Journalists across multiple media systems	Multiple ownership types	Ownership interacted with press freedom, corruption, autonomy, and professional role orientation

Note. Black Economic Empowerment refers to South Africa’s post-apartheid policy framework for broadening economic participation and ownership. CPEC refers to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Organizational and Regulatory Mechanisms of Editorial Influence

Table 2 identifies several mechanisms through which ownership shaped editorial production. In Ghana, journalists reported direct pressure to align coverage with proprietors' political interests, while weak funding, restricted access, and financial insecurity limited investigative reporting.⁴⁵ In Indonesia, centralized editorial control and fragmented regulatory authority reduced the ability of regional actors to correct partisan content produced at the national level.⁴⁶

Ownership influence also operated through organizational ideology, funding, and professional norms. *Republika* retained a pro-Palestinian orientation despite changes in newsroom structure, indicating the importance of routines, ideology, and readership commitments.⁴⁷ In coverage of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), ownership, financing, and strategic communication shaped competing narratives.⁴⁸ Foreign ownership in Bulgaria initially protected journalists from domestic political interference, while cross-national evidence showed that editorial autonomy and professional role orientation moderated institutional pressure.⁴⁹

Several studies inferred influence from patterned content rather than explicit instructions. iNews TV and Metro TV displayed different forms of bias corresponding with their political affiliations⁵⁰, while Bangladeshi newspapers framed protesters differently according to their political alignment⁵¹. A Finnish comparison further showed that ownership change could operate through centralized decisions, shared content, analytics, and standardized production systems even without direct interference.⁵²

⁴⁵ Danso, "Media and Politics: Investigating Government Interests, Ownership Influence and Media Independence in Combating Corruption in Ghana."

⁴⁶ Sulistijanto et al., "Broadcasting in the Shadow of Power: Regulatory Challenges and Political Violations during Indonesia's 2024 Election."

⁴⁷ Setiawan et al., "Media Ownership and Its Role in Shaping News: Analysing Republika's 1999 and 2021 Coverage in Light of the 2024 Gaza Genocide."

⁴⁸ Sahibzada and Jia, "CPEC in the Shadows of Fifth Generation Warfare and the Dynamics of Propaganda Model."

⁴⁹ Sarelska, "News with a Human Face in a Copycat Fourth Estate—The Americanization of Television News in Post-Communist Media Systems: The Bulgarian Experiment."

⁵⁰ Darwis and Muqsith, "Media Independence in Indonesian Broadcast Television News: A Comparative Case Study of iNews TV and Metro TV during the 2024 Presidential Election."

⁵¹ Arman et al., "Manufacturing Legitimacy: Media Ownership and the Framing of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh."

⁵² V. J. E. Manninen and L. Haapanen, "Journalists' Perceptions of Ownership Change and Its Impact on Journalistic Content and Work," *Journalism Practice*, ahead of print, 2026, Scopus, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2026.2657859>.

Overall, ownership influence ranged from direct pressure and censorship to less visible organizational, economic, regulatory, ideological, professional, and infrastructural mechanisms. Editorial convergence may therefore occur even when overt owner intervention is absent.

Table 2. Mechanisms Linking Media Ownership to Editorial Decision-Making during Political Crises

Reference	Ownership configuration	Main mechanism	Nature of influence	Principal finding
Sulistijanto et al. 2025	Partisan private broadcasters within a centralized national network	Central editorial control, market pressure, and weak regional authority	Mainly indirect and structural	Centralized control and reactive regulation strengthened ownership influence
Darwis and Muqsith 2025	Politically connected television conglomerates	Alignment of editorial orientation with political interests	Indirect, inferred from contrasting framing patterns	Political affiliation was associated with outlet-specific electoral bias
Arman et al. 2025	Pro-government, anti-government, and independent newspapers	Frame selection, evaluative tone, and assignment of legitimacy	Indirect, demonstrated through content differences	Pro-government ownership strengthened protest-paradigm framing
Danso 2025	Politically affiliated Ghanaian media	Pressure to align reporting with owner interests	Direct pressure reported by journalists	Owner affiliation weakened editorial independence and watchdog journalism
Andoh 2025	Ownership-dependent investigative-media environment	Funding constraints, interference, restricted access, threats, and self-censorship	Direct and indirect	Ownership formed part of a wider system limiting corruption investigations
Sahibzada and Jia 2025	Media operating under different ownership and funding arrangements	Strategic communication, selective reporting, and geopolitical filtering	Indirect	Ownership and financing shaped competing CPEC narratives
Setiawan et al. 2024	<i>Republika</i> under changing	Newsroom routines,	Mainly indirect	Ownership change altered

Reference	Ownership configuration	Main mechanism	Nature of influence	Principal finding
	ownership arrangements	editorial coordination, and organizational ideology		production structures but not enduring ideological framing
Sarelska 2026	Foreign-owned commercial television	Transfer of professional routines and institutional insulation	Indirect and partly protective	Foreign ownership could professionalize and protect a newsroom
Hamada and Vallesi 2025	Multiple ownership types across 67 countries	Interaction among ownership, autonomy, professional roles, democracy, and corruption	Cross-sectional association	Ownership effects were embedded within wider institutional conditions
Manninen and Haapanen 2026	Acquired and unchanged-ownership Finnish newspapers; contextual comparator	Financial targets, centralized decisions, content sharing, analytics, and shared infrastructure	Indirect organizational influence	Ownership effects may operate through strategy and production infrastructure

Note. Manninen and Haapanen (2026) is retained as a contextual comparator rather than a core Global South study. CPEC refers to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission is formally known as Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia (KPI).



Figure 6. Pathways through which ownership influence enters editorial decision-making during political crises.

The newsroom occupies the center of the model because editorial framing emerges through decisions about assignments, sources, headlines, tone, prominence, images, publication, and omission. Ownership influence may enter this space through direct intervention, economic pressure, regulation, professional culture, technology, and crisis conditions. Direct mechanisms include instructions, appointments, dismissals, censorship, and strategic priorities. Indirect mechanisms include advertising dependence, funding insecurity, audience metrics, shared content-management systems, syndicated material, centralized analytics, platform distribution, and digital-first workflows. Professional norms may reproduce these pressures through anticipatory compliance or counter them through watchdog practice, alternative sourcing, and counter-framing. Crisis conditions, including urgency, information scarcity, political polarization, personal risk, and dependence on official sources, can intensify all pathways. Solid arrows indicate documented direct intervention, dashed arrows represent structural or indirect influence, and reverse arrows indicate resistance, negotiation, and regulatory response.

Crisis-Framing Patterns across Elections, Protests, Corruption, and Geopolitical Conflict

As summarized in Table 3, crisis type shaped ownership-linked framing. In election coverage, Indonesian broadcasters produced candidate-favoring content associated with partisan ownership and centralized control, while Malaysian mainstream media emphasized stability and continuity and independent outlets foregrounded accountability and political change.⁵³

Protest coverage focused mainly on legitimacy. In Bangladesh, pro-government newspapers more strongly delegitimized dissent, whereas independent and anti-government outlets treated protesters more impartially.⁵⁴ Coverage of the Iranian protests also varied by ownership and national interest: Xinhua favored the status quo, privately operated agencies gave greater attention to political change, and some state-owned reports omitted protesters altogether.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ismail and Ghazali, “How Was General Election 15 Framed in Malaysian Media: Exploring the Role of Framing and Political Narratives.”

⁵⁴ Arman et al., “Manufacturing Legitimacy: Media Ownership and the Framing of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh.”

⁵⁵ Adegbola et al., “Reporting Bias in Coverage of Iran Protests by Global News Agencies.”

Geopolitical coverage emphasized development, threat, propaganda, solidarity, sovereignty, and national interest. Reporting on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor varied according to ownership, funding, and geopolitical alignment, while *Republika* maintained a pro-Palestinian orientation despite ownership and organizational change.⁵⁶

Overall, ownership did not determine framing automatically. Its effects depended on political affiliation, newsroom autonomy, market position, regulation, professional norms, and crisis characteristics.

Table 3. Editorial Frames in Political-Crisis Coverage and Their Relationship to Media Ownership

Reference	Crisis context	Ownership or affiliation	Dominant framing pattern	Main interpretation
Sulistijanto et al. 2025	Indonesian general election	Partisan national broadcasters operating through centralized networks	Biased campaign coverage and premature electoral promotion	Ownership concentration and weak regional authority limited neutral election communication
Darwis and Muqsith 2025	Indonesian presidential election	iNews TV and Metro TV, each linked to different political interests	Candidate-favoring and politically aligned electoral frames	Both outlets displayed bias, but its direction varied according to ownership affiliation
Arman et al. 2025	Bangladesh uprising	Pro-government, anti-government, and independent newspapers	Protest-paradigm, legitimacy, credibility, and dissent frames	Pro-government ownership was associated with stronger delegitimation of protesters
Ismail and Ghazali 2026	Malaysian election and coalition formation	Mainstream and independent media	Mainstream media emphasized stability and continuity; independent media emphasized accountability and change	Editorial orientation shaped contrasting narratives, although the small sample supports only exploratory conclusions
Adegbola et al. 2022	International coverage of	State-owned and privately	Status-quo, political-change,	Ownership and national interests

⁵⁶ Sahibzada and Jia, “CPEC in the Shadows of Fifth Generation Warfare and the Dynamics of Propaganda Model.”

Reference	Crisis context	Ownership or affiliation	Dominant framing pattern	Main interpretation
	Iranian protests	operated news agencies	causal, moral, and treatment frames	influenced protest visibility, sourcing, and proposed responses
Sahibzada and Jia 2025	CPEC controversy and geopolitical information conflict	Media differentiated by ownership, funding, and geopolitical agenda	Strategic-development, threat, propaganda, and narrative-warfare frames	Ownership and funding operated as filters in competing geopolitical narratives
Setiawan et al. 2024	Israeli–Palestinian conflict	Republika across different ownership periods	Elite political-support frame in 1999, civil-society solidarity frame in 2021, and a persistent pro-Palestinian orientation	Ownership change altered production structures but did not displace enduring ideological commitments

Note. CPEC refers to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor.

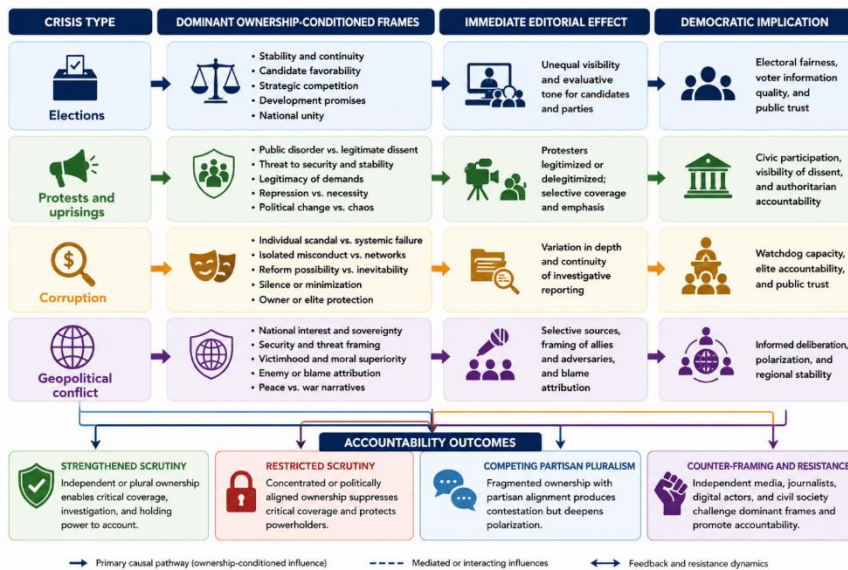


Figure 7. Crisis-specific framing patterns and their implications for democratic accountability.

Election coverage emphasizes stability, competence, candidate favorability, and political change. Ownership and political affiliation may shape candidate prominence and tone, affecting electoral fairness and

public trust. Protest coverage focuses on legitimacy. Pro-government outlets may portray demonstrators as threats to order, while independent media may emphasize grievances, repression, and democratic participation. Corruption coverage depends on editorial autonomy, resources, access, and journalist safety. Political pressure and financial insecurity may restrict investigations and encourage self-censorship. Geopolitical coverage highlights national interest, sovereignty, security, development, solidarity, and victimhood. Ownership, funding, and foreign-policy alignment may shape sourcing, blame, moral evaluation, and proposed solutions.

Democratic Accountability, Journalistic Autonomy, and Evidence Gaps

Table 4 highlights four accountability concerns: electoral integrity, protest legitimacy, corruption exposure, and public-sphere pluralism. In Indonesia, partisan ownership and weak regulation limited neutral election coverage, while competing politically affiliated outlets produced different viewpoints without guaranteeing impartial journalism.⁵⁷ In Malaysia, independent media offered stronger accountability frames, although the evidence came from a small sample.⁵⁸ In Bangladesh, ownership diversity produced contrasting protest narratives, but pro-government coverage also reinforced information control.⁵⁹

For corruption reporting, editorial autonomy depended on resources, access, and journalist safety. In Ghana, political pressure, financial insecurity, restricted information, intimidation, and personal risk weakened investigative and watchdog journalism.⁶⁰ International protest coverage showed a similar problem: state-owned agencies often favored status-quo narratives and limited protester visibility. In geopolitical reporting, ownership, funding, and strategic interests produced competing narratives without necessarily creating a shared factual basis.

The evidence also shows that ownership labels alone do not determine accountability. *Republika* maintained its ideological orientation despite ownership change, while ownership diversification in South Africa did not remove elite-centered content structures.⁶¹ Foreign ownership in Bulgaria initially protected editorial autonomy but also encouraged commercial

⁵⁷ Sulistijanto et al., “Broadcasting in the Shadow of Power: Regulatory Challenges and Political Violations during Indonesia’s 2024 Election.”

⁵⁸ Ismail and Ghazali, “How Was General Election 15 Framed in Malaysian Media: Exploring the Role of Framing and Political Narratives.”

⁵⁹ Arman et al., “Manufacturing Legitimacy: Media Ownership and the Framing of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh.”

⁶⁰ Danso, “Media and Politics: Investigating Government Interests, Ownership Influence and Media Independence in Combating Corruption in Ghana.”

⁶¹ Govenden, “The Power of Neoliberalism: Transformation, Neo-Elitism, and Class Continuities in the Post-Apartheid Media.”

depoliticization.⁶² Cross-national and Finnish evidence further showed that ownership effects were shaped by professional roles, institutional trust, centralized resources, analytics, and production systems.⁶³

Major research gaps remain. The field still lacks longitudinal and cross-national studies, direct access to owners and newsroom decision-making, consistent measures of effective control, stronger evidence on audience outcomes, and greater attention to local, nonprofit, community, and digital-native media.

Table 4. Democratic-Accountability Implications and Evidence Gaps in Ownership–Framing Research

Reference	Accountability dimension	Main democratic implication	Methodological limitation	Priority research gap
Sulistijanto et al. 2025	Electoral integrity and regulatory accountability	Partisan broadcasting and weak enforcement undermined neutral election communication	Qualitative case study centered on West Java practitioners and institutional documents	Comparative analysis of regulatory enforcement and ownership transparency across regions and elections
Darwis and Muqsith 2025	Electoral fairness, media independence, and public trust	Ownership-aligned bias threatened impartial election information	Two-outlet qualitative comparison; sample details were not fully reported in the abstract	Larger datasets linking owner decisions, newsroom processes, and audience effects
Arman et al. 2025	Protest legitimacy and authoritarian accountability	Ownership alignment shaped whether dissent was delegitimized or treated impartially	Five-newspaper analysis focused on one uprising	Longitudinal analysis across protest phases, platforms, and ownership changes
Ismail and Ghazali 2026	Electoral accountability and governance scrutiny	Mainstream media emphasized continuity, while independent outlets	Eleven purposively selected articles; findings were exploratory	Representative samples, clearer ownership documentation, and pre- and post-election comparison

⁶² Sarelska, “News with a Human Face in a Copycat Fourth Estate—The Americanization of Television News in Post-Communist Media Systems: The Bulgarian Experiment.”

⁶³ Manninen and Haapanen, “Journalists’ Perceptions of Ownership Change and Its Impact on Journalistic Content and Work.”

Reference	Accountability dimension	Main democratic implication	Methodological limitation	Priority research gap
		foregrounded accountability and change		
Danso 2025	Anti-corruption watchdog performance	Government and owner influence weakened journalism's capacity to scrutinize power	Sample size and outlet distribution were not fully reported in the abstract	Research separating ownership effects from government pressure, funding, and journalist-level risk
Andoh 2025	Investigative accountability and corruption exposure	Ownership and financial insecurity limited the depth and continuity of corruption reporting	Qualitative Ghanaian case based on structured interviews	Comparative African research on ownership models that support investigative journalism
Adegbola et al. 2022	International accountability and protest representation	State-owned agencies minimized protesters and favored status-quo remedies	Ownership and national interests could not be fully disentangled	Designs separating ownership, regime type, foreign-policy interests, and newsroom routines
Sahibzada and Jia 2025	Geopolitical accountability and public deliberation	Selective reporting and propaganda could distort public understanding and policy debate	Outlet sample, coding scheme, and corpus size were not fully specified in the abstract	Replicable cross-national analysis linking beneficial ownership with specific CPEC frames
Setiawan et al. 2024	Ideological accountability and conflict representation	Ideological commitments shaped coverage despite ownership and organizational change	Purposive comparison of 1999 and 2021; the 2024 crisis was contextual	Research distinguishing ownership effects from readership identity, ideology, routines, and historical context
Govenden 2022	Public-sphere diversity and	Formal ownership	Broad 1994–2014 period;	Post-2014, digital, crisis-

Reference	Accountability dimension	Main democratic implication	Methodological limitation	Priority research gap
	post-apartheid transformation	diversification did not eliminate elite control or class continuity	focused on print transformation rather than one acute crisis	specific, and newsroom-level analysis
Hamada and Vallesi 2025	Institutional trust and professional accountability	Ownership interacted with democracy, press freedom, corruption, and professional roles	Cross-sectional survey data from 2012–2016; crisis framing was not directly measured	Longitudinal research linking ownership, autonomy, trust, and observable crisis frames
Sarelska 2026	Fourth Estate autonomy in transitional democracy	Foreign ownership reduced overt local interference but did not fully institutionalize watchdog journalism	Historically grounded single-outlet case in Bulgaria; not a core Global South case	Comparative research on when foreign ownership protects autonomy or creates new dependencies
Manninen and Haapanen 2026	Editorial independence and structural pluralism	Acquisitions did not produce reported direct interference, but centralized resources could homogenize strategy	Contextual Finnish study; not crisis-specific or Global South-focused	Longitudinal tests of whether perceived autonomy corresponds with changes in content diversity and crisis framing

Note. Manninen and Haapanen (2026) and Sarelska (2026) are retained as contextual comparators rather than core Global South studies. CPEC refers to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor

Discussion

This review supports an ownership-to-accountability framework, but not a deterministic view of media ownership. Ownership matters because it shapes the conditions under which journalism is produced. Its influence may be direct, but it more often works through centralized decision-making, funding dependence, political ties, resource allocation, professional risk, and shared production systems.

A key finding is the distinction between formal ownership and effective control. Legal ownership does not always reveal political alliances, state-advertising dependence, informal patronage, or control over newsroom resources and infrastructure. In Indonesia, centralized national

networks limited regional editorial and regulatory authority.⁶⁴ In Ghana, ownership pressures intersected with weak funding, restricted access, and threats to journalists⁶⁵. In Finland, journalists reported no direct interference, yet acquisitions introduced centralized decisions, shared content, analytics, and standardized systems.⁶⁶ Effective control should therefore be assessed through appointments, budgets, workflows, access, and regulatory leverage, not shareholder records alone.

Ownership-linked framing also varied by crisis type. In election coverage, politically connected outlets often favored particular candidates or emphasized stability and continuity, while independent media were more likely to foreground accountability and political change⁶⁷. This shows that multiple owners may produce competing narratives without ensuring impartial journalism.

In protest coverage, the main issue was legitimacy. Pro-government newspapers in Bangladesh were more likely to question dissent, while independent and anti-government outlets treated protesters more impartially.⁶⁸ Coverage of the Iranian protests showed a similar divide, with state-owned agencies favoring the status quo and sometimes omitting protesters altogether.⁶⁹ Source visibility and omission therefore matter as much as explicit evaluative language.

Corruption reporting depended heavily on funding, access, safety, and institutional protection. In Ghana, financial insecurity, political interference, information barriers, intimidation, and personal risk weakened investigative journalism.⁷⁰ Independent ownership alone cannot guarantee watchdog reporting when journalists lack resources and protection.

Geopolitical coverage showed that ownership interacts with funding, ideology, and national interest. Reporting on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor varied with geopolitical alignment and financing structures.⁷¹ *Republika* maintained its pro-Palestinian orientation despite ownership and

⁶⁴ Sulistijanto et al., “Broadcasting in the Shadow of Power: Regulatory Challenges and Political Violations during Indonesia’s 2024 Election.”

⁶⁵ Danso, “Media and Politics: Investigating Government Interests, Ownership Influence and Media Independence in Combating Corruption in Ghana.”

⁶⁶ Manninen and Haapanen, “Journalists’ Perceptions of Ownership Change and Its Impact on Journalistic Content and Work.”

⁶⁷ Ismail and Ghazali, “How Was General Election 15 Framed in Malaysian Media: Exploring the Role of Framing and Political Narratives.”

⁶⁸ Arman et al., “Manufacturing Legitimacy: Media Ownership and the Framing of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh.”

⁶⁹ Adegbola et al., “Reporting Bias in Coverage of Iran Protests by Global News Agencies.”

⁷⁰ Andoh, “Unmasking Corruption in Africa: Understanding the Challenges Investigative Journalism Faces in Reporting Political Corruption in Ghana.”

⁷¹ Sahibzada and Jia, “CPEC in the Shadows of Fifth Generation Warfare and the Dynamics of Propaganda Model.”

organizational change, showing that readership identity, newsroom routines, and institutional ideology may outlast changes in proprietorship.⁷²

The evidence also revealed protective and mixed effects. Foreign ownership initially shielded Bulgaria's bTV from domestic political pressure but also encouraged commercial depoliticization.⁷³ Cross-national evidence showed that ownership interacted with press freedom, corruption, editorial autonomy, and professional roles.⁷⁴ In South Africa, formal ownership diversification did not eliminate elite-centered content structures.⁷⁵ Ownership outcomes therefore depend on institutional design, market conditions, political context, and newsroom autonomy.

A central implication is that ownership diversity is not the same as viewpoint diversity. Several owners may still reproduce similar elite perspectives, while concentrated ownership may sometimes coexist with internal differentiation. Democratic accountability depends on whether citizens receive credible competing interpretations and whether journalists can scrutinize power without political or economic retaliation.

Digital transformation adds another layer. Platforms, audience analytics, content-management systems, and distribution infrastructures can shape editorial priorities without visible intervention. Regulation that focuses only on formal ownership may therefore miss important forms of technological and infrastructural control.

The evidence base remains limited. Most studies focused on single countries, events, or small samples. Ownership was defined inconsistently, and few studies directly examined owners, editors, or internal newsroom decisions. Audience effects were also rarely measured, making causal claims difficult.

Future research should combine ownership records, newsroom interviews, longitudinal content analysis, regulatory documents, platform data, and audience research. Comparative studies are especially needed to separate ownership effects from regime type, market pressure, political affiliation, professional culture, and crisis characteristics. Local, nonprofit, community, and digital-native media also deserve greater attention.

This review is limited by English-language and open-access filters, incomplete screening records, heterogeneous definitions, possible

⁷² Setiawan et al., "Media Ownership and Its Role in Shaping News: Analysing Republika's 1999 and 2021 Coverage in Light of the 2024 Gaza Genocide."

⁷³ Sarelska, "News with a Human Face in a Copycat Fourth Estate—The Americanization of Television News in Post-Communist Media Systems: The Bulgarian Experiment."

⁷⁴ Hamada and Vallesi, "Determinants of Journalists' Trust in Public Institutions: A Macro and Micro Analysis Across 67 Countries."

⁷⁵ Govenden, "The Power of Neoliberalism: Transformation, Neo-Elitism, and Class Continuities in the Post-Apartheid Media."

publication bias, and reliance on abstracts for some studies. It therefore offers a conceptual map rather than a causal estimate. Its main contribution is to show that media ownership matters through the mechanisms linking control, newsroom organization, crisis framing, and democratic accountability.

CONCLUSION

Political crises reveal the institutional pathways through which media ownership becomes editorial power. Across the charted evidence, state-linked, politically affiliated, conglomerate, foreign, concentrated, and nominally independent ownership arrangements operated within unequal regulatory and market environments. Their influence was not uniform. In some cases, it involved direct pressure, but it more often worked through centralized editorial authority, appointments, resource allocation, funding dependence, shared infrastructures, source access, professional risk, organizational ideology, and anticipatory compliance.

The review identified recurring frames of incumbent legitimacy, stability, public order, protest deviance, accountability, governance failure, political change, solidarity, sovereignty, and geopolitical threat. Politically aligned and state-dependent outlets frequently favored elite or status-quo interpretations, whereas independent organizations more often expanded visibility for dissent and accountability. However, the evidence also showed that ownership concentration may coexist with viewpoint diversity, foreign ownership may protect newsrooms from domestic pressure, and ownership change may leave editorial ideology intact. Professional autonomy, market position, newsroom routines, regulation, platform architecture, and crisis type therefore condition ownership effects.

The evidence base remains limited by single-event designs, inconsistent definitions, limited access to internal editorial processes, weak audience measurement, and insufficient longitudinal and cross-national comparison. Future research should combine beneficial-ownership records, newsroom interviews, manual and computational content analysis, regulatory evidence, platform-distribution data, and audience outcomes.

The review contributes an integrated sequence linking ownership configuration, mechanisms of influence, crisis framing, and democratic consequences. Its findings support greater ownership transparency, stronger editorial safeguards, independent regulation, sustainable funding for investigative and local journalism, and policy attention to substantive viewpoint diversity rather than formal ownership plurality alone.

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