

# The role of the media in strengthening freedom of expression and democratic institutions in Uzbekistan

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The article aims to analyze the role of mass media in strengthening freedom of expression and supporting the development of democratic institutions in Uzbekistan. It focuses on how media acts as a strategic tool for effective communication between the state and society within a free and open information environment.

**Research methodology:** The study uses historical and logical analysis, synthesis, content analysis, systematic analysis, and observation. These methods are applied to explore the transformation of media functions, legislative support for media freedom, and institutional practices in Uzbekistan.

**Results:** The findings reveal that mass media significantly shape public consciousness, political awareness, and civic culture. The evolution of media functions—especially in the digital age—has made media a vital component of social and political development. The study highlights the necessity of institutional, legal, and economic frameworks to ensure the independence and effectiveness of media. It also underscores the importance of preventing manipulation and promoting balanced regulation between freedom of speech and digital security.

**Keywords:** *Freedom of speech, Information policy, Democratic society, Mass media, Dialogue between the state and society*

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## 1. Introduction

The mass media are developing rapidly and acting as intermediaries in the interactions between society and government. It should be noted that the media are capable of influencing the political choices of the population. It's very difficult to influence a mature person's choice through just one or two video clips (Alikulov & Haqqulov, 2020). Instead, there is a long-term, discrete information influence aimed at shaping certain ideological motives and motivating individuals to take actions necessary for specific parties. Studies have shown that "changes in worldview are the most complex process, continuing through inertia, but simultaneously affecting all other spheres of social development, serving as a means of clarifying changes within them" (Башук, 2015; Дадыка & Назар, 2017). However, for representatives of the generation under 25, the situation is entirely different. The danger here lies in the fact that those most vulnerable to the manipulative influence of the media are the young (Dragomir, 2024; Ризаев & Хаккулов, 2023).

## 2. Methodology

The article employs research methods such as historical and logical analysis, synthesis, content analysis, systematic analysis, and observation (Беленькая, 2010; Б. Эшбеков, 2024).

The concepts of mass media and mass communication tools logically share the same meaning, both being used in the sense of establishing connections between various systems and conducting interconnected communication. When analyzing the terms and concepts of Internet communication in political communication, political relations, and connections, which are integral and extraordinary forms of mass communication, it is first necessary to provide a brief explanation of the term "communication" itself.

Today, regardless of where we are, it is impossible to imagine life without television, radio, the Internet, and other mass media, which we have become accustomed to receiving information from daily and in large quantities. In the modern information society, the significant role of mass media in educating the population and influencing the worldview of every individual is clearly evident (Smolar, 1991).

### **3. Results and discussions**

The functions of mass media, characteristics of mass media in modern society, primary methods of influencing public consciousness, and their role in covering various political events are examined, along with their unparalleled role in shaping and enhancing citizens' political awareness and culture. Scientific conclusions are drawn from this investigation. The novelty of this research is reflected in the increasing temptation to use media for personal interests as information technologies advance. The main approach to achieving this becomes teaching pre-programmed behavioral patterns to young people. This study helps identify methods of manipulative influence on the population and aids in preventing its negative consequences (Иларионова, 2003; Б. Н. Эшбеков, 2024).

“Mass media, by utilizing modern organizational and technical systems that enable the mass reproduction and rapid transmission of verbal and audiovisual content, can influence a person’s emotional system not only through the information itself but also through the method of its delivery”.

The functions of mass media have changed because the very subject matter has evolved. In today’s information-rich society, the role of mass media has become significantly more important compared to the first half of the previous century. Initially created to meet people's needs for information and communication, mass media have become an integral part of human life. They inform, analyze, shape the worldview, and provide entertainment (Price & Krug, 2000).

Moreover, “every function of the media can be considered as one that exerts influence to some extent: delivering new knowledge about specific events or situations, shaping or altering values, behavior models, habits, constructing a particular worldview, encouraging consumption, or promoting specific products or services”.

Mass media are primarily institutions of civil society, not of state power (though this sometimes happens), nor purely commercial structures. Accordingly, “the fundamental tasks of mass media should be aligned with the integrative functions of society. For the audience, the most important media functions are orientational, entertaining, and utilitarian, while for social institutions, they are organizational, propagandistic, and ideological”.

A vivid example of the focus on the development of mass media and means of communication (MMC) in Uzbekistan can be seen through key legislative and policy measures, such as the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Permissive Procedures in Entrepreneurial Activity”, the Presidential Decree PQ-4366 “On Additional Measures to Ensure the Independence of Mass Media and the Development of Information Services in State Bodies and Organizations,” as well as the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 1017 of December 19, 2019, “On Approving Certain Administrative Regulations for the Provision of Public Services in the Field of Mass Communications”.

One of the most essential directions in ensuring freedom of expression is the establishment and development of a legal foundation. This includes:

1. Constitutional guarantees – Freedom of speech and of the press must be enshrined at the constitutional level.
2. Legislation regulating media activity – Laws guaranteeing the right to access and disseminate information must be developed and aligned with international standards.
3. Prohibition of censorship – Direct or indirect pressure by the government or other institutions on the press must be prevented.

In ensuring the free and independent functioning of media and MMC, one of the state's key priorities is to support the development of independent and impartial mass media. To achieve this:

1. Equal opportunities should be established between state-owned and non-state media – State-controlled information resources must not enjoy privileges over private media;
2. Open access to public information – Citizens and journalists must have the right to access data on governmental activities;
3. Ensuring economic independence of publications – Conditions must be created so that the media are not financially dependent on the state and can develop through entrepreneurship and private investment.

#### 4. Conclusion

The reforms to be implemented in our country in the coming years will improve the people's lifestyle, ensure social justice, increase legal literacy, ensure cultural and educational well-being, and in particular, ensure freedom of speech, which is an integral and logical part of human and civil rights. Today, the media and public service broadcasters operate not only through traditional press and television, but also through the Internet and digital platforms. Therefore, it is important for the state to support the following areas:

1. Ensuring freedom of information on the Internet - Allowing bloggers, independent online publications and digital platforms to operate without censorship.
2. Ensuring a balance between digital security and freedom of speech - Protecting freedom of speech in the cyber environment, while developing legal mechanisms against false information and cybercrime.
3. Regulating the problems of artificial intelligence and algorithmic censorship - It is necessary to prevent the imposition of artificial restrictions on the processes of information dissemination by mass media.
4. In conclusion, the implementation of such a policy, the main function of the state as a manifestation of political power and a mirror of the activities of the government, the improvement of the media and the system of state institutions, their digitization, and their upgrading to the level of global communication systems are of great importance.

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