

Mass media in a liberal democratic society



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What is the proper role of the mass media in a liberal democratic society? In the contemporary world, the use of mass media has been on the increase and thus this has not exempted its use in the political arena. In connection to this point, there is a vital role that is played by mass media especially in the liberal democratic society. As such, a liberal democratic society is the one in which elections are fair and free while encouraging competition in the political process. This kind of democracy is a representative of the American, Brazilian and Canada among other such like democracies. In particular, a liberal democratic society seeks to bring developments in the political arena, social and economic sectors. In this sense, the government is used as a tool of making developments where they are needed. On the other hand, democracy brings about vesting of authority on the citizens. In this context, the proper role of mass media in such a society may be not understood. Therefore, the undertaking of this work will cover the proper role played by mass media in a liberal democratic society.

Following this point, democracy involves a set of measures followed in the making choice of the state elite. It actually requires meaningful electoral choice that which can be made possible by the mass media which is important in any large democratic polity. In this sense, there have been ongoing arguments regarding the autonomy granted to the mass media as far as politics are concerned. Arguably, the success of any liberal democratic society is direct connected to the free flow of both ideas and arguments. This is necessitated by the mass media which should in fact maintain a deliberative exchange of such ideas and arguments. From a general point of view, mass media plays a pivotal role in a liberal democratic society which is

termed as a role of being a guardian of the democracy along with the defending of the interest of the public[1]. In actual sense, mass media plays the role of correcting the arms of the government which involve the executive, judiciary and in the larger perspective the legislative. In other words, the mass media plays a major role as the major player in the theatre of elections[2].

It was also noted that democracy requires inhibited public debates along with free speeches and along with this point, citizens should be equipped with the ability to make informed decisions of which this is accomplished by the use of mass media[3]. In addition, a liberal democratic society should actually provide sufficient information along with transparency in the matters of political decisions. As well, it should provide competition in terms of ideas and arguments which encourage participation from the members of the society and thus meet the demands of a democratic society. According to research, mass media has a great role to play in the context of a liberal democratic society.

As such, it has been pointed that there are three major roles that media plays in the given society[4]. The most important one has been pointed out as the media acting in the capacity of a regulator against the state. In the same line of thought, the media is given to the role and responsibility of ensuring that accurate as well as sufficient information is provided to the society from the larger point of view. Accordingly, the mass media has another major role to play which cannot be underrated. As a matter of fact, it should work hard to ensure that it represents people in the sense of

sufficiently reflecting the range of public opinions together with the aspect of political competition[5].

It is important at this point to note that media has a major communication role to play in the context of a liberal democratic society. So to speak, communication entails the facilitation of the public dialogues, representation of the public, making the public to live being informed, and acting as a regulator or rather a watchdog of the structures of power which affect the wellbeing of the public. As well, media is used as a tool of social unity and thus it is important to bring into view the major types of media systems in use to accomplish roles assigned within a democratic society. In line with this point, media covers the instruments of communication employed in order to accomplish the roles of communication in a democratic society. As such, these instruments of communication involve books, internet, films, newspapers and TVs among others as such.

In essence, democracy advocates for freedom of speech to be granted to the members of the society. In this sense, media works to represent the members within the given society of which due to the limited space, they use some members of the society to speak for the citizens and as well representatives of particular groups and communities together with other such like organization representatives. Therefore, through the use of media, the ideas and arguments along with the information of the given people in the society is brought into public view for the necessary actions to be taken.

Basically, the media is expected play the role of a watchdog for the public. This is to suggest that it should take the responsibility to protect the very

citizens or rather the society it is mandated to serve. So to articulate, the public is always out to see that the media is regulating the power structures of the society by exploring their functioning and then notify the public when there has arisen some issues in the structures[6]. This is also accompanied by the media pointing out to the interests of the people and where they want to act.

Another point to note is that a liberal democratic society as it has been highlighted requires a good flow of information. This is to suggest that the public requires to get information and to stay informed. In such as society, citizens are inclined towards making collective decisions for the societal benefit altogether. In the light of this point, democratic societies grow when there is flow of the shared information among the society members and thus it is imperative for the media to inform the society regarding the contemporary issues that need attention and the public stance in regard to them. As far as social unity is concerned, the media acts as a tool that works to bring together the members of the society by making use of a common culture which is only achieved when the media gives the society an experience of culture that is shared.

According to research findings together with arguments from various scholars, media as a key player in the flow of information in the society has failed in most of its roles. This is what has brought about the misconception of the proper role of the mass media in a liberal democratic society.

However, pointing out to what should be done so that the media can play its proper role, will help to alleviate the burden of the media abuse in a democratic context. As such, the mass media should not accept the

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manipulation by the political leaders who use it for selfish interest[7]. In the light of this point, the media should seek to ensure a universal access in that members should be given room to the right of entry to the mass media to contribute as well as gain from the public.

The role of the mass media in the democratic society will be realized again when the mass media works independent from the structures of power present in the society. In all the undertakings of the media, influential leaders should be presented separately from the titles so that there may be no bias. Owing to the manipulation of the mass media by influential leaders, mostly the media may ignore the interests along with the concerns of the public and as such, this should not be done but rather the media should respond to the public interests and concerns altogether. From a more practical point of view, the media is expected to provide truthful and honest information if the development of the democracy is to be achieved.

It has been argued that media is central to a democratic society as it leads to information accessibility at all social levels and geographical locations of a society[8]. Equally, mass media works as a critic essential to the government along with the investigations of wrong doing. In essence, mass media has its proper role as that of acting as an advocate for good along with bad causes. It is the responsibility of the mass media again to state the different constituencies of the democracy. So to speak, it works towards the creation of common experiences to the society while offering shared public symbols. Needless to say, it is through media that the public gets to interact with the leaders and as such solicit information from them. Accordingly, mass media

plays the role of constantly reminding the society the essence of their national identity[9].

Following this point, the instruments of media have experienced developments which are closely linked to the technological development. This is to suggest that it is not only though books, newspapers and TVs among others that the mass media operates, but rather internet has come into the scene. Thus, it is possible for the political leaders to use the internet to influence the citizens and as well interact with them[10]. Of importance to note in this case is the abuse of mass media by the leaders in order to serve their self driven interest. Therefore, regulation of the mass media should be carried out so that no cases of abuse can be reported.

Arguably, contemporary democracy has been pointed out as not to be working. This is given to the reason that the media has engaged in politics with the citizens engaging in the internet citizenship and thus the point of contact and development has been lost[11]. Besides this point, mass media has developed to a point whereby it has thus constrained leadership and leaders in the democratic society and thus on the other hand mass media has worked to drag back the democratic society's growth[12]. More to this point, arbitrated political communication in the public specialty can smooth the progress of deliberative legalizing of the processes in multifarious societies only if an autonomous media system gains self-government from its social situation and if unidentified audiences grant a criticism between a knowledgeable leader conversation and a reactive civil society[13].

Although there have been many challenges limiting the media from achieving its objective, it is essential to note that media's role in the liberal democratic society is paramount. As such, it serves the role of being the watchdog by regulating and criticizing the operations of the government. It provides a platform whereby the leaders of the society interact with the citizens and thus serve their needs. Debates concerning the political and social matters are carried out in the media and thus it serves the interests of the public. It further corrects the wrongs of the government and thus it keeps the government on check so as to ensure freedom and fairness in the society altogether.