



DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA-POLITICAL SYSTEM IN NEW UZBEKISTAN AND ITS PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the stages of development, legal foundations, and prospects of the media-political system in New Uzbekistan. During the years of independence, the media sector underwent significant reforms. Transparency in state governance was ensured, the number of mass media outlets increased, and their independence was strengthened. In particular, media policy is considered one of the key factors in building a democratic society. The article highlights the legislative framework ensuring freedom of speech and the press, the impact of mass media on political processes, and measures to strengthen the legal protection of journalists.

The mass media are an integral part of socio-political processes in society. After Uzbekistan gained independence, important reforms were implemented to democratize the media sector and liberalize the activities of the mass media, and great attention was paid to ensuring freedom of information and speech. In particular, our Constitution clearly states that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, speech and belief, as well as the right to seek, receive and disseminate information of their choice. In the era of new Uzbekistan, the issues of openness of the information space, freedom of the press and creating conditions for the independent work of journalists have become one of the priority areas of state policy. By 2010, 11 laws, 3 presidential decrees, 40 presidential and cabinet resolutions, and more than 600 sub-legal acts aimed at regulating the information and communication technologies sector in our country were adopted[1;115]. The adopted decree " On the further development of computerization and the introduction of information and communication technologies " [2; No. 28-29] regulated the development processes of this sector until 2010.

Today, as a result of the initiatives of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to "Ensure the Independence of the Mass Media," a number of important reforms have been implemented in the media sector. In particular, the information services of state agencies have been reformed, and their activities have been established on the basis of the principles of transparency and efficiency.

The stages of development of media policy in Uzbekistan can be divided into the following periods:

1. The early years of independence (1991-2000)

During this period, the initial legal framework for the media sector was created. The Law "On Mass Media", adopted in 1997, served to regulate the media sector in the country.

2. Liberalization of the information space (2000-2016)

During this period, reforms aimed at further liberalizing the activities of the media were implemented. In particular, the Law "On Transparency of the Activities of State Power and Administration Bodies", adopted in 2014, strengthened the work of state bodies with the media.

3. The era of New Uzbekistan (2016 to the present)

Since 2016, a new stage has begun in the media sector in Uzbekistan. Comprehensive measures have been implemented to ensure the transparency of state administration bodies, protect the rights of journalists, and strengthen press freedom. The 2019 Presidential Resolution "On Additional Measures to Ensure the Independence of Mass Media and Develop the Activities of Information Services of State Bodies and Organizations" [3; No. 4134] brought the media sector to a new level.

In recent years, the media landscape in Uzbekistan has expanded as follows:

In order to ensure the transparency of the activities of state bodies and organizations, over the past year, information services in many ministries and departments have been reorganized in accordance with the requirements of the time. In addition, information services were established for the first time in 201 district and city khokimiyats. In 2010-2020, 290 private and interdepartmental Internet publications were created to disseminate the most important official information and regulatory legal documents in Uzbek, Russian, and English [4;].

In the first half of 2023, the number of mass media outlets in our country increased by 379 from 2016 to 2021, with 632 newspapers, 623 magazines, 18 bulletins, 6 news agencies, 84 TV stations, 32 radio stations, and 745 websites operating. The Presidential Decree adopted on February 2, 2019, emphasized the need to adequately establish cooperation between the press services of state bodies and the mass media.[5;257-264] In our opinion, the importance of media policy lies in the correct implementation of the mechanisms of mutual influence between these two entities: the state and the citizen. In this regard, it is important to ensure periodic citizen oversight of state bodies.

For this reason, the openness and free activity of the press are also important. As you know, every year the international non-governmental organization "Reporters Without Borders" updates the press freedom index. The top three in the ranking are Norway, Finland and Sweden, while the USA is in 44th place, Russia is in 150th place. China is in 177th place. Among the Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan ranks 79th, Kazakhstan 155th, Tajikistan 162nd, and Turkmenistan 178th. Uzbekistan was included in this Press Freedom Index in 2013 and ranks 157th out of 180 countries in the 2021 ranking. According to the World Press Freedom Index, in 2022, the press freedom index rose 24 places to 133rd place, but in 2023 it fell 4 places to 137th place. According to Reporters Without Borders, officials try to exert economic pressure on journalists or bribe them. In a country where 60 percent of the population is under 30, social media has become a platform for sharing information about the problem of corruption, which is rarely covered in the official media[6;].

Media policy perspectives

There are the following main directions for improving media policy in the new Uzbekistan:

1. Ensuring information security

It is necessary to strengthen the system of combating disinformation and manipulation in the state information space. The role of the media in protecting national interests should also be further enhanced. Articles 81 and 82 of our Constitution guarantee the freedom of the mass media, their rights to seek, receive and disseminate information. Article 81 stipulates that the freedom of the mass media shall be exercised in accordance with the law, and the state ensures the freedom of the activities of the mass media. Article 82 states that preventing censorship and interfering with or obstructing the activities of the mass media shall be subject to liability in accordance with the law, which ensures freedom of information and the independence of the mass media[7; 2023.06 issue].

2. Legal protection of journalists

It is necessary to prevent violations of the rights of journalists, strengthen legal guarantees for them, and ensure that they are not subjected to pressure and harassment during their professional activities.

3. Support the development of digital media

It is important to support the development of Internet media and social networks. Today, digital information platforms are becoming an integral part of the media. Therefore, it is necessary to develop new legislative norms regulating the activities of online media.

4. Strengthening cooperation between government agencies and the media

Mutual trust and cooperation between the media and government agencies must be strengthened. As government governance becomes more open, journalists' opportunities to operate freely will also expand.

Conclusion and suggestions

After Uzbekistan gained independence, major reforms were carried out in the media sector. Media freedom was ensured, the independence of the press increased, and the information services of state agencies were developed. As a result, the number of media outlets increased significantly, the legal protection of journalists was strengthened, and the opportunities for obtaining information expanded. At the same time, there are some problems that need to be resolved:

The media has not achieved full independence;

Weak legal protection for journalists;

Issues of information security and the fight against false information.

Suggestions:

1. Protect journalists – strengthen legal guarantees for their free and safe work.

2. Increasing media independence – privatization of state media and support for non-state media.

3. Ensuring information security – strengthening measures against disinformation and cybersecurity.

4. Focus on digital media – supporting the development of online journalism and social media.

5. Strengthening cooperation between the state and the media - increasing the openness of government agencies and strengthening communication with the public.

These measures will further develop the media-political system in Uzbekistan and strengthen media freedom.

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