

The Indian Media System

Analysing a non-western media system with a model developed for largely western economies is a hard task to accomplish. We will be looking at India, using Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini's classifications from *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics*. There are four dimensions: the development of a mass press, political parallelism, journalistic professionalism and the degree and nature of state intervention (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Let us see how the Indian media system fits into the narrative, and why this classification may not be the best option.

India saw the development of a mass press as early as the 1780s. The press played a major role in the independence struggle against the British and has been one of the major proponents of democracy in the country (National Institute of Mass Communication, n.d.). India has one of the highest circulations of newspapers in the world, with *The Times of India* being the most circulated English newspaper across the globe. Radio and Television news also played important roles in the way that the mass media of the country was shaped. In terms of the presences of a mass press, India fits in the North American model.

Political Parallelism also dates to colonial times – the press was divided between being supportive or against the government. After independence too, some newspapers choose to remain critical of the government and while others support it (Mushtaq & Baig, 2016). Television media has stronger distinctions as media ownership lies in the hands of certain factions and channels are likely to support their views. For example, Republic TV a right leaning channel, was previously partly owned by Rajeev Chandrasekhar (Asianet) of the right-winged BJP (Media Ownership Monitor, 2018), while NDTV, was owned by Radhika and Pranoy Roy associated with the centre-left Congress Party (Media Ownership Monitor, 2018). This means that the media is deeply divided and objective coverage remains an issue.

Strong political parallelism and political ownership of the media, also means that professionalization in journalism is low. Several 'sting operations' carried out by independent media organisations have shown that the country's media has an issue with paid news, political intervention and commercial motivation. Organisations such as the Press Council of India try to keep print media in check, but professionalization is lower in television.

In both, the political parallelism and professionalization, India fits the Mediterranean Model.

Lastly, India has strong state intervention in the press, however, the Freedom of the Press is well protected within the constitution. State channels such as DD news have consistently ranked as the most viewed channels in the country (mostly due to their popularity in rural areas). All other channels and newspapers are guaranteed the freedom of the press and this has also been upheld by the Supreme Court in recent years. Here, it is possible to say that India fits the Northern European Model.

Thus, India has aspects of all three model and does not align with one. Here, it is problematic to only analyse the mass press, since the mass differs per state. Thus, only analysing the English language press (as is done in most studies) reduces the importance of local language media. The same is the case for urban and rural media - the news media consumed by two populations differs and each has an equal impact on its readership. There is also no analysis of how colonial

history may have affected the media's current state. Strong political parallelism and the political ownership of press have existed since its conception.

Thus, India is a hybridity needing analysis outside of this proposed system.

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