Chapter II

Mass Media, Public Opinion and Democracy:
Contemporary Mass Media Scene in USA, Germany and India

"Vox populi vox dei", the voice of the people is the voice of God, so goes the Greek maxim. Democracy is the manifestation of people’s will to be governed by those, who they elect. It is a different matter that generally the public is not happy to be governed by the very people they chose, once the election process is over. Democracy is not necessarily the will of the majority. There are any number of people who do not vote and those who vote for parties and candidates who lose elections.

Over the years, there have been numerous debates leading to concern about the increasing role and influence of the media, which, it is alleged, have changed the very fabric of politics. A fascinating, and at times, intriguing interplay between mass media and politics has come into focus. Politics as an institution has a history of thousands of years. Many things have influenced politics over the years. Similarly, politics has undergone changes and entered many a new arena. Political institutions took centuries to be what they are today. Media as an institution has progressed by leaps and bounds in a much shorter time frame. Thanks to the ingenuity of the human mind coupled with science and technology, media in a much shorter span have acquired a formidable position in-as-much-as that centuries long institutions and practices seem to get overawed by the media stimuli. Harwood I. Childs in his thesis on public opinion strongly advocates preserving public opinion, because many forces seem to be at work curtailling and undermining its role. These, according to Childs, include the tremendous growth in executive power, the growing complexity and speed of social change, emergence of pressure groups, higher stakes among political parties, mass media and other channels¹.

Representative bodies, according to analysts, are becoming less representative,

and elections although indicate the preferred candidates, often, give a slight indication of the public attitude. It is felt by a section of analysts that the decision of the voters more often than not is shaped by the mass media stimuli around the election time. Excessive visibility of certain candidates in comparison to others, cunning campaigns by the parties and the "public face" as put forward, it is feared could swing public opinion in favour or against a candidate, which may have nothing to do with the "real" choice of the electorate, as it should have been. To what extent do we depend on the media, and to what extent do the media shape our minds, attitudes and opinions, have been causes of concern and a subject of much empirical research.

Democracy, mass media and public opinion in a true sense are interdependent. If we look back at history, throughout the nineteenth century, when penny press hit the streets, the potential power of the mass media press to persuade and manipulate the public and perhaps undermine the democratic process was felt and dreaded. By seeking the sensational, concentrating on newsworthy personalities rather than news, the press it was thought was diverting the attention of the masses, arousing irrational passions and lowering the levels of political debate. However, it was not until World War I, when the government's news management and power of propaganda through the mass media came to be realised. The apparent success of propaganda led to a widespread acceptance by social scientists of the "hypodermic needle" theory of the effects of the media. This theory assumed that everyone was exposed to the media message equally. Everyone interpreted them in the same general way and everyone was affected uniformly by them. Thus, a cleverly designed message could produce a more or less uniform response from everyone in the population.

The hypodermic theory was not based on empirical research but instead reflected the social and psychological theories of the day which assumed that information was transmitted directly from the mass media to the individual without taking into account the social context within which the message was received. The theory also assumed that the individual in modern industrial society prone to be manipulated was irrational and governed by unreasonable passion traits that make
themselves a threat to democracy.\(^2\)

A systematic study of the political effects of the media was undertaken in the 1940s. The study was restricted to investigating the relationship between the mass media and voting behaviour. Researchers Paul Lazarsfeld et al, contradicted earlier assumptions and concluded that information on candidates running for offices received through mass media had little impact on their voting behaviour. The information accessed through the media, the research reflected, tended to reinforce a voter’s already formed opinion.\(^3\)

To illustrate the point further, if a voter was predisposed to vote for a certain candidate or a party, he or she would use the mass media to reinforce his or her political choice. People exercised, what the researchers termed as “selective exposure” and “selective attention”. In other words, when people read newspapers or attended to radio or television, they paid more attention to information which reinforced their preconceived ideas and dismissed that information which contradicted those ideas. But where did the preconceived ideas come from? Political attitudes and voting patterns were heavily determined by community, family and group affiliations, felt the researchers. Group transmitted political beliefs held the loyalty of their membership and acted as a buffer against the direct impact of the media.

It was called the era of “minimal effects” the view that by themselves the media were virtually powerless to change minds, that it was rather in the context of family, friends, colleagues and co-workers that was primarily responsible for people’s attitudes and opinions.

An important insight that emerged from the early research was that the respondents when asked to report on their recent exposure to campaign communication more often referred to a political discussion rather than mass media like print or radio. This led to the concept of “opinion leader” and a new hypothesis, the “two-step flow” of communication was discovered. This hypothesis presumed that information flow from the mass media first was absorbed by opinion leaders, who in


turn transmitted the information to the audience. The opinion leaders were found to be dispersed throughout the social structure and were not necessarily formal leaders. These opinion leaders had more access to the mass media campaigns than the non-leaders. In fact, the opinion leaders worked as mediators or the intervening variables between the mass media and other people in their group.

While the two-step flow hypothesis received support from sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s, the psychologists were looking for the effects of media from the point of view of individual impact. Joseph Klapper's summary of survey and social psychological research on media effects proposed a "reinforcement theory" which added a psychological dimension in the two-step flow theory. Klapper suggested that people avoid access to media messages which conflict with their predisposition. From this point of view, psychological mechanisms are the intervening variables between the media messages and the audience response. The individual, Klapper felt, was protected in two ways from direct manipulation by the media. On the one hand media messages were received indirectly through the opinion leaders and group affiliations, on the other, psychological predisposition selected only those messages which the receiver found "congenial" and matching his/her value systems. In short what Klapper tried to arrive at was that mass media function among and through multiple and intertwined mediating factors and influences. Most of the time, the media reinforced existing conditions rather than producing new ones. Their impact therefore was limited.

The early research on mass communication concentrated on attitude change but the chain of effects that result from exposure to mass communication has a number of links preceding attitudes and opinion changes.

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The relationship between media campaigning and voting behaviour has been the main focus of research in the field of political communication. Of the various models and theories, Thomas Harrop's model has been widely discussed and accepted. Harrop identifies three models of voting behaviour:

1. **Party identification model**
2. **The radical model**
3. **The issue model**

The first one stresses the importance of family socialization as a mechanism linking social cleavages to individual choice. It suggests that party identification is passed from parents to children along with other loyalties. Partnership strengthens with age, sustained by interactions with people of similar views as electors come to rely on their allegiance to solve the problem of interpreting complex political information. The radical model believes that people vote according to their social interests, though political parties and the mass media both influence the interpretation of these interests. The issue voting model treats the voter as an informed consumer, choosing between parties on the basis of which comes closest to or is least distant from voters own conceptions of what governments should do. This model looks at voters acting individually and not collectively or expressively. The broad concept of issues can be divided into three parts, viz., party's ideology, party's specific policies and party's competence.\(^7\)

According to Harrop, the mass media play a major role in the radical model of voting. Television and press are believed to define what are to count as acceptable political views, to influence citizens into similar modes of thinking and so to create a stream of messages which can favour one particular party. By contrast, the party identification model views media as just a reinforcing influence on voting decisions, providing materials which are selectively interpreted by the voters whose standing commitment to a party insulates them from the effects of the media. In the issue voting model, the media are seen more as a source of information than values. The reinforcement

\(^7\) Martin Harrop, "Voting and the Electorate" in Development of British Politics, Henery Drucker, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1983)
interpretation of the media is no longer an adequate guide to media effects. Here the party identification model is rather weak.

According to Harrop's thesis, media can influence the voting behaviour in four situations:
1. When party loyalties are weak
2. There are new subjects to cover
3. Coverage is credible
4. People rarely discuss politics

Television according to him has strengthened the credibility of the media and supplanted conversation as a major channel of political communication.

McCombs et al, speak about the following sequence to the effects of the exposure to communication viz. Awareness-Information-Attitudes-Behaviour. In reports, both prior to and during political campaigns, the news media to a considerable degree identify important issues. Simply put, the news media set the agenda for the campaigns. This line of thinking suggests that media mentally orients and organises the world for their audience. The "agenda setting" theory has also received a considerable amount of attention among social scientists, political scientists and media analysts.

Considering news a puzzle, Harry S. Truman, the late US President, long back lamented at the role of the media thus: "I really look with commiseration over the great body of my fellow citizens who, reading newspapers, live and die in the belief that they have known something of what has been passing in the world in their time".9

Walter Lippmann, one of the renowned American journalists and political analysts, questioned the purity and adequacy of mass media as sources of information in the early part of this century. In his classic study "Newspapers", he felt that journalists pointed just a "flash light" rather than a mirror at the world. Hence, the audience did not get a complete image of the political scene. They got a highly

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selective glimpses, instead. Lippman explained why the media could not possibly perform the functions of public enlightenment that democratic theory required. The media persons, he argued could not tell the truth objectively because truth was subjective and entailed more probing investigations and analysis that a busy pace of news production could allow.\textsuperscript{10}

The dominant view has emerged widely from the belief that the mass media powerfully shape human attitudes to great skepticism about their effect and back again to a belief in their power. In the first quarter of the current century the belief that media had powerful impact on the human mind came from the premise that the society was divided between a large populace and a small elite that was able to manipulate it. This emanated from the external events, the impressive rise of the mass press, radio and moving pictures on the one hand and the emergence of many a mass political movement on the other. The fascist regimes using the mass media as tools of propaganda also reinforced the belief.\textsuperscript{11}

Altheide and Shaw reckon all social institutions as media institutions. They feel as more experiences are influenced by media logic and discourse “our worlds are totally media”.\textsuperscript{12}

In the preface to their book, they speak about the insightful demarcation of “Phases of media effects” viz. Phase I (1900 to late 1930s). The emphasis was on the nature and impact of the mass media to shape public opinion. In the Phase II (1930 to 1960s) attention turned to the role of film and other media for “active persuasion or information” including some of the unintended consequences of media message.\textsuperscript{13}

In Phase III (1960s to 1980s), interest shifted to the studies of media effects but with a shift towards long-term social change, beliefs, ideologies, cultural patterns and “even institutional terms”. This was the period when interest in structural and rhetorical uses of the mass media, and also a renewed interest in semiotics, deconstruction and critical literacy was reflected.\textsuperscript{14}
The authors feel that with the exception of a few works represented in Phase III, the overwhelming majority of significant works examined media as content, and tended to focus on individual effects, e.g. voting behaviour, violence, prejudice, and susceptibility to messages.\textsuperscript{15}

During the Phase IV (1990s to the present), the focus is on cultural logic, social institutions and public discourse. The phase focuses on media and modes of representations as significant features of social life. Drawing on the theory and research, the latest phase of mass communication studies assumes that since all "messages" are constructed, there will be different interests represented in the content, including those made by social scientists about the biases of others.

In the current Phase, a great number of political scientists, sociologists and mass communication researchers believe that the mass media exert great power not only on economic or political attitudes and approaches but also on "how to think about the world". The media today, they feel not only provide information but also the conceptual frameworks within which information and opinions are ordered, not just facts, but a world view. Contemporary researchers emphasize the "agenda setting" function of the media.

A very interesting insight is offered by Altheide et al, when they say that in a media world, organised journalism is dead. The media men are post journalists for two general reasons. First, journalist practices techniques and approaches are increasingly geared to media formats rather than merely directing their craft at topics. Secondly, the topics, organizations and issues that journalists report about are themselves products of media - journalists formats and criteria.\textsuperscript{16}

Analysing the evidence of effects, Denis McQuail argues that much of what has been written about the effects or effectiveness of the media either derives from research on campaigns or involves predictions about hypothetical campaign situations which include political and election campaign, attempts at public information, advertising, public service information, some forms of education - all of which have definite quantifiable objectives to achieve. They have authoritative sponsorship. The

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. n.11, pp. 1-10.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. n.11, pp.1-10.
campaigns may not necessarily be popular with the audience, hence they invariably have to be "sold" to them. The campaigns generally work with objectives which are not controversial: voting, buying particular brands, education, health, safety and so on. Hence, McQuail suggests that media impact need to be studied more seriously.  

Democracy, as an institution has a lot of expectations from the media in terms of a number of functions and services for the political system. "The Press ... " wrote Walter Lippmann in the beginning of this century, "has become an organ of direct democracy, charged on much wider scale, and from day to day, with the function often attributed to the initiative, referendum and recall. The Court of public opinion, open day and night, is to lay down the law for everything all the time. It is not workable. And when you consider the nature of the news, it is not even thinkable." Being a journalist himself, Lippman was probably much aware of the limitations of the medium. Gurvitch and Blumber speak of the tensions and disparities between the ostensibly democratic ideals that the mass media are supposed to serve and the communication structures and practices that actually prevail. The authors list out the following responsibilities on the media.  

- Reporting developments likely to impinge positively or negatively on the welfare of citizens.  
- Meaningful agenda setting, identifying the key issues of the day, including the forces that have formed and may resolve them.  
- Provide platforms for politicians and spokespersons of other courses and interest groups.  
- Organise dialogues across a diverse range of views as well as between power holders and mass publics.  
- Perform a function of auditor holding officials to account for how they have exercised power.  
- Provide incentives to citizens to learn, choose and become involved rather  

18 Walter Lippmann, Ibid. n. 8, p. 229  
than merely to follow the political process.

- To acquire an ability to resist the efforts of forces outside the media to subvert their independence, integrity and ability to serve the audience.

- To have a sense of respect for the audience members as potentially concerned and be able to make sense of his or her political environment.

The authors, however are themselves skeptical, if the above can be achieved! Some of the obstacles that may hinder the attainment of the expectations include, conflicts among democratic values necessitating “trade off and compromises in the organisations and performances of the media”; “authoritative political communication” often appears to exist in an elite world of its own distanced from the circumstances and perspectives of the ordinary people. In fact, political communication is often perceived differently by the rich and the poor, the well informed and educated and the less informed and illiterates; among the people, not everyone is politically motivated, neither is he obliged to be. Democracy, provides everyone the right to be as much apolitical as politically active; and media can pursue democratic values only in ways that are compatible with the social, political and economic environment in which they operate.20

Media ownership is a big business proposition. If we were to look at the three democracies viz. Germany, USA and India, the major media in the US and Germany are owned by big business houses. In India, over 98 per cent print medium is owned by private interest and industrial houses. With the burgeoning satellite communication, there are any number of television channels giving tough competition to the government owned electronic media.

Judith Lichtenberg opines that it is hardly more than a platitude to say that the press has always played an important role in the political process. This, however, brings an ambiguity in its role. Traditionally, the press has been conceived as an observer - ideally a neutral observer - of the political scene. Events of the last four decades, however have amply demonstrated the inadequacy of this view. The press today - the mass media in particular - is one of the primary actors on the political

20 Ibid. pp.271-72
scene, capable of making or breaking political career and issues.\textsuperscript{21}

In democratic societies, the relationship between media organizations is characterized primarily by competition to maximise audience and to be first within the news. Media, in fact, enjoy so much clout in democratic societies that they tend to believe, they can make or mar governments. Some media deliberately take on activist role. Whether it is fair, is a debatable point.

Justice PD Sawant, Chairman, of the Press Council of India, is of the view that the media should take an activist role in order to promote the basic tenets of our constitution. He strongly believes that media are duty bound to strengthen democracy and act as crusaders.\textsuperscript{22}

Rita Beamish of the Associated Press in the USA categorically said a “no” to the crusading role of the media. “If they wear badge of a crusader, they can’t remain objective”. Media were expected to disseminate information and not become an activist, she said.\textsuperscript{23}

Against the above backdrop, in the paragraphs that follow, we shall look at the contemporary media scene in the USA, Germany and India, their manifest role in political campaigning and their possible impact in changing the perceptions of the electorate.

**Mass Media scene in America**

The United States of America can rightly be referred as the media society in a true sense. With a vast array of information and communication network, it is in an enviable position vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Of the 8250 television transmitting stations worldwide, 1241 exist in the USA. The global total homes with television surpassed 500 million in 1987, led by the United States with 89.13 million. And according to the latest count, 93 million US households or 99 per cent of all homes have television sets.

\textsuperscript{22} In-depth interviews were conducted by the present scholar with a cross section of academics, political scientists, media personalities, legal luminaries in pursuance of the research work. Interview with Justice P.D. Sawant was conducted on 17 December, 1996.
\textsuperscript{23} Interview with Rita Beamish was conducted on 12 November, 1996, in New York.
There are over 1500 daily newspapers with a combined circulation of over 60 million. The total population of the US is 255 million (1992). Of the top 100 daily newspapers, the Wall Street Journal (NY) commands the highest circulation (1,795,206), followed by the US Today (1,506,708). Times (LA) has a circulation of 146,631 followed by Times (NY) subscribed by 145,890.

There are around 7,000 weekly newspapers and countless magazines and periodicals aimed at various audiences like college students, ethnic groups, religious sects, foreign language speakers, businessmen, professional groups, women and the like. Mass media consumption of Americans is one of the highest globally. And it is no wonder that TV Guide, a magazine reflecting television programme commands the second highest circulation (16,258,476), the highest being NRTA/AARP bulletin at 22,746,028 copies. The other popular magazines such as the Time and Newsweek have a subscription figure of 4,203,991 and 3,240,131 copies respectively. The newspapers, however, have been progressively losing readership in America. In 1967, reading newspaper was a daily habit for 73 per cent of the adults. Beginning about 1970, the proportion of daily readers fell slowly by steadily hitting bottom at 51 per cent in 1988. Since then the number has stabilised in the 51 to 54 per cent range.

In an interesting statistical survey of number of newspapers, the circulation as a percentage of population from 1850-1991 brings some insights.

From 254 newspapers in 1850 with a circulation of 758,000 copies, they reached 3.3 per cent of population. At the turn of the century in 1900, the number of newspapers increased to 2226, with a combined circulation of 15,102,000 and a reach of 13.3 per cent population. After five decades, in 1950, the number of newspapers gradually came down to 1,772 with an increased circulation of the order of 53,800,000 copies obtaining a reach of 37 per cent of population.

In 1991, the number of newspapers reached an all time low to 1586, with a circulation of 60,687,000 copies reaching 23.9 per cent population This reflects the dwindling interest in reading of newspapers.24

There are more than 11,543 radio stations operating in the USA at the end of 1993. Of these, 4948 are commercial AM Stations, 4,945 commercial FMs and 1,650 non commercial FM. There are over 1,500 operating TV stations including 558 commercial VHFs, 595 commercial UHFs, 123 non commercial VHFs and 240 non commercial UHFs. Most commercial TVs are network affiliated. Approximately 443 operate as independents.

As per the law, no single entity may own more than 18 AM, 18 FM and 12 TV stations. In television, an entity is permitted to own 12 TV stations as long as they

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don't reach more than 25 per cent of the nation's television homes. UHFs are assessed for only half of a market's television homes. Group broadcasters who wish to buy interests in stations more than half owned by minorities are able to own up to 21 AM, 21 FM and 14 TV stations, and are able to reach 30 per cent of the nation's television households through their TVs, as long as two of the stations in each service are controlled by the minorities.

Newspaper owners cannot purchase broadcasting properties in the same market, nor any radio stations owner acquire TV stations there. Similarly TV owners cannot acquire radio outlets. TV stations may no longer acquire cable TV franchise in the same city, and networks may not own cable systems at all. These regulations are expected to ensure that concentration of power (of information) is restricted.

According to Nielson Media Research Statistics for the year 1992-1993 season, an average American home watched TV seven hours and five minutes a day.\(^\text{25}\) The latest study by the Roper organisation (commissioned by the National Association of Broadcasters and the Network Television Association) shows that 65 per cent of the US public turns to TV as the source of most of its news, and that 56 per cent ranks it as the most believable news source.\(^\text{26}\)

There are 11,600 operating cable systems in the US, serving some 33,000 communities operating systems currently reach about 56 million subscribers, i.e. 147 million people or 62.4 per cent of the nation's TV households. The largest (Time Warner Cable in New York) has over 900,000 subscribers. Some have fewer than 100. An estimated 5,000 systems originate programming in their own studios with an average of 23 hours weekly.

Broadcasting in the USA is governed by various Acts. The Radio Act of 1927 created a five member Federal Radio Commission to issue stations licenses, allocate frequency bands to various services, assign specific frequencies to individual stations and control station power. The same Act delegated to the Secretary of Commerce authority to inspect radio stations to examine and license radio operators and to assign

\(^{25}\)As reflected in *Cable Television Developments*, June 1993.

radio call signs.\textsuperscript{27}

At the request of President Roosevelt, the Secretary of Commerce in 1943 appointed an inter departmental committee to study electronic communications. The Committee recommended that Congress establish a single agency to regulate all inter-state and foreign communication by wire and radio, including telegraph, telephone created the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) for this unified regulation. This is the statute under which the FCC operates and which it enforces.

The Commission is forbidden by law from censoring programmes. Section 315 of the Communications Act provides:

a) "If any licensee shall permit any person who is a legally qualified candidate for any public office to use a broadcasting station, he shall afford equal opportunities to other such candidates for that office in the use of such broadcasting station, provided that such licensee shall have no power of censorship over the material broadcast under the provision of this section. No obligation is hereby imposed upon any licensee to allow the use of its station by any such candidate.

b) The charges made for the use of any broadcast station for any of the purposes set forth in this section shall not exceed the charges made for comparable use of such station for other's purposes." \textsuperscript{28}

In 1959, the Act was amended exempting the stations from the equal time requirement appearances by candidates on newscasts, news interviews and other news coverage.

A lacunae in the statute is that it requires a station presenting one candidate to afford equal opportunities to "all" other legally qualified candidates for the same office, including, often, some who have no chance of prevailing in the election. In 1960, the Congress suspended this requirement for the presidential election, thus making possible the broadcast debates between the Democratic and the Republican candidates without stations having to give equal time to the numerous other presidential candidates representing small parties. A similar provision on a permanent basis is contained in

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid. Also refer Gale Directory of Publication and Broadcast Media-1995 (Detroit: Gale Research Inc.), vol. 1-2 and 3.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid. P. 14 and Broadcasting & Cable's TV International, 1994 (CA: Baskerville Communications).
legislation passed by the Congress in September 1970.29

Mass media and presidential elections

Mass media have been playing such an all pervasive role in the American politics that some critics dub American elections as mass media elections. It is, however, not until a decade or so, that the news media have come to be regarded as an influential force in American politics. In the recent years there has been tremendous interest in the studies to gauge the influence and impact of campaigns and particularly of the mass media on voters. The reasons are not far to seek. With such a vast networking of the media, an avid interest in the media specially television (average viewing more than seven hours a day) and the vast reach and credibility, undoubtedly make the mass media the best choice to reach out to millions at low cost per person.

The mass media thrive on circulation figures and audience reach. In other words, on numbers. Nearly every American adult would have heard of audience ratings games. Politics, according to Stanley and Niemi, also involves numbers. Some issues involve market share and audience, i.e. how many and what kind of people pay attention to political news stories, candidate advertisements, campaign debates etc.? More complicated and controversial are other matters that involve numbers. Some critics allege for example that television emphasizes only the "horse race" aspect of political campaigns (i.e. who is ahead and by how much) at the cost of issues.

While data relating to how many people watch, read and listen to media is readily obtainable but specific information about political material is not by and large accessible.30

The election of 1992 was not like any other election before. Not only were contestants innovative in their usage, the media also used new techniques and methods to reach out to the discerning voter.

Some analysts however question the efficacy of the mass media in helping voters in decision making.

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29 Ibid.
Lance Bennett has the following posers:

- Why is a society (meaning the US) so rich in information populated with people who are so confused about politics?
- Is it possible for journalism to be objective as it is practiced in America?31

"Public displeasure with the media", according to Altschull, "never far from the surface found a new voice during the 1992 presidential election session".32

Not only the candidates branded the media as being "unfair", which generally was expected of them, the citizens also expressed their chronic dissatisfaction with the press. The most interesting aspect, however, was when so many members of the media also joined the politicians and public in criticizing themselves and their colleagues. Media was not only criticized for invasion of privacy but also on charges at deliberate bias in reporting.33

During the election time, although there is a lot of political coverage in the mass media, in the US, but free time is not allowed to any political party or a candidate to air his views, as in some other democracies.

Voters generally learn about candidates through word of mouth, direct mail, leaflets left at their doors. However, analysts believe that most information on presidential candidates comes through the mass media like television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Many believe that the way the media cover the campaign and the way the candidates use paid media advertising can make a vital difference in election results.34

Candidates have come to rely extensively on the broadcast media to appeal for votes. Radio and television ensure them with massive national coverage. A new form of advertising has received more attention in recent past and plays an important role in the 1992 presidential election. The so-called narrowcasting, directed specialised advertising to precisely targeted constituencies. Methods of narrowcasting included advertising on specialty cable channels, distributing video cassettes to targeted groups.

33 For details please refer Consumers' Guide to Media truth, Media Studies Journal (New York: Columbia University, Fall 1992), p.93
or individuals, direct mailers, and taped phone messages delivered via computerized telephone dialing to voters on specialized lists closely related, though untelevised, forms of narrowcasting. Social scientists, analysts are generally apprehensive about the use of fierce media campaigns as some feel that they have become battles between advertising agencies rather than tests of candidates and issues. If much of the presidential campaign is “stage-managed”, they argue, the people would never see the “real” candidate or hear discussion of the “real” issues.

Media specialists defend their work on a number of grounds. They contend that on the one hand television is overrated [that it is the only campaign tool], and on the other hand, even if it is influential, political advertising serves the same purpose as commercial advertising - to inform viewers of the products available. Viewers know the information is biased in favour of the product and make the necessary adjustments in their thinking. Skeptics, however doubt this rationale, feeling that voters do not have enough defences against the soft sell and that, in any case the media specialists are skillfully working to stay ahead of whatever defences viewers have. An anonymous media professional sums up the feelings of the specialists “Damned right we don’t explain. We don’t educate, we motivate. Th.’s our job. We’re not teachers, we’re political managers. We are trying to win”.

The battle of arguments is unending. In order to know the impact of mass media, a number of studies have been conducted in the past. In the following paragraphs we shall have a look at the findings of some such studies.

American elections and media impact studies

America can rightly take the credit of being not only a truly “information society” but also a country where a tremendous amount of empirical research is conducted on the role, efficacy and impact of various public institutions - media being one of them. Media’s role in the electoral process is considered undeniable but whether it has been positive or negative not many scholar agree on one single theory. Some researches suggest that an average American gathers information about parties, issues and candidates mainly through the mass media. While some of the research studies have
been reflected to make a point or argue against it in text of various chapters of the thesis, in the following paragraphs some studies have been picked up to make a perspective about the possible impact of media in elections. A number of studies suggest that the mass media in the US have been held responsible for the low levels of trust of Americans (Robinson 1975, 1976; iller et al 1979; Patterson 1996). In particular media researchers have been concerned about the detrimental effects of negative campaign news on political trust.

Sophia Chan in her study, “Effects of attention to campaign coverage on political trust” examines whether attention to campaign news influences political trust. It also explores whether political trust predicts attention to campaign news, and whether the mechanism of influence between attention to campaign news and political trust differs across educational levels. The researcher used the 1992 election data in her study. Results of her survey showed that attention to television campaign coverage reduced trust in government, while a lot of trust in attention to newspaper government increased campaign coverage. More importantly, the mechanism of influence between political trust and attention to campaign coverage on television led to lower levels of trust. Among the more educated, a low level of trust in government increased attention to campaign coverage. The findings also indicated that the types of media (television vs. newspapers) mattered when it came to media effects on political trust.35

A commonly repeated generalization in the political communication is Patterson and McClure’s conclusion that voters learn issue information from television advertisements and not news.36 This study has been cited at least 150 times in academic journals including recent publications by political scientists.37 Weaver and Drew consider it a “classic” of the political literature.38

However, often overlooked is the fact that Patterson and McClure's study was based on a single research conducted in 1974 in a single county. Subsequent voter surveys have found little correlation between knowledge and attention to political commercials. Drew and Weaver and others in 1991 and subsequently others attribute clear learning effects to television news. Analysts feel that why Patterson and McClure's study remains prominent in the literature is because they were the first to make an explicit contrast between learning from television news and ads than because it is consistent with most subsequent studies.

The proposition that ads are more informative than news is not grounded in any general theory. According to Zhao and Chaffe, it runs counter to many peoples' institution - a feature that has probably helped attract attention to it. The most commonly held view about political commercials is also held by advertising Guru David Ogilivy who called them "the most deceptive, misleading, unfair and untruthful of all advertising." 

Zhao and Chaffe in a study which began in the 1984 presidential election and included five additional replications in two succeeding presidential elections and one prominent US Senate seat campaign to gauge the efficacy of campaign advertisements versus television news as a source of political issue information have brought forth insightful findings:

The main results for TV news are consistent across the six studies indicting attention to television news as statistically significant. The result contradicts one major conclusion of Patterson and McClure; it falls into line with the studies that attribute positive political learning effects to television news. The finding is replicated here across a variety if campaigns, settings, and survey procedures, with almost no variation

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40 David Ogilivy, “Ogilivy on Advertising” (New York: Vintage Books, 1985) pp. 210-13. In fact when once approached to handle the account of one of the parties, Ogilivy refused, as believed advertising was required to reflect nothing but truth and that was not possible always in politics.
in the result. Candidate advertising displayed a much less consistent pattern of effects. In half of the surveys attention measures outstripped the news measure. The case in point is the 1990 North Carolina election for the US Senate, where incumbent Senator Jesse Helms narrowly defeated his democratic opponent, Harvey Gnatt. The race was of national importance as both the candidates had received huge contributions from outside the state, enabling them to purchase considerable television advertising time. Issue differences were also extreme, Helms being a leader of the Senate’s Conservative block while Gannt was a black challenger and liberal by the state’s standards. According to the researchers that was the only unusual result they got that too in a non-presidential contest.

The newspaper news and not television commercials was the major challenger to the television news, at least for the attentive audience. 41

Robinson in another study spotlights the changes that modern media coverage have brought about in Congress in the US. He outlines the manner in which Congress is covered by a variety of media. Each medium according to him differs in impact from the other and varies within itself at different times. Accurate assessment of media singly or in combination remains elusive because there is no adequate weighting criteria. The general feeling among an average American, according to him is that the media have become “harder, tougher, and more cynical”. The press corps who cover the Congress, the press secretaries, aides in the press galleries and media studios have expressed that the press has grown more hostile to Congress. In his qualitative research, Robinson conducted 50 in-depth personal interviews covering staff, and reports between 1977 and 1980, and found that only one person in fifteen thought this toughening was not the major development. Political secretaries were particularly sensitive to the change in the attitudes. One of the respondents, pointing out to the “new journalism” saw it as “blood thirsty”. The media “think we are all crooks and it only remains for them to prove it” The views, according to Robinson, reflect the

general perception of a majority of staff, who work directly with the press corps in the Congress.\textsuperscript{42}

Schram in his book, he \textit{Great American Video Game} describes how politicians devise elaborate television news strategies and carry them out and how journalists try, and often fail, to avoid manipulation by the political image makers. The author feels that in the game of video politics, the politician were ahead of the journalists and those politicians made it to the polling booth who were video savvy. The public, in view of Schram, make their mind about the candidates watching them on the television and not by reading about them in the newspapers.\textsuperscript{43}

On the other hand, analysis of CBS news coverage for over a period of 16 years has provided support for Fred T. Smoller's theory that the emergence of television as a primary source of news about the presidency has contributed to the decline of the office of the president. This finding runs counter to assertion by other scholars that television has enhanced the power of the presidency, particularly in relation to congress, and that it has vastly increased president's ability to mobilise public opinion to support their programmes.

Smoller is of the view that news practices designed to keep tales about the presidency exciting on a daily basis undermine the dignity and efficiency of the office. Exceptional rather than normal occurrences are featured and conflicts exaggerated. The need for pictures make reporters focus on the superficial. Good news, concludes Smoller becomes better and bad news appears worse than the situation warrants.\textsuperscript{44}

A perspective about the supposed media objectivity and discussion on mass media studies would be provided at the end of the chapter.


\textsuperscript{43} Martin Schram, The great American Video (New York: Morrow, 1987)

Mass Media in Germany

A study of media in Germany cannot be complete, unless it is seen in a historical perspective.

“Mass Communication”, writes Peter J. Humphrey, “does not exist in a vacuum. Inevitably, a study of the mass media will shed light on the social and political systems of any given society”. 45

When we flip through the pages of history, we find the German citizens in a dramatically transformed situation as a result of a break in historical continuity at the end of the second World War. The country stood geographically and politically divided under the direction of the Allied Occupation Powers. The choice of socio-economic system was largely imposed from outside. Most significantly, the media system was largely imposed at the behest of Allied Powers. The period is generally referred to as “Stunde Null” (zero hour) or “Das Jahr Null” (year zero). Due to the great abuse of mass media for propaganda purposes during the Third Reich, the early post-war policy makers, at first under the leadership of the Western Allies started from the first principle that the mass media were an important instrument for the (re) formation of public opinion and over an extended period of time, the reshaping of the country’s political culture.

The most urgent issue therefore was how to reorganize the media on a democratic and pluralistic basis. This involved making important decision about the degree of regulation to which the media should be subjected to or the amount of self regulation which they would be allowed and regulation by whom, by what method to what effect? Another issue which needed addressing was, what should be the desired public and private mix of media operation? What degree of commercial and private capitalist enterprise should be permitted? Three kinds of alternate economic models viz. cooperatives (Genossenschaften), Public-service Institutions (Öffentliche cutlinchen Anstalten) or public foundations (gemeinnutzige Stiftungen)

45 Peter J. Humphrey, Media and Media policy in West Germany, the Press and Broadcasting since 1945 (Berg. 1990.)
were explored. Another issue which haunted the policy makers at a very early stage related to the relationship between press and broadcasting, the interaction of the media and the degree to which the press and broadcasting sectors should be kept distinct from each other, particularly in matters of ownership and control.

The Allied occupation authorities saw to it that a large number of newspapers were closed down and those old and established newspaper owners classified under the loose term "Altverleger" were thoroughly compromised during the occupation. In effect, the entire German press was proscribed regardless of its political or philosophical orientation.46

In the early summer of 1945, the military government issued the first licenses. In the meantime, the population’s information needs were met by the so called ‘army group newspapers’ (Heersgruppenzeitungen), which were published weekly or bi-weekly by press officers of the military authorities. Like de-nazification, the licensing was generally accepted by the Germans as a necessary evil. However, it was not without inviting criticisms.

On 23 May, 1949, the Federal Republic’s constitution or “Basic Law” was promulgated and it came into effect the following day. The Basic Law contained an important guarantee of press freedom (Article 5). The article under Clause 1, Freedom of Expression read; “Everyone shall have right freely to express and disseminate his opinion by speech, writing and pictures and freely to inform himself from generally accessible sources. Freedom of the press and freedom of reporting by means of broadcasts and films are guaranteed. There shall be no censorship.”47 Even before this important development, laws about the freedom of the press had been passed in three states in the American Zone, namely Bremen, Wurtenberg-Baden and Hessen. On 4 May, 1949 the Americans announced that the licensing would be abolished in their zone. On 21 September 1949, the Allied High Commission promulgated Law No. concerning the Press, Broadcasting and other organs of "Reporting and Entertainment". The law allowed the right to every German living in the Federal

46 H. Meyn, Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1979), p.371
47 From The Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany, taken from D N Asopa, Political System of West Germany (Delhi: Meenakshi, 1976), p.225
Republic with the exception of those identified by the words “Hauptschuldige” (specially guilty) or “ais Belastete eniggestufe ehemalige National sozialisten” (former Nazis classified as guilty) to produce a magazine, newspaper, or article without the prior permission of the Allied authorities. There was a sudden wave of new newspapers mainly founded by the “Altverleger” to begin publishing again. Within a year, about 750 new titles had appeared. The initially sharply defined conflict between “Licensed Press” and “Altverleger” had led, after a short period, to a “complex web of cooperation, integration and even fusion”. According to Manfred Konche, a community of interest developed between licensed press and the owners of printing works, leading to many mergers and other forms of combination between old and new publishers.\(^{48}\)

Beyond the firm commitment to liberal democratic principles of media regulations, the Basic Law had very little to say about the media. The responsibility for regulation of mass media fell within the sphere of state (land) and not federal (land) competence.

The conflict between the publishers of the press and the broadcasting corporations commenced in the mid-1950s. It arose, because the publishers disputed the right of the public service broadcasting corporations to run advertising on their services.\(^ {49}\)

As a result of intensive lobbying by the publishers, in April 1964, the Government (CDU/FDP Coalition) decided to establish a parliamentary commission to examine the fairness of competition by the name of its chairman Elmar Michael. The commission was overwhelmingly composed of independent experts. It submitted its report to the Government in 1967 when it was led by CDU/SPD ‘grand coalition’. The Michael Report is the first comprehensive account of the organisation, structure and economic development of the West German media. In particular, it explored the state of competition in the media and how the media related to competition law, constitutional law and administrative law. It also gave a number of suggestions for


\(^{49}\)Ibid.
reform of the relationship between press and broadcasting. The publishers were disappointed by the Report as it said the crucial factor behind the economic problems of the newspaper publishers was not adverse competition from television, but competition among the different publishers themselves.50

The contemporary mass media scene in Germany

Print Media

Newspapers enjoy increasing popularity in Germany. Media analyst feel that they have more than held their own despite the advance of television. In terms of the number of newspapers per 1000 inhabitants, Germany is in fourth place behind Japan, United Kingdom and Switzerland. Local and regional dailies predominate. On weekdays about 410 newspapers appear in the old and new federal states. Nearly 1650 local and regional editions are published with a total circulation of about 32 million copies. More than two thirds of newspapers are bought on subscription, the rest are sold on the streets. Bild Zeitung is the largest circulated tabloid (4.4 million copies a day). The largest selling subscription paper is Wesideutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (circulation about 65,000). The mainstream national newspapers have smaller circulation but considerable influence on political and business leaders. These include the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Faz), Die-welt, the Sueddeutsche Zeitung, the Frankfurter Rundschau, Handelsblatt, taz, and Bild. These are often called "prestige" newspapers read primarily by the political elite and the highly educated. Die Zeit, Die Woche, Rheinische Merkur and Deutsche Allgemeine Sonntagsblatt and Bayernkurier are some of the well read national weeklies.51 The weeklies reach readers mainly at weekends, focusing on political, economic and intellectual subjects. Some of them have party connections. For instance the Bayernkurier has the CDU connection, the Die Zeit is considered a Liberal publication and the Das represents a cosmopolitan Protestant view.

50 Ibid.
More than 8000 periodicals are published in Germany. Among the best known is Der Speigal with a circulation exceeding a million copies.

Economic developments have led to the formation of large publishing houses. In the daily press sector, the biggest conglomerate is the Axel Springer A-9, although its 20 per cent share of the newspaper market is largely due to the high circulation of "Bild". As regards Sunday papers, Axel Springer AG is almost without competition with Welt am Sonntag and Bild am Sonntag.

Bertelsmann AG with global interest in books, record clubs, periodicals publishing music production, film, radio, television and printing is the second largest in the world in terms of turnover.

The political spectrum of the German mass press (before unification) extended from center-left to staunch conservative right. Apart from the so called alternative press with its limited readership and the residue of the political press, if one were to analyse the recent trend, there has been a revival of the "extreme right" press. According to a study, there are more than 130 regularly appearing newspapers and magazines which express some kinds of "extreme right" or "new right", with titles such as New Zeit, Nation Europe, Mut, Der Republikaner and Deutsche National Zeitung.52

Ten largest circulated daily newspaper in Germany

Table: 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PLACE OF PUBLICATION</th>
<th>No. of copies sold [in 000]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bild</td>
<td>Hamburg</td>
<td>4393.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westdeutsche Allgemeine</td>
<td>Essen</td>
<td>620.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freier Presse</td>
<td>Chemnitz</td>
<td>479.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitteldeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>Halle</td>
<td>416.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachsische Zeitung</td>
<td>Dresden</td>
<td>414.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheinische Post</td>
<td>Dusseldorf</td>
<td>397.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddeutsche Zeitung</td>
<td>Munich</td>
<td>396.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</td>
<td>Frankfurt /Main</td>
<td>391.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVZ. Leipziger Volkszeitung</td>
<td>Leipzig</td>
<td>376.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ten Largest Circulated Periodicals in Germany

Table: 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>TYPE OF PERIODICAL</th>
<th>NO. OF COPIES SOLD IN THOUSANDS (1st quarter, 1999)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV Movie</td>
<td>Programme Magazine</td>
<td>2629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV - Spiel film</td>
<td>Programme Magazine</td>
<td>2512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auf einen Blick</td>
<td>Programme Magazine</td>
<td>2481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horzu</td>
<td>Programme Magazine</td>
<td>2461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bild der Frau</td>
<td>Woman's Magazine</td>
<td>2091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Horen + Sehen</td>
<td>Programme Magazine</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Das Beste</td>
<td>Popular Magazine</td>
<td>1573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neue Post</td>
<td>Popular Magazine</td>
<td>1539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernsehwoche</td>
<td>Programme Magazine</td>
<td>1524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funk Uhr</td>
<td>Programme Magazine</td>
<td>1515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Facts About Germany '93

Electronic Media

Broadcasting commenced in Germany in tandem with other comparable industrial societies such as the USA and Britain. Radio was extensively used during the First World War in 1914-1918. Unlike in the Anglo-Saxon countries, however, in Germany, the state played a leading role in the development of the new medium right from the start.33

During the Third Reich, the Reich's rundfunk gesellschaft fell under the direct and highly centralised state control of Jesef Goebbels, in charge of the Reich propaganda Ministry, within which a new central information office was quickly set up. It became an important propaganda instrument of the Nazi state. News and current affairs programmes were used as a vehicle for presenting Fuhrer's pronouncements and "achievements" and little else. The wordings of the Basic Law seem to be largely influenced by the country's experience under the Nazi regime. This probably explains why it gives pride of place to basic rights, binding on all organs of the State. Article

33 Peter J. Humphreys, Ibid. no.33.
5(1) and (2) of the Basic Law reads:

“(1) Everybody has the right freely to express and disseminate their opinions orally, in writing or visually and to obtain information from generally accessible sources without hindrance. Freedom of the Press and freedom of reporting through audio-visual media shall be guaranteed. There shall be no censorship.

(2) These rights are subject to limitations embodied in the provisions of general legislation, statutory provisions for the protection of young persons and the citizen’s right to personal respect.”

Although the guarantee of freedom of broadcasting was contained in Article 5(1), it is not in itself a substantive framework for a broadcasting system at constitutional level. The development of contemporary broadcasting system was left to the Federal Constitutional Court which in a series of decisions generally known as the “broadcasting judgements” first of all “outlined the constitutional principles underlying broadcasting in Germany then provided more regularly substance in recent judgments.

Germany has a dual system encompassing both public and commercial systems. It is based on a 1986 ruling by the Federal Constitution Court that the public corporations should meet the public’s general broadcasting requirements, with the private companies playing a supplementary role. For a long time Germany had only public corporations, but this changed in 1984 when private television and radio broadcasters were allowed to compete for the first time.

In 1991 Germany had 11 regional broadcasting corporations, two organised under federal law, and a second national television network (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, ZDF) based on an agreement among all the federal states. The largest broadcasting station employing about 4,500 staff is the Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne, while the smallest is Radio Bermen with a staff strength of 650. The others are Bayerischer Rundfunk (Munich). Hessischer Rundfunk (Frankfurt am main). Norddeutscher Rundfunk (Hamburg), Saarlanderischer Rundfunk (Saarbrucken).

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54 Taken from Gestzestexte: Traite' D'etat Sur La Radio Diffusion (Bonn: Internationes, 1996), p.2.
55 Ibid. p. 3.
56 Ibid. no.41, p.394.
Sender Freies Berlin (Berlin) Sudwestfunk (Baden-Baden), Ostdeutscher Rundfunk, Ostdeutsches Rundfunk Brandenburg (Potsdam) and Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (Leipzig). They cater to the regions where they are located, although some broadcast programmes for several regions.

Percentage share of Individual ARD broadcasting stations in the programme of First Channel Television in 1996.\textsuperscript{57}

Table: 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broadcasting Station</th>
<th>Percentage Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bayerischer Rundfunk</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hessischer Rundfunk</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norddeutscher Rundfunk</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Bremen</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saarlandischer Rundfunk</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sender Freies Berlin</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddeutscher Rundfunk</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudwestfunk</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westdeutscher Rundfunk</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Inter Nationes, Bonn

The regional corporations form a standing conference of public Broadcasting corporations (\textit{Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten Deutschlands}, in short ARD). Together they operate a nationally transmitted television programme officially called “German Television” but generally referred to as “Channel one”, for which they all provide the software. In addition, they produce regional “Third” TV programmes. The Mainz-based \textit{Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen} a television network is the only station which transmits the “channel two” programme nationwide. It is the largest in Europe.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{Public Service Radio Stations}

There are two radio stations with special responsibilities, the \textit{Deutschland funk} (DLF) and \textit{Deutsche Welte} (DW), both located in Cologne. The DLF is financed by the Federal government together with regional broadcasting corporations, whereas the

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. no.41, p.394 and Ibid, no.39, p.39.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
DW is funded entirely by the Federal Government.

The public corporations are in general controlled by three bodies viz. the Broadcasting Council, the Administrative Council and the Director General. The members of the Broadcasting Council are the representatives of the main political parties and social groups. They are elected by the state parliaments or nominated by the political parties, religious communities and business and cultural organizations. The Director General runs the corporation in accordance with the decision of the Broadcasting and Administrative councils.\textsuperscript{59}

Despite the so called independence, the broadcasting in Germany is governed by political influence. Although the party representatives do not hold a majority on the supervisory board, a kind of power sharing arrangement has developed. This is particularly evident when appointments are made to top posts which draw much public criticism.\textsuperscript{60}

The public broadcasting corporations obtain most of their funds in the form of license fees. Television license revenue is split 70:30 between ARD and ZDF. Both also depend on income from commercial advertising. They have lesser time for commercial spots than private companies with whom they now have to compete for advertising.

The public corporations first had to contend with competition in 1985 when “SAT 1” began operating from Mainz as the first commercial television broadcasting company. It was followed in 1986 by “RTL plus Deutschland (now RTL, Cologne)”. At the beginning of 1991 “RTL Plus” reached two-third of all households and SAT 1 a little more than 62 per cent. Other private broadcasters include PRO 7 and Deutsches sporsfernsehen (DSF). RTL and SAT 1 mainly concentrate on sports, entertainment, feature films besides offering political programmes. PRO 7 concentrates mainly on films, whereas DSF specialises in sport.\textsuperscript{61}

Commercial programmes are transmitted via satellite and cable and can also be received via terrestrial frequencies. A number of foreign TV programmes are offered in

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, 41, p. 395.
\textsuperscript{60} Based on discussions with various politicians, media persons and researchers while on a field trip to Germany in October, 1996.
\textsuperscript{61} Official Statistics as reflected in the booklet: Fact about Germany, 1993.
the same way. The commercial stations are operated by consortia, mostly of media companies. In contrast to the public corporations, their only source of revenue is advertising.\textsuperscript{62}

As per the 1991 census, there were already 100 private radio stations, although a few of them offer programmes catering to a whole range of population. The law requires radio stations to cater for wide-ranging public tastes, so that their programmes do not influence public opinion one-sided.

In 1992, some 19 million households were linked up to the broad band cable network which the post office has been laying since 1982. Nearly half of them receive both radio and television programmes. The aim by the turn of the century is to make cabled programmes available to 80 per cent of all 30 million households.\textsuperscript{63}

With the unification of the two Germanys, the Media once again find themselves in a phase of transition. Prior to unification, all major media in East Germany were more or less under the direct control of the Communist Government. Two television channels catered to a population of 16 million. Analysts feel that due to lack of credibility, a vast majority of East Germans tuned to the West German broadcasting stations. When the wall fell, the East German TV reporters were the "first to uncover and report the excess of the Honecker regime. At the time of 1990 national election campaign Deutscher Fernresch - Funk 1 and 2 were operative and on both services, the news and stories about politics and the election campaign were aimed at the East German audience.

The print media landscape also changed almost overnight. State and party control quickly came to an end, party-owned newspapers were sold to commercial companies. The new outlets however experienced great difficulties as far as economic viability was concerned. There were 14 regional newspapers of long standing, which accounted for almost 80 per cent readership in the East Germany. In addition eight newspapers were launched after 1990. About 61 smaller papers published from West Germany, contained a "local" section for the different locals in the East. The most popular West German tabloid, the \textit{Bild} came to the East within six months of

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid no.41, p.398.
unification and attracted a readership of about 9 million copies. By contrast, the renowned Communist Party organ *Neues Deutschland* which claimed a circulation of about 1.2 million before the wall fell was reduced to about 150,000 readership by October 1990. Big media houses like the Alex Springer and WAZ are visible in the new states. The communist die-hard writers of the bygone era are jobless. People at the lower level continue. In many cases, the editors have been replaced by other East German staff member who had held a leading position in the newspaper. There is a feeling that there has not been any strong influx of West German journalists or editors into the staffs of the leading East German newspapers. The general impression about the German media is that most of the newspapers lean more or less openly towards one or another political party or, at least by popular impression, they adhere to a political ideology such as free enterprise. The vast majority of the newspapers in the old Länder support-conservative views, particularly on economic issues. The general feeling in Germany is that the media institutions in the former GDR are trying to assimilate in the melting pot. ⁶⁴

Kleinstenber is of the view that from its historical origins onward, the broadcasting system has been the object of power politics which stands to influence and control it. Media policy, he feels, has always been about power politics. ⁶⁵

According to Humphrey, since the very beginning, the West German broadcasting system was exposed to political pressure from the parties. Apart from the "blatant" attempt by the CDU/CSU, the author blamed even the federal governments in trying to gain control on the channels. The most obvious area of party politicisation, according to the author, has been those broadcasting corporations in which the membership to the supervisory bodies was according to the parliamentary model — namely the NDR (Northern Deutschland Radio) and the WDR (Western Deutschland

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⁶⁴ In my discussions with a cross section of media writers, politicians, strategists, researchers in Germany it was clear that in order to understand media functioning in a society one needs to explore the social, economic and political power relations behind the media system. The media in Germany have come a long way since the Zero hour 1945. The current phase is yet another phase of transition. Electronic media has always been sans boundries. Before the unification, however, some people I interacted in the new states narrated how it was a taboo to watch the "West German" TV. The unwritten stricture was to avoid watching “their” TV was that it may instill the rightist values.

Researchers, Semetko and Schoenbach also feel that party sympathy is a significant structuring element in the broadcasting councils of public service stations. Some journalists according to the duo have commented on the possible “chilling effect” this may have on broadcasting. In other words, journalists afraid of potential criticism may avoid controversial issues or may simply bow to political pressure. Executive editor of Die Zeit, Christoph Betram however, felt that the Public Broadcasting system over the years has been very conscious, not to be seen as partisan, because they are always under scrutiny.

During the election campaigning, while advertisements for the print media can be freely booked, radio and television advertising is publicly controlled by stations. Because of non-availability of local television, advertising is aired only during state or national level election campaigns. All competing parties have the right to broadcast commercials, free of charge on public radio and television. Commercial advertisements can’t be purchased on public channels. The airing of the ads. are confined to the “hot phase” of the election campaign, which is generally three to six weeks before election day. The phase is determined between the parties and the public broadcasting organization. The length of an ad. is restricted to two minutes. Each party running in the election is granted at least one free commercial on public broadcasting.

Additional number of advertisements are determined in proportion to the previous election results. Free advertisements, according to analysts do not really serve much purpose as the maximum length for a single advertisement allowed is upto 120 seconds and only a few exposures are allotted. The timing is also just before the election. During the 1990 election the CDU was allotted only eight advertisements per broadcaster. The private broadcasters, on the other hand, who also must make appropriate time available to the parties for campaign advertisements can and do demand the payment what is termed as the “cost covering fee”. However, there is a wide spread practice of discussing political issues in the informational broadcasts, interviews and debates.

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66 Ibid. no.33, refer chapter: Political Parties Pressures on Broadcasting, and Ibid. no.39, p.24.
67 Based on interview with the Executive Editor, Die Zeit at Hamburg on 9 October, 1996.
German elections and media studies

Party affiliations are very strong among a majority of Germans. However, many studies also reflect the role of mass media stimuli around the election times and an increasing use of mass media techniques by various political parties, both in the national and state level elections. The first election after the unification of two Germanys was an event for serious empirical research by social scientists, political analysts and pollsters. Before the unification, studies of media effects on elections in West Germany have been rare and there was virtually no research in the Communist East Germany (Social scientists were not free to investigate questions of media influence, and there were no elections to monitor).

Social scientists and researchers don’t seem to agree on whether the media influences the voting behaviour of the electorate in Germany.

According to both Blumer and Schulz, “despite an array of media effects apparent so far, the decision to go to the polls and vote is not one over which the media in Germany appear to exert any particular influence. Voting in an election has long been viewed as civic duty, and research on voter turnout has not revealed any significant media effects.69 On the other hand, research on party and candidate preference did reflect media influences. A panel study of electors in 1972 in the erstwhile West Germany revealed that those who frequently viewed political information programmes on television came to view SPD politicians more favourably. In 1976, frequent viewers of political information programmes on television were also more likely than others to believe that the incumbent Social-Liberation coalition would win the election. Noelle-Neumann in 1978 suggested that this impression may have produced a “bandwagon” effect, which in fact helped the incumbent parties to be reelected. Although Noelle-Neumann never explicitly demonstrated the impact of television viewing on voting behaviour, her 1976 study in particular was interpreted by

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some politicians and scholars as proof of decisive -and leftist-oriented-power of television in German election campaigns. 70

In West Germany, political debates among the top candidates featured from 1972-1987 election campaigns. Baker, Norpath and Schornbach in 1981, in comparing the 1972 and 1976 debates, found that politicians who displayed a more positive style of debate were more likely to be perceived as the “winner” of that debate. And Baker and Norpeth’s study of 1981 study of the 1972 debate found that electors did learn more about the candidates and parties from this event, and that this had a particular impact on the evaluations of opposition party.

Similarly, Schrott’s study of the electoral impact of the 1972, 1976, 1980, and 1983 debates suggests that debates do make an important differences to electoral politics. winning the debates, argues Schrott improved not only the candidates’ images but also their chances of getting elected. Because debates are held a few days before the polling day, their short-term effect may enhance their importance to the voting decision: “the winner of the debate might be the most salient memory for some of the voters”. 71 This has led to Sementko and Klaus Schoenbach to comment that perhaps concerned about the possible negative impact of debates, incumbent chancellor Helmut Kohl refused to participate in a debate in 1990 national election campaign, therefore none was held. 72

According to the authors, in German television news, visuals do not appear to be an important factor in the selection of a story for inclusion in the bulletin. This is in contrast with the US, where according to analysts, if colourful visuals are not available, the story is not taken up. Many German news stories during the 1990 election were

72 Holli A. Sementeko and klaus Schoenbach: Germany’s “Unity Election” Voters and the Media” (New Jersey: Hampton Press, Inc., 1994)
told by the anchor, “simply with a backdrop graphic in a ‘blue box’.

Another important aspect of the application of news values in television news concerns “balance” in the coverage of various parties and candidates. In Britain balance is predetermined. In Germany, US and also India, there are no rules in this regard. In Germany, opine Semetko et al, German news broadcasters do not “stopwatch” their news programmes to ensure that the parties are given a relatively equal share of coverage within a news programme or across the news programmes over the course of a week. “It is simply assumed that balance will emerge over the range of political current affairs programmes being offered during the campaign”. In the US also where similar tradition is practiced, one witnesses a fair balance. In the Indian context, the general criticism is that the news especially in state-owned television in the last elections has been more tilted towards the party in power.

German broadcasters response to the 1990 election news suggested that the campaign was not viewed as especially deserving of coverage in the main news stories. It was surprising to analysts to find that millions of East Germans were participating for the first time in a free election to the federal parliament, despite that there was no hype about the event. One part of the explanation as to why the historic election was deemed uninteresting by television news “is the general perception in Germany that election campaigns are something manipulative and are generally looked down upon by electors and newspeople”. Interestingly, even three days prior to the Election day, the chancellor remained the chancellor in the news, with no mention of his dual role as chancellor candidate. In the US, despite the fact that at times the election results are a foregone conclusion, but the incumbents are referred as campaigning candidates in the news. Another factor in the news was the lack of evaluative comments by reporters in German television news.

During the second election in the unified Germany in 1994, one found an increasing interest in the media about election related stories. The following table will

73 Ibid. pp. 66.
illustrate the extent of coverage in terms of number of stories in four major newspapers, viz., Frankfurter Runschau [FR], Suddeutsche Zeitung [SZ], Frankfurter Allegimine [FAZ], and Die Welt [Welt]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conservative newspapers like Welt and Faz put more emphasis on poll reports than liberal newspapers. The former two newspapers published 63.4 per cent of all news stories as reflected in the table above.

In an insightful five-country survey covering the USA and four west European countries, viz., France, Germany, Great Britain, and Spain, Laurnce Parisot, reflects how faith in the media in these countries compares with confidence in nine other major institutions. Media have negative rating in all four European countries, but score a positive chord in the USA. Confidence in the media ranks at the bottom in Britain. Only Spain ranks it highly in the group of ten, placing them third from the top. The following table would provide the data at a glance:

### Confidence in Institutions [in %age]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence in</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Britain</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great deal/some</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hardly any/no</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Church</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great deal/some</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hardly/no</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Military</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great deal/some</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hardly/no</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Police</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great deal/some</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey also assessed media’s influence on three central institutions of government, viz., the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Here the survey could not establish that the media actually impede the operation of the three institutes, but it did document the public’s evaluation of media influence on government. In the USA, 81 per cent felt that media have substantial influence on the executive, compared to 48 per cent in France, 46 per cent in Germany, 44 per cent in Britain and 41 per cent in Spain.

The following table will illustrate people’s perception about the media power:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media have</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Britain</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much power</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough power</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just the right amount of power</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As reflected in the chapter above and especially based on the in-depth
interviews with a cross section of newpersons, politicians and party functionaries in Germany, views on whether media play a dominant role in German elections is a matter of debate in Germany. However, in elections especially after the unification one does find hundreds of opinion polls being conducted to know the issues catching people's attention, the popularity of the front runners and the expectations of the electorate from various parties. Such stories do get reflected in the mass media. Mainstream newspapers bot liberal and conservative in nature evince keen interest in election based stories.

**Mass Media scene in India**

The contemporary mass media scene in India is both interesting and mind boggling. The home-spun entertainment industry is suddenly facing acute competition specially from the big players in the international market. This has a direct link with the opening up of the market to foreign companies in the 1990s. According to many surveys, India has a vast unexplored market and it is the market forces which ironically govern the media scene. Also, while the Government and the Indian electronic media could do nothing to restrict the entry of the electronic media through satellites, there is a big lobby against the entry of foreign newspapers both from among the print media houses and opinion makers in India. The foreign newspapers have not succeeded so far.74

Some of the Indian media have the largest reach given the 900 million population. However with a low literacy rate compounded by acute poverty and deprivation to millions, whether the mass media have any tangible impact is a matter of much speculation and research in the country.

**Print Media:**

According to the Registrar of Newspapers report of 1993, there are 35,612

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74 Entry of Foreign Media, UNI Backgrounder, Vol. 19 no.16, April 21, 1994. (UNI is a Wire agency in India).
publications in India, probably the highest in terms of number in the world, with a total circulation of over 607 million copies. This includes 3,740 daily newspapers, 275 tri/biweeklies, 29,597 periodicals.\footnote{Data based on \textit{India 95} (New Delhi: Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Publication Division, 1995); \textit{INS 94} (New Delhi: Indian Newspaper Society, 1994) and \textit{Advertisers Hand Book} (New Delhi: Inderparstha, 1995).}

Newspapers are published in about 100 languages/dialects. Hindi newspapers constitute the largest group in the country. In circulation also Hindi newspapers maintained their lead with about 28 million (27,938,000) copies in 1993 followed by English with over 9 million (9,010,000) copies and the third position was claimed by Malayalam press with over 6.7 million (5,637,000) copies. Statewise Distribution of Circulation provide some interesting data:

With a overall literacy rate of 52.21 per cent for urban and rural India (male 64.13% and female 39.29%), the statewide distribution of circulation provides some interesting insights. The largest number of newspapers are published from Uttar Pradesh (5,131). Delhi (4,435) comes next followed by Maharashtra and West Bengal with 3,614 and 2,836 respectively. Other states with more than thousand publications are Rajasthan (2,435), Madhya Pradesh (2,420), Tamil Nadu (1,937), Karnataka (1,650), Andhra Pradesh (1,583), Bihar (1,461) and Kerala (1,411). Uttar Pradesh print media with a combined circulation of over ten million (10,355,000) copies remained at the top position in 1993, followed by Maharashtra with a circulation of over eight million (8,215,000) and Delhi with over seven million (7,262,000) copies occupies the third position.\footnote{Ibid.}

\textit{Media Ownership}

Out of 33,612 publications, as many as 24,474 are owned by individuals, 4,162 by societies and associations, 1,449 by firms and partnerships and 1,502 by joint stock companies. The Central and State Governments as per 1993 data, bring out 713 newspapers. The remaining 1,312 are owned by trusts, cooperatives, societies, educational institutions.
As reflected in the table, about 95 per cent of the print media is owned by private interests.

As per the future perspective, it is expected that by 2000 AD, the circulation of print media will go up to 100 million copies which will include 65 million copies of daily newspapers against a circulation of 80 million in 1995.77

Electronic Media

The electronic media in India falls under the direct control of the Government. Both radio and television form part of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The media are entirely funded by the Government. With liberalisation in the 1990s, however, some of the slots in television and FM (Frequency Modulated) radio have been passed on to the private entrepreneurs. The government as of now has a monopoly over the use of airwaves and airspace, and private enterprise is not involved in the Geo.-stationary satellites it designs and builds. The government has consistently and continuously refused to allow Insat to be used for private TV network, even when its transponders are in surplus. However, the government had leased out one of its transponders to CNN for satellite. The Ram Vilas Paswan Committee for media reorganisation has recommended granting of up-linking facility to private satellite operations. As of now the private satellite companies are using Asiasat, Apstar or

other foreign satellites. The Supreme Court in its landmark judgment in the Cricket Association of Bengal case has commented on the existing situation in which the electronic media operates. The Apex court has held that: "Airwaves constitute public property and must be utilised for advancing public good. Airwaves being public property, it is the duty of the State to see that airwaves are utilised so as to advance the free speech right of the citizens which is served by ensuring plurality and diversity of views and opinions and ideas. This is imperative in every democracy where freedom of speech is assured". 78

Radio in India has a vast reach. With 140 MW transmitters, 50 short-wave transmitters and 89 FM transmitters radio has a reach of 89.7 per cent by area and over 97 per cent by population.

According to Indian Readership survey (IRS 95), radio leadership has taken a "beating over the past five years" though FM has emerged as a marginal channel.

The listenership among the urban and rural populace provide some interesting insights:

Table 2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vividh Bharati</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Channel</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srilanka Radio</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Radio</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRS 95

Television in India started on experimental basis in September 1959, with a limited transmission on three days a week. The regular service started in 1965. In


79 Indian Readership Survey-95.
1976, television and radio were separated to become independent organisations.

As per government figures, the primary service of television reaches 85 per cent of the population and 66.6 per cent of the area of the country through a network of more than 700 terrestrial transmitters.\(^\text{80}\)

Although TV is entirely funded by the Government of India, in order to mobilise additional resources commercial service was introduced in 1976 which accepts commercial advertisements and sponsored programmes. The last ten years or so have witnessed phenomenal growth of television in the country. In 1984, a second channel was added at Delhi which was extended to other metros. In 1993 four terrestrial transmitters were linked through a satellite to provide more entertainment for the urban audience. Known as DD-2 Metro, the service now caters to over 75 million people. Ten regional language channels have been added to reach out to 50 million people who speak major Indian languages other than Hindi.

DD-3, an exclusive service of programmes on culture, current affairs and business catering to the various needs of viewers was added in 1995. Movie club, a film channel was added in April 1995 to woo the audience against Star Movie channel and Zee Movie channel launched around the same time.\(^\text{81}\)

With the proliferation of satellite channels, the scenario could not have been better for the Indian audience. Today an average household has a number of channels to choose from, such as Star, Star Plus, Star Sports, BBC, Discovery, Zee, EL, ATN, Jain, BITV, YES, Asianet, Home TV, Movie Channels of Zee, Sun, Doordarshan’s various channels, and those provided by cable operators. Some of the publishing houses have also entered the fray by producing software and taking slots on the state run television. Some of these include the Times TV (Times of India Group), HTV (Hindustan TV), Television Bazar (the audio visual wing of the Anand Bazar Patrika Group). A number of well established business houses are waiting in the wings to begin their channels. The satellite viewing is through cable operator. As of now there is no


restriction on the print media houses to enter the arena of electronic media. But all private channels beam their programmes via satellite from overseas. According to IRS 95, the television exposure of various channels is as reflected in the graph:

Graph: 2.4

Reach of overall Media in India
12 year+ age group

Source: IRS’95

In 1995, 26.5 million households had television sets which according to projections will increase to 85 million by the year 2000 AD.\(^{82}\) Fifteen million households are presently connected to the cable which it is expected to increase to 36 million by 2000 AD.

Reach of overall media in 12 years plus age group in urban and rural India provides interesting insights. Television reaches 74 per cent urban audience against 32 per cent rural; press reaches 48 per cent urban against 13 per cent rural audience. Radio has a listenership among 26 per cent urban against 21 per cent rural audience. Cinema is viewed by 23 per cent urban against 12 per cent rural audience. Nineteen per cent urban audience have access to cable and satellite viewing against a meager three per cent among the rural audience.\(^{83}\)

Graph: 2.5

\(^{82}\) N. Bhaskar Rao, Ibid n. 57, p.14

\(^{83}\) Indian Readership Survey 95 (Baroda: ORG, 1995)
This leaves media planners gasping for their breadth. Reach certainly is not equivalent to accessibility. Given the low literacy rate among the rural poor, despite some sort of accessibility through community viewing, it may or may not ensure comprehension.

With so much of untapped potential, especially in the rural India, where about 70 per cent of Indian population resides, it is no wonder that media have become a business proposition both among the Indian and overseas players. Most of the foreign satellite channels, especially under the aegis of the STAR network have started producing many programmes, keeping in view the taste of the Indian audience.

The Indian constitution does not confer any special rights or privileges to the media as does the American First Amendment. However, Article 19 (I) (a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression to every citizen which incorporates:

- The right to lay what sentiments he pleases before the public, or the right to impart information and ideas;
- The right to receive information and ideas from others through any lawful medium.

The editors and journalists draw their right to publish news or any kind of information and comments on public affairs from this right. This also implies the right to print and publish and comment and criticise without any interference from the State or any public authority. This includes the right not to publish or comment as well. However, the freedom of press is not absolute just as the freedom of expression is not. Public interest and right to privacy are the safeguards of the freedom.
Article 19 (2) lays down reasonable limitations to the freedom of expression in matters affecting:

- Sovereignty and integrity of the State, Security of the State;
- Friendly relations with foreign countries; Public order; Decency or morality;
- Contempt of court; Defamation; Incitement of offense.\(^{84}\)

Though freedom of the press is not specifically mentioned here, it has been held to flow from the freedom of speech and expression. As judicially construed, this freedom now includes not merely the freedom to write and publish what the writer considers proper but also the freedom to carry on the business so that information may be disseminated and excessive or prohibitive burden restricting circulation may be avoided (Bennet and Coleman vs. Union of India, AIR, 1973, Sec. 106) 69.

**Indian elections and mass media**

If we were to analyse 50 years of Indian democracy, we find that until 1984, political parties did not make much use of the mass media. Interpersonal communication, door to door canvassing, rallies, public meetings, leaflets and outdoor medium [posters, hoardings and wall writings] dominated the scene. Late Rajiv Gandhi’s entry changed the very fabric of mass media campaigning in India. The “Dirty tricks departments” of political parties were replaced by strategists, high-flying media planners and creative writers. Crores of rupees were spent by the Congress [I] on the advertising campaign of 1984. The Bhartiya Janata Party [BJP] was to soon follow an unprecedent media blitzkrieg from the 1989 election. Mass media especially print has been used by the two dominating parties viz., the Congress and the BJP in all the elections that followed. Political advertising is not allowed on the Doordarshan. However, the national political parties have been given 15 minutes of free time once each on radio and television to air their views since the Sixth General Election held in 1977.\(^{85}\) with the proliferation of satellite channels, a number of analytical live programme involving prognosis can now be watched. The code of conduct among other things also bans the transmission of programmes such as films and film based

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programmes featuring actors who may have entered the election fray.

Things took almost 180\(^\circ\)s turn with the coming of Jain and Zee TV. Jain an ardent supporter of right wing Bharatiya Janata Party allowed mileage to the party with a number of programmes projecting its leaders, which reached the people who had access to the channel during the 1991 election. Zee TV, a Hindi channel has started some interesting election based programmes since its inception. During the 1991 elections the Indian audience probably witnessed for the first time a face to face discussion between representatives of two major political parties viz. the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party.

There was a marked improvement in the variety of programmes produced by the Zee TV during 1996 election. One of the programmes titled "Jan Man Gan", introduced various constituencies and the serving members of Parliament and members of the Legislative Assemblies who were asked about their accomplishments during their tenure vis a vis the promises made by them. The programme also included interviews with people from different constituencies who provide at times interesting insights about what was really done or not which most of the times was at variance with the claims of the candidates.

Another interesting programme was called the "Azaadi Express". An OB Van went from town to town and recorded messages spanning a minute each for the Prime Minister. The schedule of the Van was given wide publicity so that people were able to reach at the given place and time. A lot of inspiration seemed to have been drawn from the American hustings.

Indian TV is yet to wake up to the challenge. However, one does see some information quickies encouraging people “to vote without fear or favour”. One also witnessed a sort of glasnost during the premiership of Mr. V.P. Singh in 1989 when a lot of heat about media autonomy was generated. One saw programmes on booth capturing and vandalism around the election time by a spirited TV journalist, Nalini Singh.

The 1996 election have been dubbed as lackluster by critics as the festivities associated with a normal Indian elections were almost missing. the credit for this went to the forrnrrr Election Commissioner T N Seshan who kept a tight vigil on the
expenditure by political parties. More about this can be referred in Chapter Five of the Thesis.

**Indian elections and media studies**

The mass media scene becomes pretty alive during elections in India, especially with the coming of satellite channels. Various television channels compete with each other in producing innovative election based programmes. Opinion polling has not only become a regular feature around the election time, discussions based on poll results have also become popular in the media. However, serious empirical research in the field especially aimed at gauging the impact of mass media on the voting behaviour of the electorate is still at a nascent stage in India. Such research studies assume importance in a country like India - the largest democracy with over 500 million voters, where on the one hand the mass media reach is increasing, while on the other about half of its population still remain illiterate and over 40 per cent below the poverty line. Nonetheless some studies have been conducted by academics and media researcher in the last few decades. Some glimpses from these studies are reflected in the following paragraphs.

Indian media are generally criticised for their obsession with politics. Political news dominated during the mid-term poll in 1991 also. A party [Congress I] that was condemned to defeat in 1989, was working towards winning the polls in 1991. Besides the usual news stories' coverage, the Congress-I came out with paid media campaign as well. BJP was the other political party which launched a sophisticated high-tech media campaign. Analyzing the campaigns, the present researcher in a study of the tenth Loksabha has argued that both the parties in fact went in for two campaigns, one before the election, and the other after the gruesome murder of Rajiv Gandhi. In the first phase, the plank was “stability” for the Congress. The objective of the campaign was “Reinforcement” and the desired key response expected from the voters was “I will vote for Congress”. The second campaign tried to strike an emotional chord in the voters and expected them to go along the sympathy wave “Together, let’s fulfill his dream”. was the punchline of the post-Rajiv Gandhi
campaign. The BJP was clear in its objective and the expectations they had from the electorate. The strategy was “Ramrajya” and the key response desired “I am a Hindu, I shall vote for the BJP”. The objective in this campaign was also “Reinforcement” [the party had been steadily increasing its tally in the Lok Sabha since the 1984 election, hence it played on the theme of reinforcement]. After the demise of Rajiv Gandhi, when it found that that the party was taking time in selecting a leader, the plank of “stability” was hijacked by the party. At the same time the decision was not to say anything against a dead Rajiv to hurt the sentiments of the electorate and come in bad light. 86

The study also incorporated gauging the views of a cross section of the Delhi electorate on the impact of the campaign of various parties on them. Of a sample of 350 voters, 234 were males and 116 females, about 72 per cent males and 71 per cent females had seen ad campaigns in the newspapers. More than 84 per cent males and 77 per cent Delhi women were exposed to the outdoor medium. Only 40 per cent male and 54 per cent women had listened to election based programmes in the radio. In order to check whether the people were able to comprehend the message thrusts of various political parties, one of the question asked, “What in your view are the thrusts and appeals extended by different contesting parties through their respective publicity campaign?” Over 60 per cent respondents replied that the message of “Stability” was conveyed through the Congress campaign. Similarly, over 75 per cent respondents felt that the BJP’s campaign conveyed messages relating to religion. The issue of caste and upliftment of various classes was ascribed to the Janata Dal. Both, the Congress and the BJP did not score on this front. About 20 percent respondents found the theme used by the Congress appealing to a great extent and about 28 percent to some extent. More than 31 per cent respondents found BJP’s appeals convincing to a great extent and about 34 per cent to some extent. Similarly about 29 per cent felt the appeals by the JD as convincing to a great extent and over 27 percent to a less extent. 87

Many analysts believe that although the Congress was not able to manage a

87 Ibid.
simple majority, but the results could have still been worse for them, but for the sympathy wave generated in the second phase of election. M Shatruguna has talked about a particular case of Andhra Pradesh, where according to him “there had been two elections and not one”. Elections were held in AP in two phases, on May 20 and June 15, with 17 parties going to the polls in the first phase and 24 in the second phase after the death of Rajiv Gandhi. The results showed that opposition to the Congress was clear with the party getting defeated in 14 out of 17 constituencies. “Through a splendid combination of political chicanery and unashamed misuse of state machinery, writes Shatrugna, “the ashes of the slain leader were cynically displayed all over the state........ Of the 21 seats that went to polls in the second phase, the Congress-I bagged 21, sweeping the whole of Rayalaseema and winning major chunks in Telengana.”

From this case study one cannot say for sure whether it were the mass media which helped change the election outcome. However, there can’t be denying the fact that undercurrents could be felt. The live telecast of Rajiv Gandhi’s funeral, the cameras focusing on the conduct of the immediate family members, their grief-stricken faces, the role of Priyanka in taking on the family mantle [it was she who was in media focus and not her elder brother Rahul] in consoling her mother surely left impressions on the minds of the watchers. Whether it got converted into votes cannot be said for sure, for want of enough published empirical data available on the subject. In retrospect, one can argue that after the death of Indira Gandhi in 1984, her son rode the crest of sympathy and received an unprecedented mandate in the history of parliamentary democracy in India. The mass media had extensively covered the event of her funeral. Despite the riots, the killing of innocent Sikhs, the public opinion supported the party and the family legacy. The party also made extensive use of mass media during the election. How is it that when the very same leader was slain and the party could not even muster a simple majority? The reasons can be more than one. One could argue that thanks to the proliferation of mass media an average person is more informed than he was in the eighties. With the availability of satellite channels, plurality of views is now available. The other argument could be that no one from the

“family” came forward to take on the mantle of the party. The lack of a charismatic leader could have been responsible for the lukewarm response in some parts of the country [ despite the Andhra case ]. Yet another reason could be the split vote and the erosion of traditional vote base of many parties. The issue has been dealt with in detail in chapter III.

G Palnithurai’s study on “Voters’ reasoning of political participation”, questions the validity of the supposed role of mass media in elections. The research was conducted in 1991 with a sample of 525 respondents from rural areas in three voter constituencies, viz., Nilakkottai, Athur and Dindigul in Andhra Pradesh. The sample was designed to get a representation of various geographical areas, caste groups and economic strata. Some of the findings make an interesting study:

Seventy seven per cent voters evinced faith in democracy. Over 84 per cent had participated in the previous election. About 91 per cent had already made up their mind about who they would vote for in the coming election. While 25 percent said that their decision would be based on the candidate, over 64 per cent preferred party to candidate. Over 66 per cent said they discussed politics at home. About 61 per cent said the the decision to vote for a particular candidate or party was same for all the voters in their families. In over 52 per cent cases, it was the head of the family who decided who the family would vote for.

An interesting insight that emerged from the qualitative survey, when the team visited the villages was that for nearly 30 years, the practice followed was that the village committee would decide as to who to vote for. The practice was given up from the late eighties, as the youth protested this kind of decision making. Hence came the practice of decision making within the families. 89

The Nehru-Gandhi factor loomed large during the 1998 elections, when a reticent Sonia Gandhi took decision to lead the campaign for a weak and disunited Congress. The “Sonia factor” as it was popularly called by the pollsters, newspersons and analysts, kept them speculating about the outcome, till the results were

announced. When the Congress did not fair as expected by many, the apologists argued that the results could have been worse if she had not taken the reins in her hands.

Dr. Baliwinder Singh’s media content analysis of two mainstream newspapers viz. The Hindustan Times and Indian Express for 47 days from 30 April- the 15 June, the last day of withdrawals during the 1991 election reflect the interest of media in politics. The following table lists various kinds of items included by the two newspapers and the weightage in terms of the number of such items appearing during the period of analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of item</th>
<th>Hindustan Times</th>
<th>Indian Express</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead Story</td>
<td>33 [1.8]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Story</td>
<td>1292 [72.0]</td>
<td>966 [73.0]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>36 [2.0]</td>
<td>33 [2.5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article</td>
<td>7 [.4]</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewpoint</td>
<td>2 [.1]</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>1 [.1]</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the Editor</td>
<td>67 [3.7]</td>
<td>51 [3.9]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>189 [10.5]</td>
<td>72 [13.2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pix/Cartoon/ Drawing</td>
<td>96 [5.3]</td>
<td>71 [5.4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile/interview</td>
<td>37 [2.1]</td>
<td>47 [3.6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>34 [1.9]</td>
<td>54 [4.1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech</td>
<td>1 [.1]</td>
<td>1 [.1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 [.1]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table reflects type of item as appeared in the two newspapers Figures in parentheses represent percentages within the newspapers.

As both the newspapers are in English and accessed by educated urbanites, one can infer that they had a lot of material at their disposal to gain from. It is, however, another matter that the average reading of newspapers does not go beyond
10 to 15 minutes. And what is read, comprehended and recalled is another paradigm to be addressed to.

The present researcher had the opportunity to gauge the exposure, recall and impact of election messages on Delhi women at the time of Delhi Assembly election in 1993. The study was conducted with the following objectives in view:

• To analyze the election campaigns of major political parties to assess the importance accorded to women and women-related issues.
• To find out how media general and print medium in particular perceived and addressed such issues.
• To study the access/exposure of media messages and recall of messages by women voters and their possible impact on the voting behaviour.

The universe for the research was spread over seven constituencies of Delhi. The total sample comprised 700 women respondents. The field survey was conducted through stratified sample survey technique following the left hand rules in the process of selecting a household. The field survey was conducted between November 2-4, when electioneering was at its peak. The election was held on 6 November 1993.

Some of the findings included the following:

Media in general did not give enough coverage to women candidates or women-related issues.

The BJP scored over other parties in devoting serious thought to women and their issues in their manifesto.

Media exposure of Delhi women was quite high. Seventy four per cent women were exposed to election related news/programmes in the electronic media as compared to 28 per cent to rallies and party meetings. Among the messages of various party recalled, BJP scored over other parties. However, BJP’s campaign was recalled with the theme of religion, and Congresses’ messages were recalled as to do with “stability”.

Women with less or no education were susceptible to family influence in
casting their vote. .

A whopping 67 per cent felt that media were no facilitators in their decision making.90

In another study of the same election, researchers Abhilasha Kumari and Sabina Kidwai of the Jamia Millia Mass communication Centre found that media were the main source of information for the Delhi women but not necessarily in helping them making their minds about who they would vote for.91

Research scientist Uma Narula opines that though, the Indian press has played a "negligible role in the education and participatory involvement of the masses in political communication" but it has always played a significant role "in directing the public thinking to poll considerations including caste, creed, regional biases, hero worship, particular sympathy wave and familial ties".92

J S Yadava in a study based on the analysis of data collected in a nation-wide study of the election campaign during the eighth parliamentary election held in December 19893 puts forth the role of media in reinforcing the already held views. The theoretical basis of the study was that the election campaign helps in reinforcing and mobilizing the opinions of the electorate and not so much in converting them. He is of the view that during a period of 18-24 months preceding the elections, the mass media serve to place the current issues of politics on the agenda of citizens' discussions. Through the interplay of mass media and interpersonal communication, the essence of major political issues get disseminated widely among the electorate even among illiterates and those living in remote areas. As a result they form their impressions and opinions about leaders and parties. During the campaign period contending parties consolidate such impressions as opinions about selected political issues in the form of major themes. The campaign, according to him heightens the

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91 Abhilasha Kumai and Sabina Kidwai, "Illusion of Power" (New Delhi: FES, 1994).
interest of voters in public affairs. He contends that voters selectively perceive media stimuli about their favourite parties and candidates. This implies that effective campaigning although does not get totally accepted by the voters, it helps in reinforcing the impressions and opinions that already exist in the minds of the voters.

P V Sharda in her study of the rural audience found that although, the rural voters have realised the importance of such broadcasts, their final decision as to whom to vote is not entirely based on the media stimuli. According to her, "villagers watch these programmes to know what is being said by different political parties".4

In her another study relating to the impact of Radio and Television, Sharda has studied the effectiveness of the two powerful media from a politician's perspective. She conducted qualitative research based on in-depth interviews with 100 politicians from a cross section of political parties who were elected to the state assembly or the parliament.

As many as 75 per cent were not satisfied with the limited exposure allowed to them to air their party’s point of view or agenda. Over 74 per cent suggested once in a week exposure around the election time and 17 per cent twice a week. An interesting suggestion came from some elected representatives to make it a regular feature and restricted to election times.

Sixty one respondent felt that despite the Doordarshan and All India Radio being government controlled media, they had enough freedom of speech and expression while projecting their view points in the time allotted to them. Thirty five per cent however did not agree with that.

Ninety per cent respondents felt that a code of conduct was necessary for the political broadcasts. The code in their view needed to be comprehensive to cover all aspects. The presenter, they said must be penalized if the allegations made against others were not substantiated. This speaks of the concern felt by politicians in general

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about the allegations and counter allegations traded against each other in election times. On the question as to who would frame the code of conduct, about 74 per cent preferred an all committee group, over 14 per cent suggested the name of the election commission and about 10 per cent felt that it should be drafted by a group of intellectuals and political thinkers.

Radio and television were not considered important campaigning tools by a majority of politicians. The following table provides some interesting data about the perceptions of the politicians:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Press</th>
<th>films</th>
<th>TV</th>
<th>Outdoor</th>
<th>Door to Door</th>
<th>Pub. Mings</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>AV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Press</td>
<td>films</td>
<td>TV</td>
<td>Outdoor</td>
<td>Door to Door</td>
<td>Pub. Mings</td>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>AV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cong (I)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeanScore</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDP</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeanScore</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeanScore</td>
<td>CPI / (M)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeanScore</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeanScore</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The issue that has caught the attention of social scientists and serious researchers in the Indian contest is the increasing proliferation of the electronic media and their impact on the gullible minds of millions of voters who are illiterate but at the same time overawed by the powerful media with three dimensional effect and larger than life projection of personalities. It is hoped that some empirical research studies would be conducted during the coming elections.
There is an increasing debate on the subject of the alleged "partisan" role of the media in matters of national and public interest. Media's role during elections has come under closer scrutiny. Thomas Patterson, a renowned professor of political science, argues that press's restless search for the riveting story generally work against its intention to provide voters with a reliable picture of the campaign. "The press," writes Patterson, "is in the news business, not the business of politics, and because of this, its norms and imperatives are not those required for the effective organization of electoral coalitions and debate. Journalistic values and political values are at odds with each other". The media he argues has many strengths but certainly not the capability of looking at the world as a whole and not in small pieces. 95 And Patterson is not alone in thinking about the issue of media bias. The very act of choosing one story and dropping another and the decision as to which story will appear on which page and how, are subjective decisions.

**Media Objectivity:**

Are media objective? A lot of heat is generated in academic discussions and research. In order to understand how do people who "use" media or those who "manage" media or "write" for the media perceive the issue of media objectivity and a related question - what were their views about the media in their country, the present researcher conducted a qualitative survey adopting the method of in-depth interviews with a cross section of scribes, academics, strategists, party functionaries and pollsters in the three countries under study. Discussion points were prepared in advance and all their views were recorded. 96

In the following paragraphs, the views of the experts from various fields are reflected to provide a perspective of their thinking on the issue of media objectivity.

There is a general allegation in the USA, that the media by and large are liberal. Hence they tilt towards the Democrats. The Republican candidates have used this point time and again in their election campaigning. The Democrats have defended it by

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95 Thomas E Patterson, Out of Order, (new York: Alferd A Knof. 1993)
96 These were some of the questions asked of a cross section of experts by the present scholar in USA, Germany and India in pursuance of the Field Work conducted in Oct-Dec. 1996.
sharing statistics to prove their point by citing the number of negative stories written about them by the so called “Liberal” media.

Rita Beamish, a correspondent with the Wire Agency Associated Press feels that the younger lot among the journalists in the USA have liberal approach and were not “diehards”. The same view was subscribed by S. Sreenath, an academic at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. He was of the view that 80 per cent of working journalists specially in Washington were democrats. He narrated a general fad in the US viz. “if you were young and not a Democrat, you had no heart and if you were old and not a Republican, you had no brain.”

Prof. James Carry, a legendary figure in the field of mass communication put it interestingly by ascribing the profession of journalism to the middle class people who in his view were by and large liberal. Media in the US, he remarked, was liberal on cultural matters, conservative on economic issues and liberal on issues involving race. “Media in a true sense”, reasoned Prof. Carry, “is really professed by liberals and managed by conservatives in the US”.

Roycee Crocker, a researcher in the Library of the Congress on the allegation of the US media being “pro-liberal” media said “it is probably true. In terms of the surveys, I have seen specially in Washington and New York, it is true”. William Kimberling of the Federal Election Commission said he did not share the popular view about that. Media, he said, did not select what they write. It were the events and circumstances which governed their writings. He compared media to a product in a market place which stood in competition with so many similar products. Hence, competition in fact governed the message.

Media were in a vicious circle, opined Kimberling. In order to break-even and make money, they had to increase readership and viewership and in order to achieve

97 The interview with Rita Beamish was conducted in New York on 12 November, 1996.
98 Interview with S. Sreenath, Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Journalism was conducted at the Columbia University New York on 14 November, 1996.
99 Prof. James Carry, considered one of the pioneers in mass communication in the USA heads the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. Interview with Prof. Carry was held on 14 November, 1996.
100 Roycee Crocker is a specialist in National American Government at the Library of the Congress. Interview with him was held at Washington D C. on 25, November, 1996.
101 William Kimberling is a Deputy Director in the Six-member US Federal Election Commission. Interview with him was held on 27 November, 1996, at Washington D C.
that, they played to the galleries, to cater to the mass taste, using the populist approach. Media, hence, at times were governed by the bottom line.

Prof. Allan Lichtman, researcher and scholar also agreed that individually most of the broadcasters and newspaper writers were Democrats by beliefs and convictions, but those who owned media were by and large Republicans. “I think it is balanced. I think most of the journals are biased to writing interesting stories” he reasoned. He narrated about various media messages during the last two weeks of the 96 Presidential campaign when the “so called” liberal media wrote only on the alleged foreign contributions to the Democrats “because that was the story of the day”, reasoned Lichtman. Interestingly, however, in a research survey conducted in 1996, 29 per cent respondents felt the media in the US had liberal bias, 13 per cent thought the media fitted to conservatism. 58 per cent felt it was evenly balanced, while 10 per cent did not answer.

In contrast to the US, the general feeling in Germany is that their media tilt towards the right/conservatism. Ralf Golinski, spokesperson for the right wing Christian Democratic Party (CDU) in saddle with coalition partner CSU and the FDP agreed that media by and large were dominated by conservative writers. However, he said it did not help the party. As a journalist, one looked for the bad and sensational, so “how can it help the right-wing party in power?” he chuckled. He, however, did not hesitate mentioning that many “left wing journalists”, helped the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in working out strategies for them! “You know” said Golinski, “there is altogether a different psychology of left and right thinking writers”. When asked about the media in the new states (erstwhile East Germany) he commented that before unification, the readers knew how to “read between the lines”. He also spoke of the “special language” used by certain papers which criticised the Government. Many newspapers he agreed had vanished in the new states. “Today”, said Golinski, “the media were growing together”.

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102 Prof. Allan Lichtman is a professor of history, a TV personality, a researcher who has developed a model for predicting presidential elections and was also a spokesperson for Bill Clinton on Worldwide Web during the 1996 election. The interview with him was held at the American University Washington D C. on 27 November, 1996.

103 Ibid.

104 Ralf Golinski is a spokesperson for the CDU based in Bonn, at CDU Headquarters. Interview with him was held on 9 October, 1996.
Gunter Schwedhelm, an SPD spokesman said the media in his country definitely were pro-right which he said went against their party's interest. Most of the media writers in Germany, Schwadhelm said, had definite political preferences. “Call them left liners and hard liners, if you wish to classify”. At the same time, he said there definitely were some neutral journalists who needed nothing but a good copy! By and large, he felt media were “responsible” and not “unfair”. The Public broadcasting media had representatives of various interests, which compensated for the bias, if any, of the print media.105

Dr. Anglika Kostez Lossack, member of the Bundestag, felt that in general, the print medium represented the established interests in the Society. She did not feel the media were by and large right oriented. “There are any number of papers with left leaning”, she said. “Whatever the leanings unfortunately, there is an underestimation of the Public mind”, she bemoaned.106

Jurgen Mexiner, heading one of the largest opinion polling agency felt that it was a “colour scenario”. Some media houses had definite biases. Some readers/viewers may be able to read the bias, others may not and “that is where the catch lies” said Mexiner.

Cristoph Betram, Executive Editor of the Liberal periodical Die Zeit did not agree that media institutions had any definite biases in Germany. “In this country, people do know the biases, if there are any”. Journalism in Germany, he said was taken in high esteem unlike in some other European countries and the USA108

On manipulation of media by the politicians, he said it was a matter of “reciprocal fertilization”. Media and politicians provided “oxygen” to each other for survival.109

Mathias Wanbach, another CDU spokesperson in Berlin, did not agree that media in Germany tilted towards the Right. “On the contrary, you have to go back to

105 Gunter Schwedhelm is an SPD spokesman in Bonn at SPD Headquarters. Interview with him was held on 9 October, 1996.
106 Interview with Dr. Angilika Kostez Lossack, representing the Green/Alliance, 90 in the Bundestag, was held in Bonn on 9 October, 1996.
107 Interview with Jurgen Mexiner of A.C. Nielsen, a Market Research Agency was held on 11 October, 1996 at Hamburg.
108 Interview with the Executive Editor of Die Zeit was held at Hamburg on 11 October, 1996.
109 Ibid.
the 1960 when there was this student’s movement” said he. According to Wanbach left wing journalists were very well represented in the media who in their heart of hearts were against the CDU. SAT 1, (a TV channel) he said had conservative leanings while the RTL was left wing. He referred to Lahrstein, the Information Chief of Bertelsman, a major media house, who was a staunch supporter of the Social Democrats. 110

There were not enough young journalists going in for the CDU, he lamented. He felt journalists with left bent of mind were more active.111

The Indian media scene is veritable, complex and interesting. Justice Sawant, heading the Press Council of India feels that by and large “we have a liberal media - when we talk about the mainstream English print media”. According to him one did find some local and ethnic influences in the regional media. Some media houses according to him had definite political affiliations.112

Referring to a content analysis of a cross section of newspapers around the 1996 Parliamentary Elections, it was found that the media by and large had given a balanced coverage. There were stray examples of reportage laced with political colour.113

Nitya Chakraborty, Assistant Editor with the largest selling newspaper in the Capital viz. Hindustan Times said that the independence of the print media were a “special characteristic of the Indian democracy”. In election times, however, he opined, the management’s point of view could be felt.114

Balbir Punj, of the Observer termed the Indian mass media as “Vibrant”. Print medium, he said, was always free from the beauracratic and political shackles. With the coming of the satellite channels, the electronic media was also coming of age, because

110 Mathhias Wanbach is a CDU spokesman at Berlin. Interview with him was held on 13 October, 1996.
111 Ibid.
112 Justice P.D. Sawant is the Chairman of the Press Council of India. Interview with him was held in New Delhi on 17 December, 1996.
113 Reports on Press coverage of Elections to the Eleventh Lok Sabha,Press Council of India, item No. 13, 1996.
114 Based on in-depth interview with Mr. N. Chakraborty on 16 December, 1996.in New Delhi.
it was a matter of survival for them.115

"There can never be 100 per cent objectivity in Communication. The scribes have their own little biases", said Punj. The redeeming thing was that the reader was intelligent and he could see the biases and make his or her opinion, he reasoned. "Media" he said, "were not missionaries but an industry and let them remain so", put Punj categorically.116

Justice Sawant, however, had high expectations of the media to work as a crusader.117

EC Thomas, Editor with the United News of India, was emphatic when he said that each media house had inherent biases which got reflected all the time specially in times of elections.118

The sale of newspapers over the years, said Thomas had devaluated because, it was no longer considered a mission but an industry. The newspaper selling, he said was now reckoned to selling of soaps and detergents. "When they (newspapers) lose in subscription they make up in advertising", bemoaned Thomas, an old timer, having served the print media for about four decades.119

In order to understand the mass media in any society, it is important to know the sociology / the ownership of the media, said Dr. JS Yadava, Director of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. In the Indian context, he said "the mass media are really the class media".120

Reach is not necessarily equivalent to accessibility. Given the economic status of the teeming millions, who live below poverty line, they hardly have any access to the electronic media like the television and radio. And given the literacy rate (India was far behind in achieving the dream of being an ‘Information Society’), print media has an overall circulation of about 6.5 crores with a population of over 90 crores.

115 Balbir Punj is the Executive Editor of The Political and Economic Observer. During the 13 day-prime-ministership of Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he was his Press Advisor. Interview with Mr. Punj was held on 16 December, 1996.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Interview with Mr. E.C. Thomas was held on 16 December, 1996, in New Delhi.
119 Ibid.
120 Dr. J.S. Yadava, a Communication Researcher of long standing is the Director of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. He expressed these views at a seminar held on 29 August, 1996.
Despite varying social, economic and political scenario in the three democracies under study, media play a dominant role in disseminating information and entertainment to its population. In normal circumstances the effect of media may not be discernible, but on special occasions and critical times one can find an almost instant impact of media.\footnote{121}

Over the years, especially with the proliferation of the satellite channels, an interesting, may not be very healthy phenomenon has been witnessed - the increasing "Americanization" of campaigning style in various democracies. The media world is sans boundaries. This seem to cause a great amount of worry among politicians, social scientists and concerned citizenry in various liberal democracies.

Matthias Wanbach, a CDU spokesman at Berlin emphatically said that it was indeed an "unwanted" trend. "We are happy as we are. We cannot afford to go the American way".

Richard Hilmer of the Infra Test, an Opinion Research agency in Germany, said it was a fait-accompli which could not be reversed.\footnote{122}

Betram, Executive Editor of Die Zeit felt it may have some impact. Germans, he said, were traditional people. The media also did not indulge in character assassination as in the US. "Hope we don’t learn the bad. People may not take it kindly", he said.\footnote{123}

Dr. Anglika Lossack, member of Bundestang felt, it was inevitable. "It is an interdependent world” said she, “when we want good to come, some bad will also filter”. Clarifying, “bad”, she said it was a relative term.\footnote{124}

Gunter Schwedhelm spokesman for the SPD said Germany was a small country and let it not go the US way.\footnote{125}

\footnote{121} It will not be out of place to mention about the story of Lord Ganesha supposedly drinking milk in 1996. What was a telephonic conversation between two persons reached not only the nook and crany of the country but even among the expatriate Indians spread all over the world. How did the information reached? Who did it? In most certain terms, it was the mass media stimuli. Almost every channel covered it, the radio stations beamed it and the telecommunication and inter personal communications reinforced it. Such an instances in fact did not need any empirical research to prove the impact of the mass media in reaching out the information. Whether people believed the message or not, is besides the point.
\footnote{122} Ibid.n. 83.
\footnote{123} Ibid.n. 81.
\footnote{124} Ibid. n. 79.
\footnote{125} Ibid. n. 78.
Justice Sawant felt that these were the perils of the "Information Society". The last two elections did find increased use of media to reach to the masses. The media impact, however, he said depended a great deal on "education and social consciousness" of the people.\textsuperscript{126}

Prof. James Carry of the Columbia University said democracies were driven by the "nervous system of communication". "To me, the most promising thing about America seems that by the time the people elsewhere adopt what America propagates, it will progress to something else", said Prof. Carry.\textsuperscript{127}

Davis Schwartz, Curator at the American Museum of Moving Images felt that the effort (of Americanization) was not deliberate. Each society, he said, had great resilience and only they could answer what to take and what to reject.\textsuperscript{128}

Royce Crocker said the phenomenon of Americanization of campaigning elsewhere could "cent percent be ascribed to the media reach".\textsuperscript{129}

William Kimberling felt that the real politics in America was local or street politics. The intention was not to internationalize. The democracies elsewhere should not get "swayed away".\textsuperscript{130}

Prof. Allan Lichtman who has predicted elections in America based on a historical model developed by him said, it was true but he wished other countries did not use expensive electronic media and rather stuck to the grass root level campaigning. "American elections are going to be international in future also", he said confidently, "because America is going to remain a dominant power as it has been since World War II".\textsuperscript{131}

The above trend will be in sharp focus with empirical researchers, sociologists, political scientists and contestants in Liberal democracies in time to come.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid. n. 85.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.n. 71.
\textsuperscript{128} Interview with David Schwartz was held in New York on 11 November 1996 .
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. n. 72.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid. n.73.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid. n. 75.
\textsuperscript{132} The effect of campaigning the American way was felt in the neighbouring Pakistan during their General election in 1997. Corruption has been a favourite issue in the Pakistan and the Indian media, but character assassination involving the ethical mores of a candidate caught the media attention for the first time for the Feburary 97 election in the country. Former Cricketer Imran Khan found himself embroiled in the controversy in the face of adversaries Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharief questioning his being a true follower of Islam referring to his playboy reputation before his marraige.
Discussion

From Macluhan’s oft quoted “medium the message”, the media have traveled a long way. Their role in society and political process is undeniable, yet the real impact is a matter of wide-ranging empirical research in liberal democracies.

What makes public opinion happen? What moves public opinion? What networks the societies? There is no gainsaying the fact that an average individual gets to know about his world through the mass media stimuli. A number of researches prove that when people are asked if they were influenced by mass media, more often the reply has been in the negative, but when they have to speak in the context of a third party, they are sure that the influence of mass media is all pervasive. This is specially true of the negative and the gory happenings in society. All parents believe that watching violent movies have made their children violent in their behaviour. There are unending debates on the impact of satellite television on traditional societies. However, social scientists believe that shortcomings in research designs explain why many studies of media impact on public opinion do not detect substantial media effects. One of the reasons could be that most of the research designs focus on immediate changes in opinion about single events or classes of events, rather than changes produced over longer periods of time by a multiplicity of media stimuli. Investigators seldom use baseline research to allow them to assess the opinions before news exposures. And

Sita White a Briton, also sued Imran Khan for a paternity test. Imran Khan lost in all the eight constituencies he contested from. While one can’t say for sure if the media played the proverbial “Brutus”, but issues such as these are catching public attention. Media love “sleaze” but what impact it is going to have on the election outcome, if at all, only time will tell.
when potency of media stimuli is measured, researchers usually are unable to measure the appeal of media messages and sources who transmit them.

Of the various theories and models discussed at the beginning of the chapter and the research studies, Harrop's model and the "Agenda Setting" theory have caught the attention of the analysts.

While one can argue that Harrop's model can suit to some extent in the truly "information societies" where the mass media reach is high, but would this model suit Indian conditions, given the extent of illiteracy, limited access to mass media especially press, radio and television can be a matter of argument.

Another factor which we need to bear in mind as for India is concerned is that political discussions on the electronic media were almost nil, until the coming of the satellite channels. Given the programming, the government controlled media were not contributing in creating an informed public opinion. As indicated in the chapter above, election campaigning using the mass media extensively is only a recent phenomenon. More specifically from the eighth general election in 1984. In fact, in the last two general elections -1996 and 1998, we have witnessed a great spurt in political discussions and election based programmes on all the major channels both in English and Hindi. The foreign channels especially the Star Plus, Star News, BBC and Zee, TVI and DDI and DDI have contributed tremendously in bringing forth issues that concerned the electorate. Hence the agenda setting theory does find some relevance. On the other hand, for the sake of argument one can say that the media bias was never so apparent in the Indian elections, as during the 1998 General elections. The discussions on the electronic media were by and large dominated by well known print journalists whose "soft corner" for various political parties did get reflected in their expression of views. What would be the argument of Arun Shouri, Chandan Mitra, Prabhu Chawla, Prabhash Joshi or M J Akbar, to name a few was not difficult to understand, especially by the media savvy television watchers or readers of various newspapers. Though one can't refer to any empirical research done to gauge the
impact of such programmes in shaping public opinion, one can infer that mass media kept the interests of people alive in elections and could at some level may have contributed to the changing fortunes of political parties and split voting thus paving way for coalition politics. In fact, the vote base of various parties has been shifting among various voter segments. This aspect has been dealt with in detail in the following chapter.

Analysts of impact studies however, feel that the process of opinion change is very complex. In order to account for changes between two opinion surveys, it is important to examine media content before the first survey. Discrepancies between current media message and prior media message [or prior opinion] are important. Part of the media impact is temporary so that there is a tendency for opinion in the Take I and Take II period to drift back, to move in a direction opposite to the thrust of the media content prior to Take I. Analysts suggest that it is important to distinguish between news sources rather than lumping together all media content together. The effect of news from various sources vary widely.

The theory of “Agenda Setting” by the media has received serious attention of the researchers. Most agenda-setting research begins after media have featured an issue and attempt to find the relation between media concerns and the concerns of various audience groups. How are media concerns aroused? What circumstances and efforts are required to attract the attention of media to make them catapult a particular issue into spotlight of political attention and action? Most agenda-setting studies have combined content analysis of news media and interviews of media audiences to assess how well media priorities and audience priorities coincide.

Blumer et al put forward, four approaches to election agenda setting, viz.,

- **Prudential**
- **Reactive**
- **Conventionally journalistic**
**Analytical**

The categories represent the way of sorting out various approaches to election news-making. Analysts feel that such an approach has its limitations as each category points to a different set of interest. Let’s have a look at them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda setting Orientation</th>
<th>Area of reference/interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prudential</td>
<td>The organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Politicians as sources of news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conventionally journalistic</td>
<td>Occupational values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>keeping in view the public interest</td>
</tr>
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Explaining the above, Blumer et al write, “How newsmen strive to project an election campaign is not just a matter of internal debate. Their choice and decisions have important consequences for all who depend on their coverage of major political events. First, the various approaches to journalistic agenda-setting may trigger or constrain different electioneering tactics. Prudential attitudes may encourage parties to develop calculated **strategies of sharply angled complaints**. A reactive philosophy could favour close **collaboration between party managers and campaign reporters** and a sign-posting of the party’s intended message of the day [or hour] to their mutual convenience. The **conventionally journalistic** approaches seems to invite a propaganda of nuggets, nutshells and golden phrases, including the staging where possible, of dramatic, combative and visually arresting incidents and accusations. The **analytical** approach, however, would presumably require politicians to elaborate their more substantive issues and policy positions”.

Without going into which approach was put to use in different elections at different times, in the USA there are a number of studies to suggest that the issues that were in media focus also became key issues of public concern. In 1952, the Republicans led by

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133 Jay G Blumer, The political effects of mass communications [Essay written by the author as a Thier level course at the Open university Social Sciences, Milton Keynes Walton Hall], quoted by PV Sharda, ibid.
Dwight Eisenhower, successfully exploited the three “K’s”- Korea, Corruption, and Communism- in order to regain the white House after a hiatus of twenty years. The prominence of these three issues cultivated by press extending over many months, according to researchers McCombs and Shaw, worked against the incumbent Democratic party. However, 1952 was not an isolated case. The researchers found a correlation between the political issues highlighted by the media and concerns of the voters during the 1968 US presidential election. In the election of 1992, despite incumbent candidate, George Bush having high rating, the media seemed to lose interest in him. The state of American economy caught the media attention like nothing else. Democrats’ slogan “It’s economy stupid!” caught not only the media attention but also of the electorate at large. Clinton’s strategists used it to their advantage. As reflected in the chapter on Themes and issues [Chapter IV], one of the television commercials had the President Bush replying to an interviewer’s question on the state of the US economy that it was not so bad. The statement was followed by a voice-over saying “If he does not understand the problem, how is he going to solve it”. Bush lost the election. As reflected in the previous chapter, he annoyed the media by dubbing them as “Liberal” and “anti-Bush”. The 1996 election seemed to in continuity of the previous election. Despite, Clinton being in the eye of various storms, media’s honeymoon with Clinton was not yet over. He swept the election. As some perception mapping studies suggested, Clinton supporters said they had elected him for two terms in 1992 itself. Voting for him in the 1996 election was a formality.

In Germany also, some research studies and interviews with a crosssection of experts in a qualitative survey for the current study have reflected the agenda setting role by the media. In the first election after unification in 1990, the media focused on the issues relating to unification and the unstinted support of the Union parties. Helmut Kohl was projected as the crusader in this regard. The SPD came out as a reluctant partner. The election results were a foregone conclusion. In the second election in 1994, Kohl’s

135 The present researcher was in the USA around the election time in 1996. In the news bulletins that followed after the election results were announced, included snapshots of such perceptions.

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popularity was going down and there was a time the media gave a feeling as if SPD would sweep the polls. However, at the last moment, media focused on the improving economy and issues relating to the European Union and the leadership role provided by Helmut Kohl. The CDU coalition won once again, although by a whisker. The opposition ascribed this to a large extent to a “conservative” press which supported the Union parties.

In the Indian context, the role of media especially electronic media has been of recent origin. The print medium has always been active around the election times to focus issues. From Indira Gandhi’s slogan of “Garibi Hatao”, to focusing emergency excesses in the seventies which brought forth an unprecedented mandate, the Indian print media have kept the issues of the day in focus. In the eighties especially, during the 1984 election, Rajiv Gandhi caught the media attention. [The party also made use of paid communication by way of advertising in newspapers.] Dr. J S Yadava’s research study of 1984 election reflects the issues raised by media which became election issues. Rajiv received an unprecedented mandate in the history of Indian democracy. Media were responsible to a great extent in supporting his programme and giving him an image of “Mr. Clean”. The very Rajiv became a whipping boy at the hands of media in a time span of just five years. The role of VP Singh and others in this regard had also been crucial. He made “better” copy for the media than Rajiv. Bofors was the issue of the day in 1989. Congress and specially Rajiv went down in the esteem of some of the traditional as also new supporters of the leader. Congress lost. The election of 1991 was fought on the themes of Mandir, Masjid and Mandal. Indian politics has not been the same since then. Media’s role in 1991 and especially the use of media by the Bhartiya Janata Party has been a subject matter of discussions and empirical researches. The media in general gave a feeling as if the party was going to sweep the polls. The elections that followed in 1996 and 1998, the trend has by and large continued. The 1996 election could be said to be the “election Commission’s” election. Overspending by political parties, the sources of unauthorized money by various parties and the strictures imposed by the election commission were
the media themes in the 1996 election. The agenda hence was set by the media. Political parties were quick to see the "Writing on the wall" and curtailed expenditure.

Agenda setting which traditionally has been the function of political parties now seem to be in the hands of the media. Media would like to defend it with the argument that they are the watchdogs of society and they focus those issues which are in the larger interests of the society. However, social and political scientists seem a worried lot looking at the erosion of authority of age-old institutions.

Election issues are propped up around the election time but could be decisive factors in the election outcomes. Over the years one has witnessed that whichever the country, whatever may be the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the electorate, price of essential items, crime, law and order, corruption, and ethical issues concerning those in authority, if in media focus have been decisive factors in deciding in favour or against various political parties. Such issues, if in adverse media focus, generally work against the incumbent party.

The forthcoming election for the Delhi Assembly at the end of 1998 would be interesting to watch. Issues concerning deteriorating law and order situation, the spiraling prices of essential commodities, power and water scarcities have already caught the media attention. One has to see if all these also become public concerns hence election issues.

The decade of the nineties is perceived as the "Age of Information". With the availability of a vast array of media and a world sans boundaries, election in one democracy is no more a national issue but an international one. However, when we closely look at the mass media scene in the three countries under study, the data
reflects a large difference in their (media) reach and accessibility. In the United States, on the one hand the circulation figures of the newspapers are going down, the popularity of television is catching up with not only increased hours of viewing but in credibility. There is, however, a growing feeling as also supported by research that the media in the US are pro-Liberal."

In Germany, the media once more found themselves at crossroads in 1990 when the Berlin Wall fell. The media, specially the print, is monopolized by private enterprise and big business houses as in the USA or India. The Basic Law confers freedom of speech and expression. The media however are considered "conservative" in approach. The media in the new and the old Laender are now assimilating in the melting pot.

In India the media despite an advancement in technology and software are not "actually" reaching the vast populace due to poverty, low literacy rate and Inaccessibility. While technically the electronic media has a reach of over 95 per cent population (radio) and 80 per cent population (TV), but in practice given the 40 per cent people living in abject poverty, the media consumption is probably the least of priorities with them. The print media scene is vibrant. The circulation figures may not match the western counterparts, but India publishes the largest number of newspapers in the world. The print media enjoy complete freedom of expression. The proliferation of satellite media has now allowed plurality of views, which was not possible with Doordarshan. Radio id yet to witness the Glasnost. The passing of the Broadcasting bill in the Loksabha in July 98 hopefully will pave way for greater autonomy and expansion to both All India Radio and Doordarshan.

In fact the freedom enjoyed by media in a society is an indication of the extent of democracy in that society. The media play a crucial role in the election process in liberal democracies. They act as a conduit between the masses and the political institutions and contestants.

When we look at the democratic traditions in the three countries, the USA can
rightly be said a cradle of democracy. Not only the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, the media help build public opinion and respect plurality of views. Democracy in the true sense is not very old in Germany and India. Germany for historical reasons is always on the guard to ensure protection and sustenance of democracy. The unification of the two Germanys reaffirm the faith of the people in democratic norms and the two elections bear testimony to that. As far as India is concerned, the last five decades have more than proved the inherent faith of a great mass of people in democracy. Author and columnist Ashish Nandi has very succinctly put it: “Of all the vaulted components of the ideology of the Indian State, democracy has best survived the vagaries of time. Socialism, Secularism, Development, Nationalism, Security, Science and Technology have all become a debatable in some case abrasively so ... Only the appeal of democracy has not faded in India. Indeed it has deepened over the years .... The poor seem more committed to it than the ultra-rich”.

Message, medium and audience form the inevitable troika for any successful communication. The strategists work out the most persuasive messages and transmit them through effective channels(media) to the chosen audience to get the “desired response”. A study of the electorate keeping in view their demographic and psychographic characteristics to gauge their voting behaviour and impact of media stimuli hence becomes inevitable.