

## Overview of Politics

Politics is a total complex?? relation of power among people in a society. It has got to do with who gets what, who gives what order, who does what, etc. It revolves around trying to hold onto power. Politics is all about power. If you have that power you decide what happens in a society. Politics can also be played by non-state actors like IPOB. Politics involves a number of acts:

### Political Acts/Activities:

1. **Running for elections/Elections:** In any political setting, before a leader is chosen there must be elections. This is the main route to power in every democratic setting. Irrespective of the fact that some political positions/roles might be by appointment.
2. **Voting:** The act of casting a ballot towards electing a political leader. The right to vote is called a franchise. It represents the power of the people in deciding who will rule/ who will become their leader. Has got to do with casting ballot.
3. **Decision-making:** Has got to do with controlling people and processes. Exercising power on deciding what will be done, and how what will be done will be done. Policy formulation, policy implementation, creation of institutions, states, etc. It is a part of political activities seen in every political setting. Any state where these decisions are made moves to political growth and economic growth.
4. **Activism/Advocacy:** Promoting or sponsoring a cause or interest and pushing such interest for their realization. Fighting for a cause, point of view, ideology. Advocates are people who are speaking for a particular cause, eg., End SARS, MASSOB/IPOB.
5. **Wars/insurgency:** War involves the use of armed forces to defeat a group/an enemy. Insurgency is the use of force by a group to intimidate or pressure the state into agreeing with its terms and conditions. Insurgency sometimes might degenerate into wars. Counter-insurgency happens when the state tries to resist these insurgents, people who want to take over power.

### Who Are The People That Play These Political Roles .ie. Political Actors.

1. Politicians
  2. Political Parties
  3. Citizens
  4. Advocacy Interest Pressure Groups
  5. Activists
  6. Armed Forces/ Security Agencies
  7. Business Organisations and Corporate bodies
  8. Media Gatekeepers.
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1. **Political Leaders:** These are people who are directly involved in the governance of a state like the president, governors, local government chairmen, etc. Might emerge through force but are still leaders. Might exercise power indirectly through the police or

armed forces. In this way, the police and armed forces play political roles. This involves the politicians. They are directly involved in partisan politics.

2. **Political Parties:** Organisations whose main objective is to promote particular ideologies and sponsor candidates to take over governance of the state. They also provide a platform for candidates who will go and project these ideologies, eg. APC, PDP, APGA, etc. In Nigeria, only political parties can sponsor individuals in an election.
3. **Voters:** People who exercise their franchise in order to elect a particular leader. Voters have a lot of power since they determine who gets what in an electoral system. Very important political Actors.
4. **Advocacy Interest Pressure Groups(Advocacy and Interest Groups):** Some are much more radical in nature than others. They use tact to promote their interests eg, ASUU, Ohaneze ndi Igbo, Arewa.
5. **Activists:** Just like advocacy interest pressure groups, these are individuals that promote a cause. They speak and push for a particular set of principles through strategies such as communication campaigns, litigation, demonstrations, etc. They can function individually or collectively. A student activist can function under NANS. A labor activist may function under NLC. You can be an individual activist who uses the face of a particular pressure group.
6. **Armed Forces/ Security Agencies:** They protect the territorial integrity of a nation. They safeguard power exercised by state actors. Without the police most of the decisions that are taken or policies that the government comes up with might not be obeyed. They are an integral part of the system.
7. **Business Organisations and Corporate bodies:** The economic arms of Governance. Eg. Coca-cola. They have so many roles to play in the political space or governance of companies they operate in.
8. **Media Gatekeepers:** Media managers, and owners. They are very important people in every political setting. They determine who and what is heard in the [olitical process. They determine who is heard and who isn't, whose ideologies are heard, and whose aren't.

## Connection Between Mass Media and Politics

### Role of Mass Media in Politics

These two areas are like Siamese twins.

### Connection Between Mass Media and Politics

Political communication is the process of the exchange of messages, ideas, and views, among various actors in a political setting. These actors include people like politicians, political parties, pressure groups, and advocacy groups. It is a process whereby political actors employ language and symbols to generate and share ideas. These languages and symbols include things like words, pictures, colors, and flags.

**Mediated communication in politics:** This means the communication goes through a particular medium before it gets to the main person. The media is like a mediating partner, factor, or platform. Most of the political messages we get as individuals in a political setting are mediated.

Communication is mediated, eg. sometimes when the president gives a speech, it goes through different media reportage/platforms. And before it gets to people those messages are interpreted. Why? Because most times it is human beings that are working in those media and before you know it they inject their own bias/meanings into such media messages. Therefore communication/news is not outrightly objective in itself. Media messages are not always in their purest form.

In essence, media messages are usually mediated, they are not in their purest form. What you think they are sometimes is not what they are.

Mass Media not only influences political knowledge, but also the political thinking, orientation, and action of political actors. The Role of the mass media in modern politics is very important. In modern politics, politicians cannot carry out their role without the mass media. It is a vital tool for reaching the audience and getting back to the politicians/political actors. It allows interaction between the two areas.

### The Role of mass media in politics

They are different political functions the media carry out.

1. **Political Information:** The media helps to keep political actors informed. They pass information to political actors, keeping them informed - voters, members of political parties, political office holders. The media has the role of collating pieces of information wherever they originate from and disseminating them to all the different actors ensuring there is a continuous flow of information.
2. **Political Education:** They help to keep political actors enlightened on various political issues/issues of politics.
3. **Political Mobilization:** The media helps to gather people for political action. This includes social media and traditional media. They spur people to take political actions of political significance.
4. **Political Agenda Setting:** The media is used to set political agenda. Because the media is talking about it, it quickly becomes a political agenda for everybody. Eg., getting your PVC, Nigeria restructuring, etc.
5. **Political Advocacy:** The media helps in promoting a political cause. Because the media is very persuasive and powerful, it can be used to sell an idea or a particular cause to the people. eg., the media was strongly used to advocate for Obasanjo's third term, they were also used to fight the third term agenda.

6. **Discussion and Debate:** The media provides a platform for discussion and debate. That is by way of engaging different people in different political debates. It provides a platform for the voices of different political actors to be heard. Different points of view can be heard through this. The media helps to make sure these voices are consistent in every political setting.
7. **Public Opinion:** The media provides a platform for the formation of public opinion. This is done by:
  - a. By providing a platform for people to express their views.
  - b. By informing and educating people to be able to express their opinion.
  - c. By projecting a particular opinion over others through consistent and positive coverage. Because such opinions will move the country ahead.
8. **Status Conferral:** The media plays the role of conferring status on political actors. When people are featured consistently in the media, through such consistent coverage, the status of those people becomes very pronounced.
9. **Political Advertising:** The media also serves as a platform for promoting political candidates, political organizations like political parties, as well as political ideologies. This type of communication is commonly known as political campaign; where candidates sell themselves, political parties market their ideologies, and other interest groups promote their political ideas such as constitutional amendments and electoral reforms.

## The mutual influence between the mass media and politics

This is the way media interacts with politics and at the same time influences what happens in the political setting, as well as conversely, the way politics interacts with the media and covertly or overtly influences what happens in the media. Mutuality here has to do with the interaction between the two. One can say that while the media influences politics, politics also influences the media. This influence manifests particularly in two ways:

1. The beliefs and actions of political actors
2. How the actions of political actors influence the media

How does the mass media influence political beliefs and ideologies?

Mass media through their various functions and roles, ultimately influences the beliefs, actions, and ideologies of various political actors like political leaders, voters, pressure groups, etc.

How do the actions of political actors influence the media?

It is the actions, words, and what the political actors do that provide the reports that the media write. Eg. sometimes when the media write about the National Assembly where they are punching and fighting each other, these are the action of the political actors and the media ends up reporting it.

Political actors also participate in agenda setting because it is their activities that generate the issues that the media selects the agenda. It is their activities that determine what agenda to set. It is the people that will set the agenda that the media will use to set the public agenda.

For instance, all these frontline political actors, most of them have media stations, eg. Uba with Authority FM, and Ogene FM - Ekwunife. These people have these media channels and they influence the media through this ownership. The government also influences the media through the government's ownership of media channels.

In other words, by shaping media control and determining the extent of media/press freedom, politics consequently shapes the content of the media, it influences what the media may report.

### Media - Politics Sphere/Nexus/Continuum

It is a nexus of inter-cooperation (interoperation??), a nexus of interrelationship, it's a continuum. There's this continuous flow of relationship (you interact with me, I interact with you). These two areas have become inseparable.

Essentially, the relationship between the two is mutual. While the media shapes the political agenda, politics in turn shapes the media agenda. The two are mutually influencing each other, mutually creating each other in a way that they have become a sphere of activities, that one may refer to as "the media-politics sphere."

## Media and Political Control

### The political control of the media

This is the attempt by various political interests to appropriate the powers of the media towards advancing their respective goals in a given political sphere. In other words, it is an attempt to control what the media disseminates towards the protection of one's interests. Political control also refers to the nature, extent, and philosophy of this control. Political control of the media may be viewed under two broad categories:

1. Political Control By The Government
  2. Political Control By Individuals or Non-governmental Institutions
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1. **Political Control By The Government:** Government control of the mass media can be direct or indirect.
    - a. **Direct Control:** This type of control occurs when the government owns or partly owns a media establishment, and is therefore in direct control of that media organization.
    - b. **Indirect Control:** This happens when the government controls the media through laws and regulations.

**The government can also influence the media through patronage:** The government patronizes the media through commercials thereby influencing them to be favorable to

her in their reportage. This type of control can be termed persuasive media control and not coercive. It is coercive when the government is using force as a means of control.

2. **Political Control By Individuals or Non-governmental Institutions:** This can also be direct or indirect.
  - a. **It is direct** when such individuals and institutions establish media houses to advance their interests. Political organizations can also own media houses to propagate their own ideologies, however, this is currently prohibited by the constitution in Nigeria. Religious organizations are restricted to non-terrestrial broadcasting.
  - b. **It is indirect** when such individuals and institutions exert influence on the media through patronage or pressure. Sometimes politicians might patronize these individuals in order to influence their media messages. Sometimes they may threaten the media houses or journalists with being sacked for favorable reports. Pressure might also come from pressure groups, eg. terrorist groups (when Boko Haram attacked This Day because they were receiving bad reportage from the media house).

**Illegitimate and Legitimate Control of the Media:** Control of the media by government or non-governmental political actors may assume legitimate or illegitimate status.

It is **legitimate** when it falls within the bounds of conduct permitted by the law and ethics. It is **illegitimate** when it is illegal or unethical. In many countries today where democracy is weak, it is common for the government and its agencies to try and muscle the press even without recourse to the law.

It is legitimate for the government to prosecute a media house or journalist for an offense such as sedition, but it will be illegal to stop them from reporting what the law permits them to.