

Linking Measures of Global Press Freedom to Development and Culture: Implications from a Comparative Analysis

HAI TRAN

DePaul University

REAZ MAHMOOD

California State University, Fresno

YING DU

Hong Kong Baptist University

ANDREI KHRAPAVITSKI

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This study attempts to clarify the relationship between development and press freedom, and the role of culture in determining press freedom throughout the world. Moreover, the study explores differences in the results, based on analysis using alternative leading press freedom indices (Freedom House and Reporters Sans Frontières), to gauge the influence of the indices themselves in forming conclusions. According to the results, the link between development and press freedom is not established conclusively. The two press freedom indices produce divergent, even contradictory, results. The findings speak to the necessity for continued refinement of quantitative measures, particularly when addressing matters as subtle as global press freedom.

The field of development communication is heavily influenced by modernization theories. This paradigm identifies media participation, with accompanying press freedom as another facet of development (Burrowes, 1996; Gunaratne, 2002). Press freedom and development are believed to go hand in hand. Research, however, has inadequately examined this assumption. Consequently, it remains empirically unproven whether press freedom is a product of development, a stimulus, or irrelevant to it (Stevenson, 2003).

Hai Tran: htran10@depaul.edu

Reaz Mahmood: reazmahmood@hotmail.com

Ying Du: ydu@hkbu.edu.hk

Andrei Khrapavitski: andrei.khrapavitski@gmail.com

Date submitted: 2010-10-09

Meanwhile, the empowerment perspective emphasizes that extraneous factors can affect the media (Melkote, 2003). Comparative studies of press systems have noted that the characteristics of each media model depend on the culture in which it operates (Fischer & Merrill, 1970). Some media scholars have asserted that a certain set of ideas about the relationship between the press and society derives from long-standing beliefs and intellectual traditions (Winfield, Mizuno, & Beaudoin, 2000). These arguments are popular in qualitative research, but have yet to be evaluated in quantitative work. The dearth of quantified measures for culture makes it almost impossible for social scientists to explore whether or not there is a link between culture and press freedom.

The notion of freedom of the press itself has been challenged as being inapplicable on a global scale, especially because it is largely a Western value that associates with the characteristics of the Western economic, political, and libertarian polemics (Altschull, 1990). The measurement of press freedom has been criticized as being both influenced by the modernization paradigm and ignorant of cultural factors. Studies on—and surveys of—freedom of the press show various shortcomings when examined through the world system perspective (Gunaratne, 2002).

The present study, therefore, seeks to examine the traditional conception of press freedom linked with development as well as enrich this understanding through the consideration of cultural differences. The purpose of this study, then, is twofold. First, it evaluates empirically the press freedom-development relationship and the role of culture in determining freedom of the press. Second, it examines conceptual and methodological implications of using press freedom indices in international communication research. Thus, this study presents a new approach that may be of considerable value to the body of literature on global press freedom.

Literature Review

Press Freedom and Development

Freedom of the press continues to be a contentious concept in international communication research. Several definitions of press freedom have been postulated over time (Becker, Vlad, & Nusser, 2007). Although there is no single, agreed-on explication of this concept, freedom of the press tends to be associated with the independence of the media in disseminating diverse ideas and in providing citizens with access to and participation in the exchange of information and opinions (Hachten & Scotton, 2007; McQuail, 2005; Merrill, 1991; Price, Rozumilowicz, & Verhulst, 2002; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956).

The dominant paradigm in development communication considers press freedom an essential element of communication for social change (Burrowes, 1996; Gunaratne, 2002). This notion is largely influenced by the modernization theories (Lerner, 1958; Rogers, 1983; Rostow, 1960; Schramm, 1964) that emphasize the power of mass media in development. Lerner (1958) wrote that mass media growth was one of the three phases of democratic political development. The media accelerate the process of modernization by exposing isolated traditional communities to new people, ideas, and attitudes. The role of communication in development was accorded a central position when Schramm (1964) called media the “great multiplier” of efforts to promote social change. As it was thought to have a powerful and direct

influence on individuals, communication would function as a bridge to a wider world. Both Lerner and Schramm showed a high correlation between the indices of modernity and availability of mass media. In their arguments, the more developed the nation, the higher the availability of mass media outlets and vice versa (Melkote & Steeves 2001). Important support for the dominant paradigm came from Rogers, who advanced the diffusion model (Moemeka, 1994, 2000). His theory defines social change as the result of the diffusion of innovations through channels over time throughout a social system (Rogers, 1983). Communication, in that sense, is the "change agent" that transfers new ideas from willing experts to an assumedly ignorant target social system (Moemeka, 2000).

Though these assumptions about economic development, social change, and the influence of mass media in the processes are the pillars of development communication, they have not been examined adequately. Development studies tend to pay more attention to political and economic structures, while ignoring communication. Meanwhile, according to Stevenson (2003), though it is easy to demonstrate the correlation between communication and development, the question of whether communication is a stimulus to development or a product of it is left unanswered. Several scholars have argued that mass media are both an index and an agent of development (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). Therefore, it is rather simplistic in the absence of evidence to assume that the relationship between communication and development is unidirectional (e.g., press freedom leads to development). Applied to the context of the current study, press freedom, an important facet of communication for social change, is considered either a determinant or an outcome of development.

Culture and Press Freedom

Critics have pointed out that press freedom studies tend to follow the modernization paradigm and fail to go beyond the endogenous factors within the nation-state (Gunaratne, 2002). Meanwhile, the empowerment perspective emphasizes the notion of cultural proximity (Melkote, 2003). Culture is thought to be the common value-based interpretations, artifacts, organizational forms, and practices of a group of human beings related to a specific environment (Casmir, 1991). International communication scholars have long acknowledged that cultural traditions, as well as national and regional philosophies, form the foundations of the press in countries throughout the world (Fischer & Merrill, 1970; Winfield et al., 2000).

The relevant literature has documented the role of culture as a determinant of press freedom in different environments. Hallin and Mancini (2004) demonstrate that dominant characteristics of political structure and culture are associated with subtle differences within Western media systems. According to several scholars, two dominant cultural values in the Americas are reflected in different perceptions of press freedom. North America, with its attachment to individualism and cultural diversity, emphasizes media autonomy and the "fourth estate" ideology (Eid & Buchanan, 2005; Stevenson, 1994). Latin America, with its orientation toward political and societal consensus and the collective good, embraces the "culture of silence" (Freire, 1970) that favors state control of the press (Dealy, 1974; Hughes & Lawson, 2005; Perkins, 2002). According to Smaele (1999), the unique position of Russia—between Europe and Asia—and its combination of Western (European) and Eastern cultural and philosophical principles, might cause Russia to interpret the concept of "Eurasianism" as a European model or simply as the Russian model of the media. In the Eastern world, Asian cultures proclaim the interconnectedness of parts and the

whole, emphasizing the group over the individual (Gunaratne, 2005). These values overtly and subtly influence respective press systems in the region (Winfield et al., 2000). Though none of the classical philosophies in the region endorses authoritarianism, a libertarianism that permits negative freedom without concomitant responsibilities and duties would be unacceptable to Asian cultures (Gunaratne, 2005). The Middle East has historically existed in an environment that favors strong governmental control over the media (Amin, 2002; Kamalipour & Mowlana, 1994; Merrill, 1987). Kedia and Bhagat (1988) suggest that technological diffusion and impact within a society are affected by the cultural norms and traditions. Thus, even the rise of transnational media flow through technologies such as satellite broadcasting and the Internet may not be enough to produce an environment that enables press freedom to flourish. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a long-standing mentality of centralization that resulted in the establishment of authoritarian press systems in many of the region's countries (Pitts, 2000). While the movement toward more democratic media systems may manifest itself in an institutional sense, long-held cultural values are likely to remain, particularly since ruling elites may have the greatest influence in terms of the values that shape media systems in the region.

Culture is long-lasting and its implications are particularly important when dealing with such subtle issues as global press freedom, but measuring culture remains a formidable task, especially because there is almost no agreement on what cultural values are important and how they should be described (Stevenson, 1994). To provide the quantified frameworks for understanding cultural differences, Hofstede defines culture as the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 4). The Hofstede model presents a typology of five cultural dimensions: (1) power distance (the extent to which people accept unequal distributions of power in society); (2) individualism-collectivism (the relationship between the individual and the collectivity that prevails in a given society); (3) uncertainty avoidance (the degree to which members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations); (4) masculinity-femininity (the extent to which a society is characterized by assertiveness versus nurturance); and (5) long-term/short-term orientation (the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards versus the fostering of virtues related to the past and present). Since their inception, these quantitative measures of culture have been widely used to search for underlying factors impacting the general diffusion process of innovations (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

Among the five cultural dimension scores, power distance has the most explicit connection with the orientation toward acceptance or rejection of top-down control in a society. Past research has linked this cultural dimension to corporate governance practices (Chan & Cheung, 2008; Christie, Kwon, Stoeberl, & Baumhart, 2003; Scholtens & Dam, 2007), the degree to which status is sought by individuals (Huberman, Loch, & Onculer, 2004), and the social progress of nations (Sharma, 2003). Thus, in the context of the present study, power distance is the most appropriate starting point for examining the role of culture in determining press freedom due to its direct relevance to norms and traditions that help or hinder democratization.

Measuring Press Freedom

Conducting international comparisons and analyzing press freedom provide a methodological challenge. Perhaps the most basic of difficulties lies in the collection of adequate data (Holtz-Bacha, 2004). This is due, among other reasons, to the sensitive nature of the concept of press freedom (Hume, 2000), as well as language barriers and the cultural biases that each researcher brings to the collection process (Holtz-Bacha, 2004). Given the inherent difficulties, two organizations relying on divergent measurement approaches, serve as prominent sources of data for research on global press freedom.

Freedom House, an American organization founded over six decades ago, promotes itself as a clear voice for democracy and freedom around the world. It publishes an "Annual Survey of Press Freedom" (Seeman, 2003; Sussman & Karlekar, 2002) in support of the "rights of democratic activists, religious believers, trade unionists, journalists, and proponents of free markets" (Becker, 2003, p. 109). In evaluating the collected material, Freedom House examines the legal environment, political influences, and economic pressures on the media using a 20-item questionnaire (Becker, Vlad, & Nusser, 2004).

Reporters Sans Frontières [Reporters Without Borders] was created by French journalist Robert Menard in 1985 to address negative feelings about the press and to provide better coverage of issues and conflicts perceived to be forgotten (Seeman, 2003), and bills itself as "the first worldwide index of press freedom" (Reporters Sans Frontières, 2006). To create its index, this organization sends out a 53-item questionnaire to sources in country, usually members of domestic and foreign media as well as legal experts and members of NGOs involved with media freedom (Becker et al., 2004). The questions fall into the categories of physical and psychological attacks on journalists, legal harassment of and discrimination against journalists, obstacles to collecting and disseminating information, and government manipulation of the media (2004).

Despite their widespread use, neither of these indices has avoided criticism due to concerns related to alliances (Becker et al., 2004; Seeman, 2003) and biases (Bozemann, 1979; Feen, 1985; Scoble & Wiseberg, 1981), leading to mixed reviews (Bollen, 1993; Caux, 2003). Beyond the sources of influence and tension associated with such data collection and analyses, Gunaratne (2002) asserts that the actual criteria for measuring freedom of the press are faulty. Specifically, the measures developed by Freedom House and RSF center on state control over the press, while ignoring the constraints that the economy imposes on the press. In terms of Habermas' public sphere and communicative rationality theories (see Gunaratne, 2006, for a review), these indices focus on instrumental rationality of the system worlds rather than communicative action of the lifeworld (i.e., the freedom of citizens in the lifeworld to receive and disseminate information). Taking these criticisms and limitations into consideration, this study attempts to examine whether the use of quantified and seemingly reliable press freedom indices might lead to discrepancies in drawing conclusions in comparative international communication research.

Hypotheses

As the reviewed literature indicates, the dominant paradigm in development communication has long asserted the presence of, but has yet to provide, solid evidence concerning the relationship between

development and press freedom, which is largely measured by the systems constraints on press operation (Becker et al., 2007). Meanwhile, the empowerment paradigm has posited that culture is an important antecedent of press freedom, an argument that also remains to be empirically evaluated. Because the measurement of press freedom has faced criticism for, among other things, the criteria for evaluation, the indices themselves must also be considered in drawing conclusions. The question of whether they would affect comparative studies of the global media remains unanswered. Based on relevant work in the field, the following hypotheses are presented:

- H1a: *Development can predict the degree of press freedom.*
- H1b: *Development can be predicted by the degree of press freedom.*
- H2: *Culture can predict the degree of press freedom.*
- H3: *Statistical analyses using different indices for press freedom yield different results.*

Method

Data Collection

Data for the present research came from the following sources: 2005 Freedom of the Press (Freedom House), 2005 Worldwide Press Freedom Index (Reporters Sans Frontières), 2005 Governance Indicators and 2006 World Development Indicators (World Bank), 2006 Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme), and Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Scores (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). It should be noted that these data were reported in 2005 and 2006. However, they were either collected or updated in 2004 and, therefore, are temporally comparable and appropriate for the purpose of this study. Since different data sources have different sample sizes, only cases with valid values across all variables were selected. Consequently, a constructed data file with 65 cases is provided for the current analysis.

Key Variables

Press Freedom. For comparative purposes, two indices for press freedom are utilized. Freedom House provides ratings of press freedom on a 100-point scale, with 0 indicating "best" and 100 indicating "worst." In this sample of 65 cases, FH scores (PF_FH) range between 9 and 82. Reporters Sans Frontières ranks press freedom on an original scale from .50 (*most free*) to 109 (*least free*). In the study sample, the range of RSF scores (PF_RSf) is between .50 and 83.

Development. Human Development Index (HDI), a composite measure created by the UNDP, is used as an index of development. It represents the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, education, and a decent standard of living. HDI is measured fractionally on a scale from 0 (*lowest*) to 1 (*highest*). HDI values in the study sample range from .53 to .965.

Culture. Culture is measured by power distance (PDI), the quantified cultural score in the Hofstede typology (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) that is most relevant to press freedom studies. PDI scores

in the study sample range between 11 and 104, with higher values representing stronger tendencies toward the acceptance of unequal distributions of power in society.

Control Variables

Governance. In the traditional conception of independent media, freedom is directly related to governance (Rozumilowicz, 2002). Past research has identified the key role of governance in determining press freedom (Amin, 2002; El-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2002; Faringer, 1991; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Merrill, 1987; Pitts, 2000). In this study, governance is measured by six indicators provided by the World Bank: voice and accountability (VoiceAcc), political stability (PolStability), government effectiveness (GovEffect), regulatory quality (ReguQual), rule of law (RuleLaw), and control of corruption (ContrCorrup). An original scale from -2.5 (*worst*) to 2.5 (*best*) is used for these variables. In the study sample, VoiceAcc values range from -.166 to 1.56, PolStability from -1.79 to 1.48, GovEffect from -1.01 to 2.12, ReguQual from -1.15 to 1.89, RuleLaw from -1.22 to 2.02, and ContrCorrup from -1.18 to 2.39.

Globalization. According to several scholars, globalization is likely to curtail restrictive practices against the press (Amin, 2002), because it promotes democracy both directly and indirectly (Bhagwati, 2004). The globalization process has transformed nation-states into "global states" such that despite endogenous press restrictions, citizens can access information and participate in the exchange of ideas via exogenous media that are not subject to state control (Gunaratne, 2002). In this research, globalization is measured by six indicators provided by the World Bank: merchandise trade (Merchandise), trade in services (TradeServ), growth in real trade less growth in GDP (GrowthTrade), gross private capital flows (GrossCap), foreign direct investment net inflows (FDIin), and foreign direct investment net outflows (FDIout). These measures were calculated as a ratio to GDP in U.S. dollars with higher scores reflecting higher levels of globalization. In the study sample, Merchandise scores range from 6.5 to 330.4, TradeServ from 4.9 to 64.4, GrowthTrade from -3.7 to 14.6, GrossCap from 1.9 to 314.1, FDIin from -3.6 to 30.9, and FDIout from -4.1 to 26.4.

Data Analysis

The authors employ a series of hierarchical regression to analyze the data. For all analyses, governance and globalization variables (control measures) are entered in the first and second blocks. To test H1a, the FH index (FP_FH) is treated as the dependent variable and HDI is entered as the independent variable. To test H1b, the regression analysis is conducted in a reverse order with FP_FH being the independent variable and HDI being the dependent variable. H2 is examined by treating power distance (PDI) as the independent variable and the FH (FP_FH) as the dependent variable. Finally, to test H3, the aforementioned analyses are repeated, using the RSF index (FP_RSF) in place of the Freedom House index (FP_FH).

Results

Univariate Analysis

With the sample size of 65 cases and the ratio of cases to variables of above 4:1, the regression analysis procedures can be assumed to be appropriate. There are no missing values. Means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum values are within range for variables. In terms of normality, some absolute values of standardized skew and kurtosis indexes are above the ± 3 criterion, but none of them are quite extreme. In general, the data are normally distributed. Therefore, the basic assumption of robust regression analysis is not violated. Descriptive statistics for the variables of interest are provided in Table 1. Data categorized by geographical region are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Variable Profiles.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Governance			
VoiceAcc	.57	.83	-1.66 – 1.51
PolStability	.17	.84	-1.79 – 1.48
GovEffect	.72	.91	-1.01 – 2.12
ReguQual	.67	.81	-1.15 – 1.89
RuleLaw	.57	.98	-1.22 – 2.02
ContrCorrup	.60	1.06	-1.18 – 2.39
Globalization			
Merchandise	71.40	50.49	6.5 – 330.4
TradeServ	17.88	11.95	4.9 – 64.4
GrowthTrade	3.68	2.83	-3.7 – 14.6
GrossCap	35.01	54.06	1.9 – 314.1
FDIin	3.52	5.97	-3.6 – 30.9
FDIout	2.40	5.59	-4.1 – 26.4
Culture			
PDI	59.83	22.27	11 – 104
Development			
HDI	.84	.11	.53 – .965
Press Freedom			
PH_FH	32.86	20.23	9 – 82
PH_RB	16.67	19.29	0.5 – 83

Table 2. Variable Means by Geographical Region.

Variable	Africa (n = 7)	Americas (n = 16)	Asia (n = 11)	Europe (n = 29)	Oceania (n = 2)
Governance					
VoiceAcc	-.25	.47	-.18	1.06	1.36
PolStability	-.57	-.15	-.22	.61	1.01
GovEffect	.14	.27	.29	1.20	1.89
ReguQual	.04	.34	.17	1.12	1.62
RuleLaw	.07	.07	.10	1.06	1.88
ContrCorrup	.03	.19	-.09	1.13	2.10
Globalization					
Merchandise	54.61	44.97	102.75	80.49	37.35
TradeServ	18.31	10.41	17.70	22.41	11.50
GrowthTrade	.43	2.84	4.8	4.57	2.55
GrossCap	13.47	16.12	21.89	56.39	23.70
FDIin	1.08	3.20	3.28	4.31	4.50
FDIout	1.01	.83	2.52	3.65	1.00
Culture					
PDI	60.57	63.63	75.36	53.79	29.00
Development					
HDI	.69	.83	.77	.90	.95
Press Freedom					
PH_FH	47.14	36.75	50.09	21.97	15.00
PH_RB	28.81	17.43	36.87	6.51	4.25

Testing Hypotheses with the Freedom House Index

Press Freedom and Development. Two separate tests were conducted to examine the first pair of hypotheses concerning the two-way relationship between development and press freedom. When HDI is entered as the independent variable and the Freedom House ranking is treated as the dependent variable, development accounts for 0.8% of the explained variance in press freedom. The unique contribution of development is statistically significant.

**Tables 3a & b. Relationship Between Development and Press Freedom
(Freedom House Index).**

3a. Development as Predictor of Press Freedom

VoiceAcc	-21.934
PolStability	-.041
GovEffect	8.262
ReguQual	-7.627
RuleLaw	-6.389
ContrCorrup	.561
<i>Governance R² Change</i>	<i>.927***</i>
Merchandise	-.032
TradeServ	.130
GrowthTrade	.139
GrossCap	-.012
FDIin	.005
FDIout	-.120
<i>Globalization R² Change</i>	<i>.005 (NS)</i>
HDI	29.970
<i>Development R² Change</i>	<i>.008**</i>

3b. Press Freedom as Predictor of Development

VoiceAcc	.095
PolStability	.022
GovEffect	-.029
ReguQual	.102
RuleLaw	-.010
ContrCorrup	.030
Governance R² Change	.704***
Merchandise	.000
TradeServ	-.001
GrowthTrade	-.001
GrossCap	.000
FDIin	-.001
FDIout	.002
Globalization R² Change	.010 (NS)
PF_FH	.004
Press Freedom R² Change	.034**

*** Significance at 0.001 level

** Significance at 0.01 level

In the first control block, six governance variables explain that almost 93% of the variation in the degree of press freedom. Meanwhile, the contributions of six globalization variables in the second control block are not significant. The results for H1a are presented in Table 3a. When the FH index is treated as the independent variable and HDI as the dependent variable, press freedom accounts for 3.4% of the variance in development. Again, governance variables are the best predictors of development, explaining more than 70% of the change in the model. The contribution of the second control block (globalization variables) is not statistically significant. These findings are reported in Table 3b.

Overall, when the Freedom House ranking is used as the measure of press freedom, both H1a and H1b are supported. A comparison of R^2 change in the two models indicates that press freedom better predicts development than does development explain press freedom.

Culture and Press Freedom. A regression analysis was conducted with the Freedom House ranking as the dependent variable, Power Distance (PDI) as the independent variable, and measures of governance and globalization as control variables. As shown in Table 4, culture makes a significant, though modest, contribution to varying degrees of press freedom measured by Freedom House. Controlling for governance and globalization, power distance accounts for 0.7% of the explained change in the model. The six governance variables predict nearly 93% of the variation in levels of press freedom.

The unique contribution of globalization variables is not significant. Thus, when the FH index is used for the analysis, the results confirm H2 regarding the role of culture as an antecedent of press freedom..

Table 4. Culture as Predictor of Press Freedom (Freedom House Ranking).

VoiceAcc	-21.176
PolStability	-1.039
GovEffect	6.235
ReguQual	-5.461
RuleLaw	-6.287
ContrCorrup	5.271
Governance R² Change	.927***
Merchandise	-.041
TradeServ	.153
GrowthTrade	.319
GrossCap	-.006
FDIin	.043
FDIout	-.235
Globalization R² Change	.005 (NS)
PDI	.123
Culture R² Change	.007 **

*** Significance at 0.001 level

** Significance at 0.01 level

Comparing Results: Reporters Sans Frontières Versus Freedom House

Freedom House and Reporters Sans Frontières are two widely cited sources for assessment and evaluation of global press freedom. Previous studies have found considerable consistency in the measurement of popular press freedom indicators (Becker et al., 2007). In the context of the current analysis, the data containing 65 cases in the study sample indicate that the Freedom House and Reporters Sans Frontières rankings of press freedom are highly correlated ($r = 0.863$, $p < 0.001$). However, the authors of this study suspected that the use of these measures would be likely to yield divergent results, even in similar analyses, due to their different methodologies and assessment criteria. In order to test H3, all analyses conducted in the previous section were repeated, using the RSF index (FP_RSF) as the indicator of press freedom in lieu of the FH ranking (FP_FH).

As expected, when the RSF ranking is entered into the regression models, the results become quite inconsistent, even contradictory to the findings from the use of the Freedom House index. Specifically, as shown in Table 5, the relationship between development and press freedom no longer exists. HDI could not predict or be predicted by press freedom levels (as determined by Reporters Sans Frontières). When development is treated as the independent variable, the contribution of globalization (the second control block) to the change in press freedom is statistically significant (4.1%). When the RSF index is treated as the independent variable, globalization cannot explain the variance in development. Governance variables continue to be the best predictors in both models. This control block accounts for 83.4% of the change in HDI and 70.4% of the variation in press freedom, as measured by Reporters Sans Frontières.

**Tables 5a & b. Relationship Between Development and Press Freedom
(Reporters Without Borders Index).**

5a. Development as Predictor of Press Freedom

VoiceAcc	-23.846
PolStability	-2.877
GovEffect	8.828
ReguQual	.423
RuleLaw	8.075
ContrCorrup	-9.656
Governance R² Change	.834 * * *
Merchandise	-.065
TradeServ	-.194
GrowthTrade	1.000
GrossCap	.036
FDIin	.024
FDIout	.156
Globalization R² Change	.041 * *
HDI	-13.382
Development R² Change	.001 (NS)

5b. Press Freedom as Predictor of Development

VoiceAcc	-.017
PolStability	.021
GovEffect	.014
ReguQual	.081
RuleLaw	-.032
ContrCorrup	.026
Governance R² Change	.704 ***
Merchandise	.000
TradeServ	-.001
GrowthTrade	.000
GrossCap	.000
FDIin	-.001
FDIout	.002
Globalization R² Change	.010 (NS)
PF_RB	-.001
Press Freedom R² Change	.004 (NS)

*** Significance at 0.001 level

** Significance at 0.01 level

Furthermore, Table 6 illustrates a complete lack of association between culture and press freedom when the RSF index is used for analysis. Controlling for governance and globalization, the power distance dimension of cultural differences cannot predict the degree of press freedom, as determined by Reporters Sans Frontières. Meanwhile, globalization variables are responsible for 4.1% of the explained change in levels of press freedom. Again, governance contributes greatly to press freedom. This control block accounts for 83.4% of the variance in the RSF ranking.

**Table 6. Culture as Predictor of Press Freedom
(Reporters Without Borders Index).**

VoiceAcc	-23.806
PolStability	-3.718
GovEffect	8.132
ReguQual	-.744
RuleLaw	9.006
ContrCorrup	-9.097
Governance R² Change	.834***
Merchandise	-.065
TradeServ	-.166
GrowthTrade	1.076
GrossCap	.032
FDIin	.052
FDIout	.084
Globalization R² Change	.041**
PDI	.036
Culture R² Change	.001 (NS)

*** Significance at 0.001 level

** Significance at 0.01 level

In sum, similar regression analyses using different press freedom measures (Freedom House vs. Reporters Sans Frontières) produce conflicting results. Though the two indicators are highly correlated, they cannot ensure the consistency of conclusions across the different measures. Thus, the current analysis finds strong support for H3.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study sets out to examine assumptions about factors that influence global press freedom, with the impetus being a lack of sufficient evidence for both dominant and empowerment perspectives in the field. First, rather than accepting the established conception of development linked with press freedom, this study applies an empirical test. Second, it investigates the claim that cultural differences play a role in enabling media democratization. Finally, due to concerns related to measurement of press freedom, it evaluates how the most widely used press freedom indices themselves might pose a methodological challenge to comparative research.

Using data produced by well-established international institutions and advanced research, the current analysis yields some surprising findings. The link between development and press freedom is not

established conclusively. Use of the Freedom House index shows a significant connection between the state of the media and socio-economic circumstances, as would be expected from the dominant paradigm. Moreover, beyond establishing a two-way relationship, results from H1a and H1b provide some evidence of directionality. Press freedom better predicts development than does development explain press freedom. Thus, press freedom is more likely to be an antecedent of development than it is the reverse. However, using the Reporters Sans Frontières index, the results do not support either directions of the relationship between development and press freedom from the first hypothesis. Likewise, for the second hypothesis, cultural differences are significantly connected with the Freedom House ranking, while not connected to the Reporters Sans Frontières ranking. Additionally, the two press freedom indices produce divergent results for the relationship between globalization and press freedom, with the Freedom House ranking showing no connection and the Reporters Sans Frontières index showing a significant relationship. In all, the largely contradictory results support the third hypothesis, which predicts different outcomes based on the differing characteristics of those indices. That said, the one consistent finding, using either of the press freedom indices, is that governance is the single best predictor of press freedom among the factors examined.

Implications

Though the two press freedom measures utilized in the present study show a high degree of correlation, they yield different findings with divergent implications. Whether there is a link between press freedom and development, as well as between press freedom and culture (as shown in this research), may depend on how we define press freedom itself. While the Freedom House index reflects the conditions for potential violations of press freedom, the Reporters Sans Frontières ranking reflects actual violations. Thus, it is clear that the press freedom indicators can affect scientific research, as they are based on different criteria that can lead to different, even opposite conclusions. Such notions are inherent in previous research questioning the methodology, tension, and bias in surveys of global press freedom (Becker et al., 2004; Bozemann, 1979; Feen, 1985; Gunaratne, 2002; Hartman and Hsiao, 1988; Seeman, 2003; Scoble & Wiseberg, 1981). These contradictory findings raise a red flag and speak to the necessity for continued refinement of quantitative measures, particularly when addressing matters as subtle as global press freedom. Moreover, both Freedom House and Reporters Sans Frontières define press freedom strictly in terms of the state-press conflict, making their measurement value-laden. A better and more objective method to evaluate press freedom may rely on Habermas' concept of communicative action, or the right of citizens in the lifeworld to communicate (see Gunaratne, 2006, for a review).

Similarly, it is reasonable to question the indices for the other examined variables as well. For instance, criteria established by organizations such as the World Bank, due to their prominence in the global order, are already likely to contain an inherent link to the dominant paradigm. Apparent association of factors such as development with press freedom would, in such cases, naturally be aligned with the press freedom indices, based on the most similar conception. The operationalization of globalization in terms of economy is inadequate, considering other important dimensions of global integration such as openness to digital information. In addition, the findings in this study indicate that the proper functioning of global press freedom depends on the political realities and the quality of governance above all other

factors. No longer is it possible merely to assume that economic development and diffusion of technologies in and of themselves will lead to free expression and active engagement in global dialogue. Most certainly, this adds credence to the challenges of those who contend that the concept of development associated with the modernization paradigm is flawed. At the least, it suggests that development should be redefined with much greater emphasis on good governance rather than on economic and technological indicators alone.

Lastly, despite the central role of governance in press freedom, traditional theories of the press with rigidly defined categories may no longer suffice for providing adequate conceptions of the increasingly complex realities associated with media use and control. A system perspective—one incorporating a multitude of factors—provides a potentially more useful alternative.

Limitations

The use of aggregate secondary data, while providing a multitude of new opportunities and avenues for research in international communication, poses a degree of concern that would not be the case with data collected specifically for the purpose of this study. Due to the various purposes and methodologies associated with the different data sources, the degree of meaningfulness in their combination remains somewhat open to interpretation. Also, this study analyzes only a single slice of reality rather than examining press freedom at different points in time. Thus, the likelihood of the findings to remain consistent under changing global conditions cannot be determined. While this issue of consistency over time may be of importance to scientific research in general, the matter may be of even greater relevance for international communication, based on exponential rates of change in an increasingly globalized society.

Suggestions for Future Research

To address the limitations of this study, several directions for future research become apparent. At the most basic level, longitudinal studies would add credence to the current findings, if they arise consistently at different points in time. Adding the element of time also brings greater potential to attribute causation. Beyond this, however, lies a greater challenge: A unique design specifically for the purpose of understanding of press freedom must be developed for more rigorous and meaningful analyses. Given the enormous scope of the matter, a practical way to accomplish this might be to focus on smaller-scale case studies of certain regions rather than on undertaking a massive global project. Then, the separate studies, taken together with an adequate consideration of some property of the whole itself, may present an overall pattern that enables better understanding of press freedom at the global level. Additionally, due to the subtlety of the factors in question, studies examining indirect influence would be a necessary addition to those that explore direct impact. In all, a number of avenues open up for consideration based on the current findings, and beyond the implications of the findings themselves, this is perhaps the most significant contribution of this study to an emerging body of scholarship at the nexus of development, culture, and press freedom.

References

- Altschull, J. H. (1990). *From Milton to McLuhan: The ideas behind American journalism*. New York: Longman.
- Amin, H. (2002). Freedom as a value in Arab media: Perceptions and values among journalists. *Political Communication, 19*, 125-135.
- Becker, J. (2003). Keeping track of press freedom. *European Journal of Communication, 18*(1), 107-112.
- Becker, L. B., Vlad, T., & Nusser, N. (2007). An evaluation of press freedom indicators. *International Communication Gazette, 69*(1), 5-28.
- Becker, L. B., Vlad, T., & Nusser, N. (2004, July). *Media freedom: Conceptualizing and operationalizing the outcome of media democratization*. Paper presented to the International Association for Media and Communication Research, Porto Alegre, Brazil.
- Bhagwati, J. (2004). *In defense of globalization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bollen, K. (1993). Liberal democracy: Validity and method factors in cross-national measures. *American Journal of Political Science, 37*(4), 1207-1230.
- Bozemann, A. (1979). Review of freedom in the world: Political rights and civil liberties, 1979. *Orbis, 23*, 213-223.
- Burrowes, C. P. (1996). Modernization and the decline of press freedom: Liberia 1984 to 1970. *Journalism and Mass Communication Monographs, 160*.
- Casmir, F. L. (Ed.). (1991). *Communication in development*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Caux, L. A. (2003, May). *The role of media in the development of democracy in the Western hemisphere*. Unpublished monograph, Inter-American Defense College. Retrieved December 7, 2006, from <http://library.jid.org/en/mono42/caux.doc>
- Chan, A., & Cheung, H. (2008). Common cultural relationships in corporate governance across developed and emerging financial markets. *Applied Psychology, 57*(2), 225-245.
- Christie, M., Kwon, I., Stoeberl, P., & Baumhart, R. (2003). A cross-cultural comparison of ethical attitudes of business managers: India, Korea and the United States. *Journal of Business Ethics, 46*(3), 263-287.
- Dealy, G. C. (1974). The tradition of monistic democracy in Latin America. *Journal of the History of Ideas, 35*(4), 625-646.

- Eid, M., & Buchanan, C. (2005). North America: Multiplying media in a dynamic landscape. *First Monday*, 10(11). Retrieved November 21, 2006, from http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue10_11/eid/index.html
- El-Nawawy, M., & Iskandar, A. (2002). *Al-Jazeera: How the free Arab news network scooped the world and changed the Middle East*. Cambridge, MA: Westview Press.
- Fischer, H-D., & Merrill, J. C. (Eds.). (1970). *International communication: Media, channels, functions*. New York: Hastings House.
- Faringer, G. (1991). *Press freedom in Africa*. New York: Praeger.
- Feen, R. H. (1985). [Review of the book, *Freedom in the world: Political rights and civil liberties, 1984–1985*]. *Washington Quarterly*, 8(3), 237–291.
- Feen, R. H. (1985). [Review of U.S. government report, *Country reports on human rights practices for 1984*]. *Washington Quarterly*, 8(3), 237–291.
- Freedom House (2005). Freedom of the press. Retrieved November 9, 2006, from <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=204&year=2005>
- Freire, P. (1970). Cultural freedom in Latin America. In Louis M. Colonnese (Ed.), *Human rights and the liberation of man in the Americas* (pp. 162–179). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Gunaratne, S. A. (2006). Public sphere and communicative rationality: Interrogating Habermas' Eurocentrism. *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, 8(2), 93–156.
- Gunaratne, S. A. (2005). Asian philosophies and authoritarian press practice: A remarkable contradiction. *Javnost - The Public*, 12(2), 23–38.
- Gunaratne, S. A. (2002). Freedom of the press: A world system perspective. *Gazette*, 64(4), 343–369.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hachten, W. A., & Scotton, J. F. (2007). *The world news prism: Global information in a satellite age (7th ed.)*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Hofstede, G. H. (1980). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.

- Hofstede, G. H., & Hofstede G. J. (2005). *Cultures and organizations, software of the mind: Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Holtz-Bacha, C. (2004, July). *What is good press freedom? The difficulty of measuring freedom of the press worldwide*. Paper presented to the International Association for Media and Communication Research, Porto Alegre, Brazil.
- Huberman, B., Loch, C., & Onculer, A. (2004). Status as a valued resource. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 67(1), 103–114.
- Hughes, S., & Lawson, C. (2005). The barriers to media opening in Latin America. *Political Communication*, 22(1), 9–25.
- Hume, E. (2000). *Global media development report: The media missionaries*. Retrieved December 7, 2006, from http://www.ellenhume.com/articles/missionaries3_summary.html
- Kamalipour, Y., & Mowlana, H. (1994). *Mass media and the Middle East: A comprehensive handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Kedia, B., & Bhagat, R. (1988). Cultural constraints on transfer of technology across nations: Implications for research in international and comparative management. *Academy of Management Review*, 13(4), 559–571.
- Lerner, D. (1958). *The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East*. New York: Free Press.
- Melkote, S. R. (2003). Theories of development communications. In B. Mody (Ed.), *International and development communication: A 21st-century perspective* (pp. 129–146). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Melkote, S. R., & Steeves, H. L. (2001). *Communication for development in the third world: Theory and practice for empowerment (2nd ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- McQuail, D. (2005). *McQuail's mass communication theory (5th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Merrill, J. C. (1991). *Global journalism: Survey of international communication (2nd ed.)*. New York: Longman.
- Merrill, J. C. (1987). Governments and press control: Global attitudes on journalistic matters. *Political Communication & Persuasion*, 4(4), 223–262.
- Moemeka, A. A. (2000). *Development communication in action: Building understanding and creating participation*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

- Moemeka, A. A. (Ed.). (1994). *Communicating for development: A new pan-disciplinary perspective*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Perkins, M. (2002). Freedom(s) of the press in Latin America: Reconciling societal and individual rights in international law. *Gazette*, 64(1), 5–19.
- Pitts, G. (2000). Democracy and press freedom in Zambia: Attitudes of members of parliament toward media and media regulation. *Communication Law & Policy*, 5, 269–294.
- Price, M. E., Rozumilowicz, B., & Verhulst, S. G. (Eds.). (2002). *Media reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state*. New York: Routledge.
- Reporters Sans Frontières (2006). Asia - Annual report 2006. Retrieved November 18, 2006, from http://www.rsf.org:rubrique.php3%3Fid_rubrique=576
- Reporters Sans Frontières (2005). Worldwide press freedom index. Retrieved November 9, 2006, from http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=549
- Rogers, E. (1983). *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Rostow, W. (1960). *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rozumilowicz, B. (2002). Democratic change: A theoretical perspective. In M. E. Price, B. Rozumilowicz, & S. G. Verhulst (Eds.), *Media reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state* (pp. 9–26). New York: Routledge.
- Scholtens, B., & Dam, L. (2007). Cultural values and international differences in business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 75(3), 273–282.
- Schramm, W. (1964). *Mass media and national development*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Scoble, H. M., & Wiseberg, L. S. (1981). Problem of comparative research on human rights. In V. P. Nanda, J. R. Scarritt, & G. W. Shepherd (Eds.), *Global human rights: public policies, comparative measures, and NGO strategies*, p. 160. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Seeman, N. (2003). *Measuring a free press*. Fraser Forum. Retrieved December 7, 2006, from <http://www.fraserinstitute.ca/shared/readmore.asp?sNav=pb&id=583>
- Sharma, B. (2003). Hofstede's measures of national culture and social progress. *Psychological Reports*, 92(3), 1199–1202.

- Siebert, F. S., Peterson, T., & Schramm, W. (1956). *Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Smaele, H., (1999). The applicability of Western media models on the Russian media system. *European Journal of Communication*, 14 (2), 173–189.
- Stevenson, R. (2003). National development and communications. *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, 3, 1–13.
- Stevenson, R. (1994). *Global communication in the twenty-first century*. NY: Longman.
- Sussman, L., & Karlekar, K. (Eds.). (2002). *The annual survey of press freedom 2002*. New York: Freedom House.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2006). Human development report. Retrieved November 16, 2006, from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi>
- Winfield, B. H., Mizuno, T., & Beaudoin, C. E. (2000). Confucianism, collectivism, and constitutions: Press systems in China and Japan. *Communication Law and Policy*, 5, 523–347.
- World Bank (2006). World development indicators: Integration with the global economy. Retrieved November 15, 2006, from http://devdata.worldbank.org/wdi2006/contents/Table6_1.htm
- World Bank (2005). Governance indicators. Retrieved October 6, 2006, from <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>