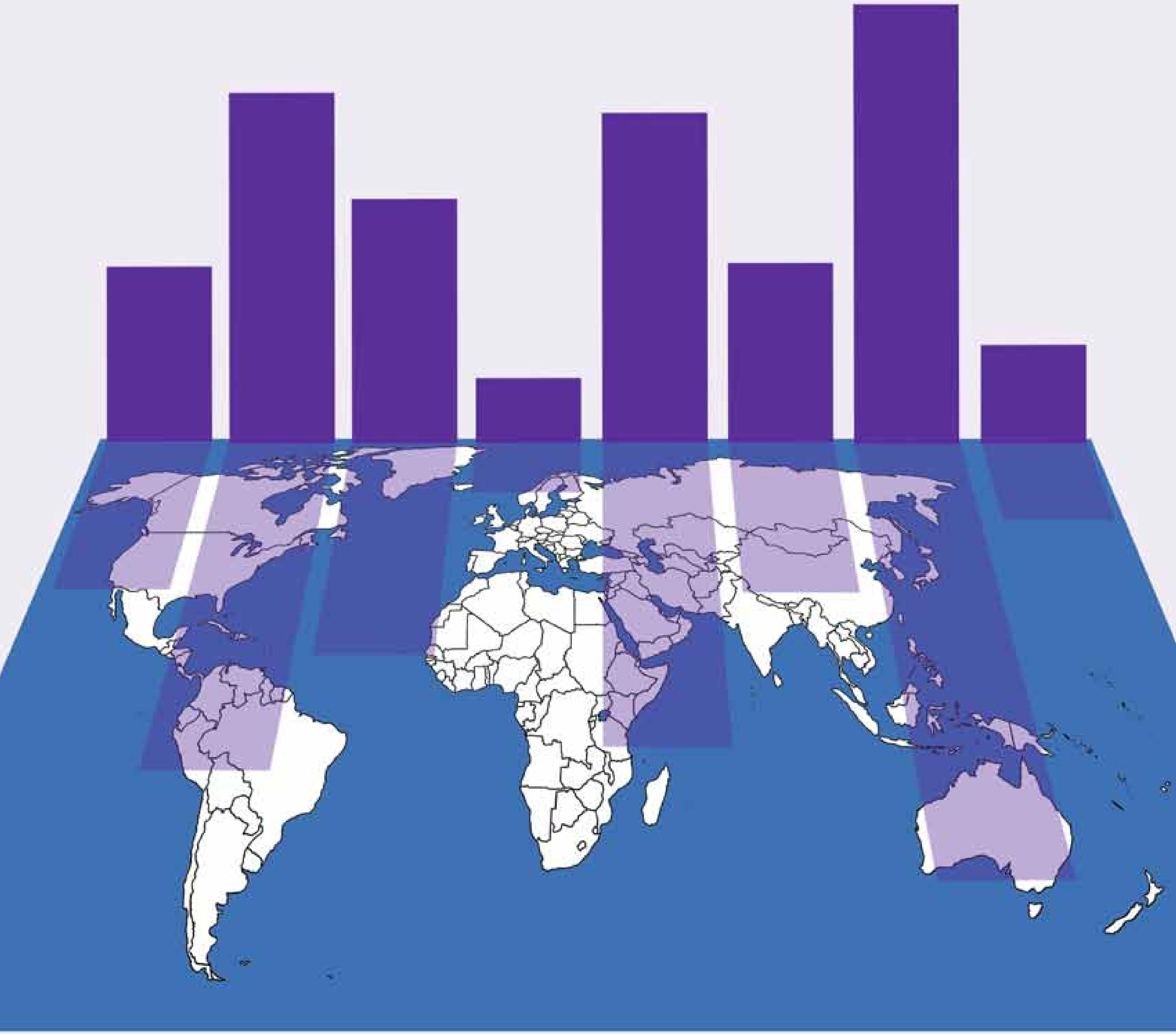
Evaluating the Evaluators

Media Freedom Indexes and What They Measure



CIMA Center for International Media Assistance

Annenberg School for Communication University of Pennsylvania

Evaluating the Evaluators

Media Freedom Indexes and What They Measure

Evaluating the Evaluators: Media Freedom Indexes and What They Measure

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ISBN 0-9818254-1-9

Original reporting commissioned by:

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR GLOBAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

The Center for Global Communication Studies (CGCS) at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania is a leader in international education and training in comparative media law and policy. It affords students, academics, lawyers, regulators, civil society representatives, and others the opportunity to evaluate and discuss comparative, global, and international communications issues.

Working with the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and research centers, scholars, and practitioners from around the world, CGCS provides research opportunities for graduate students; organizes conferences and trainings; and provides consulting and advisory assistance to academic centers, governments, and NGOs.

CGCS draws on various disciplines, including law, political science, and international relations, among others. The Center's research and policy work addresses issues of media regulation, media and democracy, measurement and evaluation of media development programs, public service broadcasting, and the media's role in conflict and post-conflict environments.

CGCS's network includes the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP) at the University of Oxford and the Center for Media and Communication Studies (CMCS) at Central European University in Budapest.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ASSISTANCE

The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), an initiative of the National Endowment for Democracy, works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of media assistance programs around the world. The Center approaches its mission by providing information, building networks, conducting research, and highlighting the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies around the world. CIMA also serves as a catalyst to address needs in the media assistance field, bringing together policymakers, practitioners, funders, and academics to reach shared goals.

CIMA convenes working groups, commissions research reports, and holds events. The Center has also compiled a bibliographic database of international media assistance resources. CIMA's Advisory Council advises the Center on topics in media development that need further study and how it can assist organizations involved in media assistance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Burgess is a Washington, DC-based writer specializing in international affairs and technology. He worked for 28 years at *The Washington Post* in jobs that included Tokyo bureau chief, mass transit and aviation reporter, technology editor, and Europe editor. Burgess has a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan.

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PREFACE

This report had its origins in a workshop convened at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania in November 2007. Entitled "Measuring Press Freedom and Democracy: Methodologies, Uses, and Impact," the day-long gathering brought together experts to discuss the increasingly pressing issue of how to measure media freedom worldwide, particularly those countries receiving media development aid. Participants analyzed the philosophies and methodologies of existing indexes of worldwide media freedom and compared strengths and shortcomings of the different measurement systems. Participants debated use and misuse of findings in the nongovernmental organization (NGO), donor, government, and academic communities, as well as by the media themselves.

From this workshop came a project to publish a book of academic articles addressing issues of measuring media freedom, as well as related questions of how to measure the impact of individual media aid programs. Monroe E. Price, director of the school's Center for Global Communication Studies, and Susan Abbott, then the Center's associate director, took the lead in commissioning papers from some of the world's top thinkers on the subject. The book, titled "Evaluating the Evaluators: Measures of Press Freedom and Media Contributions to Development," will be published in late 2010.

In conversations with Marguerite H. Sullivan, senior director of the Center for International Media Assistance, an idea emerged for her organization to broaden the debate and audience by commissioning a report that would synthesize the findings of the Annenberg book's papers. CIMA later selected John Burgess, a former *Washington Post* editor and reporter, for that job. In his own research, Burgess drew on the submitted papers and interviews with media experts, aid practitioners, and donors, and on other academic papers, reports, and conferences that addressed questions of measuring media freedom. In addition, he spoke at length with people at the three organizations that produce the most widely cited indexes: Freedom House, IREX, and Reporters Without Borders. Burgess did not seek to condense each of the book's papers. Rather, he combined the papers' key conclusions and data with his own reporting to craft a narrative overview of efforts to understand and improve the measurement systems that are invaluable tools in the world of media assistance.

The papers used in the writing of this report are listed on the following page.

ACADEMIC PAPERS CITED

The following articles, part of a forthcoming book to be published by the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, were drawn upon in the writing of this report. They are listed alphabetically by the author's last name.

Fackson Banda (SAB Ltd.-UNESCO Chair of Media & Democracy, Rhodes University): "What Are We Measuring? A Critical Review of Media Development Assessment Tools."

Lee B. Becker (director, James M. Cox Jr. Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Georgia) and Tudor Vlad (associate director): "Conceptualizing and Measuring Characteristics of Media Systems."

Christina Holtz-Bacha (professor of communications, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg): "Freedom of the Press—Is a Worldwide Comparison Possible and What Is It Good For?"

Thomas Jacobson (professor, School of Communications and Theater, Temple University); Lingling Pan (doctoral student, Mass Media and Communication Program, Temple University); and Seung Joon Jun (doctoral student, Department of Communication, University at Buffalo): "Indicators of Citizen Voice for Assessing Media Development: A Communicative Action Approach."

Shanthi Kalathil (consultant, the World Bank): "Measuring the Media: Examining the Interdisciplinary Approach."

Craig L. LaMay (associate professor, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University): "What Works? The Problem of Program Evaluation."

Gerry Power (managing director, InterMedia UK); Anna Godfrey (research manager, BBC World Service Trust); Patrick McCurdy (lecturer, Department of Media and Communications, Erasmus University): "When Theory Meets Practice, Critical reflections From the Field on Press Freedom Indices."

Monroe E. Price (director, Center for Global Communication Studies, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania): "Press Freedom Measures: An Introduction."

Andrew Puddephatt (director, Global Partners & Associates Ltd.): "Examining and Critiquing Existing Measures of Media Development."

Andrei Richter (professor, School of Journalism, Moscow State University): "Post-Soviet Perspective on Censorship and Freedom of the Media: An Overview."

Russell S. Sobel (professor of economics, James Clark Coffman Distinguished Chair, Department of Economics, West Virginia University); Nabamita Dutta (assistant professor, Department of Economics, University of Wisconsin, La Crosse); and Sanjukta Roy (consultant, World Bank and Internews): "Beyond Borders: Is Media Freedom Contagious?"

Silvio R. Waisbord (associate professor of media and public affairs, George Washington University): "Operational Models and Bureaucratic Imperatives in the Global Promotion of Media Diversity."

Guobin Yang (associate professor of Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, Barnard College): "Press Freedom and Transnational Online Activism in China."

The following academic articles were substantially quoted but are not part of the Annenberg book:

Steven E. Finkel (professor of political science, University of Pittsburgh); Aníbal Pérez-Liñán (associate professor of political science, University of Pittsburgh); Mitchell A. Seligson, (professor of political science, Vanderbilt University); and C. Neal Tate (professor of political science and law, Vanderbilt University): "Deepening our Understanding of the Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building, Final Report," January 28, 2008.

Pippa Norris (McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University): "The Role of the Free Press in Promoting Democratization, Good Governance and Human Development," published in "Media Matters: Perspectives on Advancing Governance & Development from the Global Forum for Media Development."

A.S. Panneerselvan (executive director, Panos South Asia): "Spheres of Influence: A Practitioner's Model." A version of this paper was presented at the Measuring Change II conference convened by the Katholisch-Soziales-Institut in Bad Honnef, Germany from October 12-14, 2009. The paper is also on file with the author.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

All over the world, studies that rank countries by media freedom figure prominently in civil liberties debates, aid programming, foreign policy decisions, and academic research. The three most widely cited indexes—compiled by Freedom House, the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), and Reporters Without Borders (RSF in its French initials)—often become media events in their own right on release day, written about by local newspapers and Web sites and analyzed on television and radio. In view of the breadth and depth of their impact, academics have been studying the quality of the social science that underlies these and other studies. Some academics claim deficiencies in such issues as methodology, cultural neutrality, and focus on "old media." Yet many go on to conclude that whatever the shortcomings, the studies produce basically consistent findings over time and are credible, useful tools for tracking the evolution of media freedom in the countries of the world. They serve to highlight the crucial role of a free press in democracy and good governance.

Western industrialized countries tend to cluster at the top of the major studies that survey them (Freedom House and RSF), along with a few developing countries. Arab countries generally do poorly in media freedom rankings, as do China, Russia, and many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The very bottom ranks consistently include North Korea, Turkmenistan, Cuba, and Eritrea. Academics say there is real value in having the same questions asked year after year about each country, even if there is disagreement about what to ask and to whom—should it be experts or ordinary citizens?

Claims of Western bias in the studies have spurred the development of new rating systems that are meant to have universal

A news stand in Moscow.
Photo by Svetlana Balashova

acceptance or to be tailored to the conditions of particular regions. The African Media Barometer, for instance, was devised to measure media conditions specifically in the developing nations of Africa. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), meanwhile, has devised new media development indicators that it calls culturally and politically neutral. The indicators are applied only with the cooperation of the country's government and the participation of commercial and civil society groups. The UNESCO studies do not produce numerical scores or country-by-country rankings.

Other analysts, meanwhile, feel that the main problem with the existing surveys is a perceived focus on "old media" such as newspapers, radio, and TV. As the Internet continues to expand and billions of people acquire mobile telephones with text messaging capabilities, these analysts say, new indicators are needed to measure digital media's impact. Freedom House and RSF are both working to integrate new media into their studies; at the same time, other groups are working toward indexes aimed exclusively at new media.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, hundreds of millions of dollars in media development aid has flowed into former communist countries. Some political scientists caution that the recipient countries' ranking in the three major studies should not be used to judge success or failure of individual aid programs, because a country's media landscape can be affected by countless other factors, such as the election of a more tolerant government or improvement in the local economy. At the same time, other academic studies have found general statistical correlation among media aid, improved media freedom, and a better overall state of democracy.

The organizations that conduct country rankings should continue to increase technical sophistication, cultural neutrality, and transparency. In particular, continued attention must be paid to digital media, notably the Internet and mobile phones, which now number approximately 4.6 billion worldwide.[1] Donors and implementers of media assistance, meanwhile, should keep up efforts to find better ways to monitor and evaluate specific programs and to share the resulting information with other aid organizations. At a time of financial shortfalls, foundations and other funding bodies should assure that assessment of media quality at both the national and the program level receives the attention (and the money) that it deserves.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATORS

On October 3, 2009, tens of thousands of demonstrators gathered in a Rome plaza to accuse Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of suppressing media freedom in Italy. The following week, spirited debate broke out in the European Parliament, as lawmakers waving copies of Italian newspapers pressed the same point. The European Union, they said, should take action in light of Berlusconi's ownership of the country's largest media company, his influence over state television as prime minister, and defamation suits that he had filed against newspapers that questioned his personal ethics. "The situation in Italy is unprecedented," said Claude Moraes, a Labour member of the European Parliament who represents the London area. "It could be dangerous for the whole of Europe."[2]

> **"Everybody knows that these numbers are not perfect and not without error … but they are really important and useful."**
>
> — Mark Nelson

To rebut claims of partisan posturing, Berlusconi's critics pointed to a study published earlier in the year by Freedom House. There it was: statistical proof. In its annual country-by-country assessment of media freedom around the world, Freedom House scored Italy at 32 on a scale of 0 to 100, three points worse than its number of the previous year. This change was big enough to bump Italy's media from the study's category of "free" to "partly free." Italy was now in the company of such countries as Egypt, East Timor, and Ecuador, rather than Sweden or Australia.

For three decades, Freedom House has been ranking the world's countries by media freedom, joined in more recent years by Reporters Without Borders (commonly known by its French abbreviation, RSF), the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX). The three surveys attempt to apply mathematical precision to a huge and, in many ways, subjective state of affairs: the entire media universe of individual countries. Such issues as libel law, censorship, news organization finances, diversity of views, languages of broadcasts, physical safety of reporters, and dozens of other factors are rated mathematically, with the results boiled down to a single number.

The studies figure not only in political debates like Italy's but in a broad range of foreign policy, journalism, and aid decision-making all over the world. U.S. broadcast officials use them in deciding whether a particular overseas radio service should be converted into television. World Bank researchers use the numbers when drafting papers that help determine how much aid a country will get. Political scientists type the studies' findings into spreadsheets in efforts to identify new correlations and relationships between media freedom and other factors of countries' political systems. UN and national and private aid organizations use the surveys in programming hundreds of millions of dollars of media development funding. Reporters and columnists employ them in discoursing on media freedom, diplomats in bringing pressure on governments that rank low.

As use of these indexes expands, they are drawing increasing attention from academics and other media experts trying to judge the quality of the underlying social science. "Precisely because these are such important institutions, it is desirable to try to shape a critical discourse about their work," writes Monroe E. Price, director of the Center for Global Communication Studies of the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania.[3] He and the Center's then associate director, Susan Abbott, commissioned a book of appraisals of the studies, on which the current paper draws. In analyses for the book, as well as interviews for this paper, media freedom experts from a selection of backgrounds and countries variously faulted the major studies as having weak methodologies, excessive reliance on experts' views, a lack of transparency, a Western bias, and a focus on "old media" such as newspapers and TV at the expense of fast-expanding digital media. Yet at the same time many concluded that despite the short-comings, the studies have acceptable statistical consistency and reach the same general conclusions. In short, the studies provide a crucial, credible, and useful tool for tracking media freedom around the world and changes over time. In general, experts find value in surveys that ask the same questions year after year, even if they disagree with what those questions should be and whether experts or citizens should be answering them. As such, the surveys are used frequently in academic analysis.

"Everybody knows that these numbers are not perfect and not without error," says Mark Nelson of the World Bank Institute. "You have to use caution in interpreting the data ... but they are really important and useful." In a perfect world, he says, there would be solid data on such issues as newspaper circulation and ownership of the media in every country of the world. In the meantime, there are the media freedom studies, which he likens to public opinion polls—worth paying attention to in decision-making, but not infallible.

The indexes by Freedom House, IREX, and RSF have over the years drawn the most attention worldwide, forming a sort of oligopoly of media rating systems. But other systems have come into use as well, sometimes designed to address perceived problems with the "Big Three." The African Media Barometer, for instance, was crafted for use in Africa in particular. The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2008 approved a media evaluation system for use in aid programming. Applied so far to five countries, it does not produce numerical rankings and requires cooperation of the country's government and participation of multiple civil society organizations. At MobileActive.org, an NGO that seeks to harness mobile communications for social change, work is underway on a "Fair Mobile Index" aimed at measuring the burgeoning impact of mobile devices such as cellphones.

But none of the new systems has put an end to debate about the best way to evaluate. At the most basic level, the question is: What exactly

A group of children rushes to use the first telephone in their village in Thailand.
Photo courtesy of National Telecommunications Commission, Thailand.

is it that should be measured? Does media freedom equal independence from government? Does it mean physical safety for journalists and lack of censorship? Some analysts feel that what matters most is whether media listen to their country's citizens and act on their behalf. In this view, the central issue is whether media help them take part in the democratic process. Good media can be owned by anyone as long as they give "voice" to the ordinary citizen.

"In the world of media freedom advocacy and in government policy circles, the conceptual explication of media freedom has taken a back seat to problems of its measurement," write Lee Becker and Tudor Vlad of the University of Georgia. "Never mind the obvious point that it is hard to measure something if you do not know exactly what it is."[4]

The surveys share the bedrock principle that media freedom applies in every country of the world, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That document, proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1948, is officially embraced today by all UN member states. Article 19 of the Declaration reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."[5]

But from that common starting point, the studies strike out in different directions concerning what to study and how. (Country rankings by Freedom House, IREX, and RSF appear in Appendixes I through III.)

FREEDOM HOUSE

The *Freedom of the Press* index of Freedom House owes its existence to a map. In the 1970s, a large world map rating countries on their overall freedom hung in the lobby of the New York headquarters of the NGO. Green meant "Free," yellow meant "Partly Free," and purple meant "Not Free," based on the organization's annual study of democratic practices around the globe. Freedom House officials found the map to be a very useful tool in attracting media attention to the group's

A newspaper and magazine stand in Amman, Jordan.
Photo by Nisreen Banat.

core issue. When countries were shifted from one color to another based on events of the preceding year, TV crews sometimes showed up to record the change. So Freedom House Director Leonard Sussman began wondering, why not produce a map for the more focused but related issue of press freedom?[6]

The resulting press freedom index and its map (see page 10) were soon functioning as a lobbying tool in the debate over one of the central international media issues of the 1980s, the proposed New World Information and Communication Order. Industrialized countries exercise unfair control over the world's information, said proponents of the "new order," which was being pushed by some member states of UNESCO. New laws and practices are needed to balance the flow, they argued. The United States strongly opposed the idea as potentially harmful to freedom of expression and its media companies. So did Freedom House and Sussman, who put the new study to use.

Freedom House was founded in 1941 to promote democratic principles worldwide at the time of World War II fascist expansion. Its first honorary co-chairs were Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin Roosevelt, a Democrat, and 1940 Republican presidential nominee Wendell Willkie. Ever since, the organization has spoken with a generally bipartisan voice in Washington policy debates and advocacy abroad. Sometimes it has supported specific U.S. policies, sometimes it has opposed them, but in a larger context it puts its weight behind American notions of democratic government.

Freedom House has modified its press freedom questionnaire and methodology in 1989, 1994, 1997, 1999, and 2002. The 1994 revision added a scoring system by which countries of the world were ranked numerically by press freedom, rather than just being placed in a category of Free, Partly Free, or Not Free. With each change, the organization has tried to retain sufficient continuity in questions and weightings so that a country's performance can be credibly compared year-to-year. No other media freedom study has so long a run of what scholars call "longitudinal" data—the study's 30th anniversary was April 2010. The survey today has 23 questions divided into three categories: legal environment, political environment, and economic environment. "Do the penal code, security laws, or any other laws restrict reporting, and are journalists punished under these laws?" That question in the legal environment section can be scored from 0 to 6. "Do the state or other actors try to control the media through allocation of advertising or subsidies?" Part of the economic section, this question carries a potential score of 0 to 3. For each question, a 0 score signals the highest possible level of media freedom—as in golf, a low score is a good one. The sum of the questions' scores becomes the country's overall rating. Creating categories, Freedom House has deemed that a score of 0 to 30 means that the country has a "Free" media, while 31 to 60 signals "Partly Free," and 61 to 100 "Not Free." Just a one point change year-to-year can move a country from one of these categories to another. The country's numerical rating, compared with those of other countries, will determine its place in the global ranking.

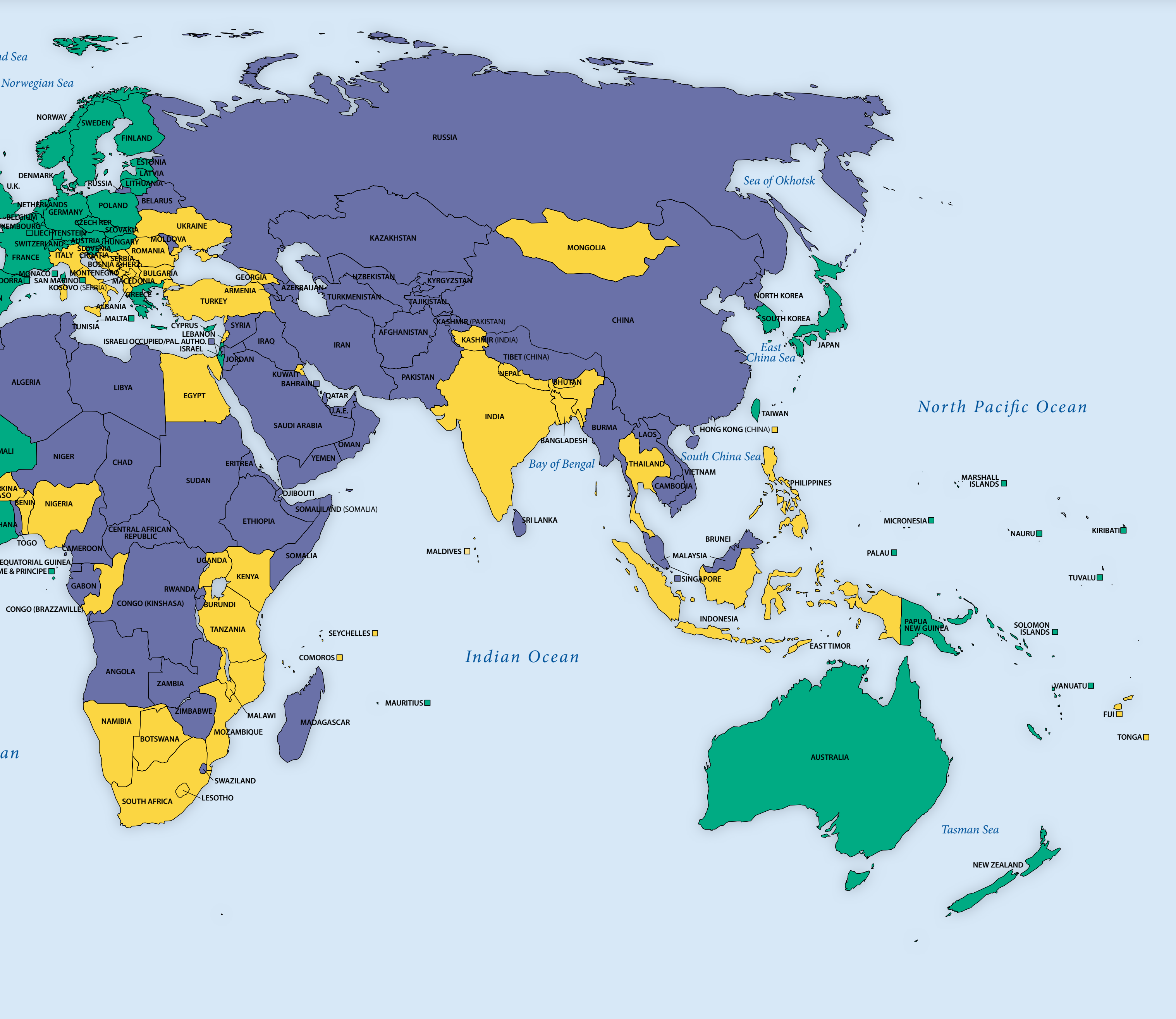
To head up the evaluation of a given country, Freedom House selects a writer/analyst judged to have deep knowledge of the country and its media. This person may be an academic or a journalist, a local citizen or a foreigner. In some cases a Freedom House staff member is chosen. Depending on the political climate, the person may work in the country or study it from the outside. Some writers handle multiple countries at once. The analyst scores the 23 questions based on events in the country during the prior calendar year. The analyst may also write a narrative of the year's main media freedom-related developments.

In past years, the next step has been to send the report and scoring to one of a half-dozen two- or three-member panels of people whom Freedom House has picked as experts on the countries of a region. In a meeting, often in New York, the panel goes over the report as well as reports from other countries of the region. Particular scrutiny is applied, Freedom House officials say, if a proposed new score would move the country to a new

Survey Findings

Freedom Status	Country Breakdown	Population Breakdown (in billions)
FREE	69 (35%)	1.08 (16%)
PARTLY FREE	64 (33%)	3.01 (44%)
NOT FREE	63 (32%)	2.71 (40%)
TOTAL	**196 (100%)**	**6.80 (100%)**

f Press Freedom 2010



The Map of Press Freedom reflects the findings of Freedom House's study *Freedom of the Press 2010: A Global Survey of Media Independence*, which rates the level of press freedom in 196 countries and territories during 2009. Based on these ratings, countries are classified as **Free**, **Partly Free**, or **Not Free**.

The ratings system is designed to capture the varied ways in which pressure can be placed on the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and internet-based news outlets to operate freely and without fear of repercussions. The study also assesses the degree of news and information diversity available to the public in any given country, from either local or transnational sources.

Criteria include: the legal environment in which the media operate; the degree of political control over the news media; economic pressures on content; and violations of press freedom ranging from the murder of journalists to other extralegal abuse and harassment by both state and nonstate actors.

Freedom House is an independent nongovernmental organization that has monitored press freedom worldwide since 1980.

www.freedomhouse.org

Production of the Map of Press Freedom made possible by the Hurford Foundation

category. (This is how Italy dropped from “Free” to “Partly Free”: its score of 29 in the report for surveying the calendar year 2007 became 32 for 2008). A number of staff members of Freedom House also review the country report and scoring and make suggestions as they see fit. In the end, consensus is reached and the country is formally scored.

When all countries of the world are completed, they are ranked. The new annual report is edited, and a new version of the tricolored map is devised, to become standard decoration on the walls of media aid offices in many parts of the world. Enlarged to a 36-by-20-foot scale, the map and an accompanying touch screen-controlled database make up a permanent exhibit at the Newseum, the museum of journalism in Washington, DC.

In the report released in May 2010, reflecting assessments for events of calendar year 2009, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden were all tied for the best score in the world, 10, while North Korea had the worst, 99. The United States got a score of 18, placing it with one other 18-scoring country (the Czech Republic) in the 24th rank.[7]

For many of its operations, Freedom House accepts money from governments, but only ones that it considers to be democratic. For the press freedom index, however, it has long declined to take money directly from governments of any kind, in an attempt to head off accusations of serving government interests. It has relied instead on money from foundations, some of which are privately funded, some of which, such as the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED), receive government support. The NED gave the index $20,000 in each of fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

In 2009, the study suffered a serious financial blow, with the loss of some of its funding. Freedom House found other donors to replace some of those funds, but it could not close the shortfall and was forced to make significant cuts in the study’s resources. For the first time, the study was published only on the Internet and not on paper. No regional panels of outside experts were convened, with their work of backup analysis being handled instead by Freedom House staff members. The report itself was shortened, with only about 40 countries getting full treatment of numbers and narrative reports of the year’s media-

A mobile phone user on Batumi Boulavard, Batumi, Georgia.
Photo by Leli Blagonravova.

related events. Conditions in the rest were reported only as scores, sometimes with brief bullet-point accounts of media events. For the calendar year 2009 study released in April 2010, Freedom House resumed the use of regional review panels of outside experts; other cuts, including online-only publication and shortened reports, remained.

Freedom House is canvassing for new funding and hopes to restore the study to its previous form in future years.

IREX

The *Media Sustainability Index* was born out of efforts to better direct the wave of media assistance dollars that began flowing into Eastern Europe and Central Asia following the collapse of communism there.

Among the groups deeply involved in U.S. media aid programs is the Washington-based IREX, which in Cold War days had administered academic exchanges with the Soviet Union and the other communist countries of Eastern Europe. According to Leon Morse, who oversees the index today, in the 1990s IREX was pursuing comprehensive programs aimed at building media organizations that could one day be weaned off foreign aid—they would be sustainable, in other words. With the Freedom House index focusing on questions of media freedom, IREX felt the need for an assessment tool that paid particular attention to journalistic quality and economic factors in a country's media environment. Starting in 1999, IREX officials, working in conjunction with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), plotted what issues to measure and by what methodologies, consulting outside experts to give their views. The first countries to be evaluated would be the former communist states, but IREX saw broader application down the road. "We purposely sat down to make these as universal as possible," said Morse. "We didn't want this to be an Eastern European index."[8] IREX has since applied the index to 80 countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. From the start, IREX has relied heavily on U.S. government funding for its surveys. The index for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, for instance, is underwritten by USAID. The Middle East and North Africa study has been paid for by USAID and the State Department, with UNESCO bankrolling an Iraq-specific study. Other funding has come from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the People Technology Foundation.

The study is based on five declarative sentences that state what IREX views as the fundamental objectives in creating good media systems:

- "Legal and social norms protect and promote free speech and access to public information.
- "Journalism meets professional standards of quality.
- "Multiple news sources provide citizens with reliable, objective news.
- "Independent media are well-managed businesses, allowing editorial independence.
- "Supporting institutions function in the professional interest of independent media."

Under each of these objectives is a collection of indicators, also expressed as declarative sentences. "Independent broadcast media produce their own news programs" helps assess, for instance, the state of the multiple news sources objective. "Professional associations work to protect journalists' rights" is linked to the supporting institutions objective. Each of these statements is scored 0 to 4, with 0 signifying that the country basically does not meet the indicator at all and 4 signaling that it meets it in full. Scores for the indicators are averaged to produce an overall score for each objective. The objectives' scores are in turn averaged to yield a score for the country as a whole. Like Freedom House, IREX has created categories to help in analysis of the conclusions. Countries with an overall 0 to 1 score are designated as "unsustainable, anti-free press." Above that, at 1.01 to 2.00, is "unsustainable mixed system." Then comes "near sustainability" at 2.01 to 3.00 and, at the top, 3.01 to 4.00, "sustainable."

Scores are compiled by groups that are considerably bigger and more diverse than those used in Freedom House's index. In each country, IREX strives to recruit a dozen professionals from all types of media, including private and state organizations, representing a diversity of urban and rural populations and the country's major ethnic groups. Panel members may include media owners, editors, reporters, managers, and marketers, as well as representatives from academia, the legal field, and NGOs. Each person is given a 22-page single-spaced document that lays out the indicators and how to score them.

Reporters Without Borders prides itself on being a street-savvy rabble-rouser, its ranks including men and women ready to go to jail for their convictions.

Later, panel members sit down together and discuss their scores under the direction of a moderator. People are free to change their own numbers based on what they hear from fellow evaluators. Representatives of government media are not included in the panel if IREX feels that they would intimidate those in private media. On the other hand, IREX says, government media representatives are sometimes found to be more than willing to score their employers badly and share candid criticisms with the panel.

Often the moderator functions also as the country's writer, entering the numbers into an Excel spreadsheet, determining the averages, and drafting a narrative report. The spreadsheet, the questionnaires with the raw numbers, and the reports are sent to Washington. There, Morse reads the reports and scores the country himself as a final contribution to the mathematical pool—his scoring is treated as equivalent to that of an individual panel member. The final averages become the score in the published report.
In countries that have a relatively open political system, IREX includes the names and affiliations of the panel members in the public report, though not their individual scorings. The narrative description may quote panel members by name concerning discussion of specific events in their countries. If a country's politics are generally repressive, IREX keeps the names of the members confidential. And in highly repressive countries—Uzbekistan, for instance—there is no effort to convene a panel inside the country. IREX settles for having specialists outside the country do the ratings and write the narrative.

In the 2009 report on 21 countries of Europe and Eurasia that were formerly communist, IREX put Turkmenistan in the lowest spot, with a score of 0.32. The categories of "unsustainable mixed system" (1.01-2) and "near sustainability" (2.01-3) each had nine countries, with Bosnia and Herzegovina holding the best score of 2.81. The highest possible category—the 3.01-4 range signaling "sustainable"—had not a single country in it for the year.

REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS

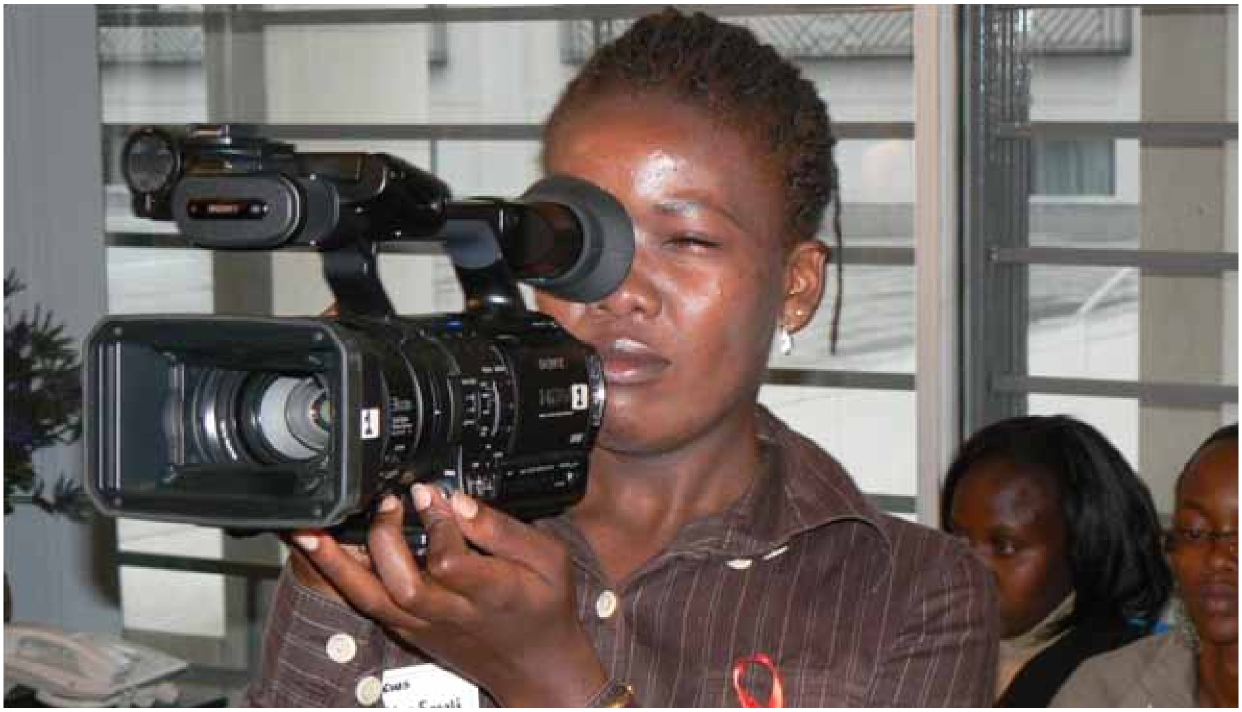
Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is the latecomer to the group, bringing a contrasting approach and personality. While Freedom House and IREX have acquired somewhat "establishment" reputations over the years, RSF prides itself on being a street-savvy rabble-rouser, its ranks including men and women ready to go to jail for their convictions. "We are not well-known as diplomatic," says Clothilde Le Coz, the group's Washington director.[9]

The group has mastered the art of getting itself and its issues featured in the worldwide media. In 2008, Robert Ménard, co-founder and at the time leader of RSF, was detained with two other RSF members at the kickoff Olympic flame ceremony in Greece after they unfurled a banner depicting the Olympic rings as handcuffs—a defiant statement during a speech by the president of the Beijing Olympics organizing committee.[10] That was one of many protests that year against suppression of media freedom in China, where the 2008 games were held. On the Games' opening day, August 8, RSF members used low-powered radio transmitters that they had smuggled into the country to put 40 minutes of dissident talk onto the airwaves in Beijing. It was, RSF declared, the first pirate radio in China since communist rule began in 1949.

In its survey, RSF considers some structural issues such as state ownership of printing facilities. But most questions seek to measure the traditional blunt-object weapons against media freedom: the murder or imprisonment of journalists, the ransacking of newsrooms, and the suppression of information for political purposes.

RSF consistently wins honors and funding from Western groups, notably in Europe. Citing work on five continents to raise awareness about journalist safety and media freedom, the European Parliament in 2005 awarded the group a Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, (an annual prize named for Soviet scientist and dissident Andrei Sakharov). Over the years, portions of RSF's overall budget have come from the European Commission, UNESCO, and the French prime minister's office, as well as foundations such as the Soros Foundation and the NED. Under RSF's funding procedures, donors do not give money exclusively to the press freedom index, but their grants can underwrite specific regional programs that generate information that goes into it. For instance, according to the NED, the purposes of a $39,900 grant that it gave to RSF for work in Eritrea, Zimbabwe, Somalia, and the Ivory Coast in 2005 and 2006 included helping jailed journalists, conducting training workshops, and writing country reports to analyze press freedom.[11]

RSF stresses that grants from governments and foundations make up only a small part of its budget. The majority (68 percent in 2008) is "self-generated" through such things as the sale of books and calendars and the licensing of the RSF name.[12] RSF, in fact, has an entrepreneurial bent for bringing in cash: Its Web site is unique among the three organizations in featuring ads for products that have no connection to the press freedom mission—chic garments, weight loss methods, or other organizations. On one recent day, an ad congratulated a visitor for being the 999,999th to come to the site and claimed they had a chance to win a BMW.



A TV production specialist in Kenya participates in a training session.
Photo courtesy of Internews.

According to Le Coz, Ménard began to think during the course of his work that the organization needed its own specific numbers as hard evidence of where individual countries stood vis-à-vis their neighbors concerning press freedom. It was first an internal measure, but as the media began to show interest, it became a public document. The first global study was presented in 2002; a new version is now released every October. The reports are published only on the Web.

The 2009 survey consisted of 40 questions. Numbers 1 through 4 give the flavor of the questionnaire as a whole: “Were there any cases of journalists 1. Illegally detained (without an arrest warrant, for longer than the maximum period of police custody, without a court appearance, etc)? 2. Being tortured or ill-treated? 3. Being kidnapped or disappearing? 4. Fleeing the country as a result of harassment?” Recognizing that threats come not only from government, the questionnaire asks about armed militias and secret organizations as well. Other parts of the survey get at such issues as censorship and self-censorship, extent of government ownership of media, economic and legal pressure, and filtering of the Internet.

According to RSF, the questionnaire is filled out by affiliated human rights groups, by the local member of RSF’s network of more than 120 correspondents around the world, and by various other journalists, researchers, jurists, and human rights activists. The group does not routinely disclose who these people are, though in countries with generally open political systems, the correspondents’ identities are no secret. In some repressive countries RSF opts not to take on local people, concerned that they might really be working for the government. The group also sends the questionnaire to the countries’ governments, sometimes getting a response, sometimes being ignored.

On its Web site, RSF does not detail the system by which the questionnaire answers become a numerical ranking, but the organization provided a description on request for this report. Its system assigns fixed numbers to yes-no questions. For instance, a “yes” answer to a question as to whether there were any cases during the year of journalists being kidnapped or disappearing converts into a 3, a “no” answer into a 0. Questions that entail some judgment are scored with a range of numbers. For instance, a question lower down in the survey asks whether there was “widespread self-censorship in the privately owned media.” The answer can range from a score of 0 (meaning no self-censorship) to 5 (strong self-censorship). A formula is then applied to the answer to produce a number that goes into the country’s total score. Likewise, in a question that asks how many journalists, media assistants, or press freedom activists were killed in connection with their work during the course of the year, the number of deaths determines the number that goes into the country’s total score. One death means 3 points, more than 5 means 10 points. As with the Freedom House index, an overall low score for a country is a good score.

In the latest ranking, taking into account events up to August 31, 2009, RSF ranked five countries as having perfect scores of 0: Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden. At the other end of the scale was Eritrea, with a score of 115.5.

TAKING THE STUDIES TO TASK

Over the years, the three studies have been dissected *ad infinitum* in political science departments, foreign ministries, newsrooms, and media aid offices. Hardly anyone, it seems, is entirely happy with them. Some are furious.

The most basic accusations involve bias. In its starkest form, this critique depicts the three organizations as arms of Western governments, working to advance particular foreign policy outcomes. In some capitals, Freedom House is seen as delivering the American view of the hour; MSI's close association with USAID has led to a similar characterization. Reporters Without Borders has the distinction of drawing charges from both sides of the Atlantic that its true loyalties lie on the other.

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RSF's "highly curious rankings map far better upon the … political agenda of the European Union than upon any concrete indicators of press freedoms," John Rosenthal wrote in the U.S.-based online publication *World Politics Review* in 2007. Taking note of French and EU funding, he cited what he called a tendency to soft-pedal curtailments of media freedom in Europe and play up such things in the United States.[13]

At the same time, some analysts in the European and American left see the organization as an arm of Washington. In particular, they cite RSF's long-standing and strident campaign against the Cuban government, which has included such actions as the seizure in 2003 of a Cuban tourism office in Paris. In these critics' view, the Cuba campaign is service rendered for the U.S. funding that in some years has flowed into the group's budget. European governments, while highly critical of Cuba's communist leadership, have in general pursued a less direct approach.

Christina Holtz-Bacha of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg takes note of the wide differences in Freedom House and RSF ratings of the United States and France in 2007 and 2008. Freedom House put the United States in the 21st rank in 2008, while putting France in the 40th rank. RSF, meanwhile, did the reverse, ranking France higher than the United States. "That is not yet proof for real or anticipated political influence" by the organizations' donors, writes Holtz-Bacha. But she does see the numbers supporting "the assumption of a bias towards the home country of the organizations' headquarters."[14]

That, indeed, is the more common basis for claims of bias. It's not that the three are faithfully carrying out instructions from funders. Rather, the home country's views of media freedom have made their way into each of the three questionnaires, thereby helping that country take a spot at least toward the top.

Concerning American-European differences, the big question is ownership and regulation. "In the United States," notes Holtz-Bacha, "the market is seen as the best guarantor of media independence. In contrast, Western European countries examine the problems that arise for the media from a free and unregulated media market much closer."[15]

In the United States, the media is overwhelmingly in private hands, as mainstream thinking says it should be. The American broadcasting industry was largely the creation of corporations drawing on private capital; American newspapers have historically been privately owned. Conventional wisdom in the United States is that government should stay out of the picture concerning media. There are exceptions, of course. The congressionally funded Corporation for Public Broadcasting helps support public TV and radio stations all over the country. The U.S. Postal Service gives discount rates for mailed publications. And in recent months, with so many American newspapers facing financial ruin, some prominent voices in the American industry have called for federally organized aid or a bigger role for the nonprofit financial model.[16]

Governments all over the world praise the concept of media freedom but give very different descriptions of it.

Still, compare that to Europe, where political parties hold ownership stakes in some mass-circulation newspapers. Broadcasting generally began as a state enterprise in Europe, sometimes run by the country's post office as another means for society to keep in touch. Private broadcasters were only gradually introduced—Sweden, for instance, licensed its first private over-the-air television station in 1991.[17] Though commercial broadcasting continues to expand in Europe, state-owned television and radio remain a large and trusted presence in the daily lives of millions of people.

There is broad political consensus in Europe that the state has a duty to actively promote the health and diversity of all forms of media. Holtz-Bacha notes:

> In Germany, for example, in addition to the usual interpretation of press freedom as a barrier against state influence, the Federal Constitutional Court has also deduced from the press freedom article of the constitution an obligation of the state to secure the functioning of the press. This positive guarantee for the press as an institution, however, leaves the state on a tightrope walk between the obligation to keep its hands off the media and the obligation to safeguard the conditions necessary for a free and diverse press … [T]he Portuguese constitution makes it an explicit duty of the state to prevent concentration of the media.

Holtz-Bacha also cites Article 11 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Declaring that "the freedom and pluralism of the media shall be respected," it provides another layer of authority for state intervention.[18]

So it was that President Nicolas Sarkozy of France was not calling for anything radical when he proposed in January 2009 that about $260 million be added to annual newspaper subsidies that were already running at about $360 million. He also suggested that every 18-year-old in the republic should be given a free subscription to the newspaper of his or her choice, with the bill being split by government and publishers.[19] His plan was later adopted.

Many scholars see these contrasting points of views in the studies' questions. "Media outlets and supporting firms operate as efficient, professional, and profit-generating businesses" is one of the MSI's statements of desired conditions. "Independent media do not receive government subsidies" is another. Freedom House devotes much less attention to this issue, but does ask: "Does the economic situation in a country accentuate media dependency on the state, political parties, big business, or other influential political actors for funding?" In the view of Fackson Banda of South Africa's Rhodes University, Freedom House has a "neo-liberal predisposition towards the state as predatory, always encroaching on media freedom and independence."[20]

The questionnaire of Reporters Without Borders, drafted on the other side of the Atlantic, marks countries down if the state holds a media monopoly or there is "narrow ownership of media outlets." But overall the study pays little attention to issues of ownership.

So how much do differing questions bring different rankings? Holtz-Bacha notes inconsistencies in conclusions about European countries. "Taking the 27 member states of the European Union as an example, for a long time there was a consensus on Finland's first rank. On the [RSF] index of 2007, the country has dropped to rank 5, whereas Freedom House still lists Finland in first place." Likewise, Romania, placed in both studies at the bottom of the EU countries in 2006, had overtaken Cyprus and Bulgaria in 2007 on the RSF index but remained the EU bottom-ranker in Freedom House's report.[21]

Other analysts suggest that alleged American-European biases don't matter that much. What does matter is West-East or Industrial World-Developing World spins. Is it coincidental that indicators devised in Western industrial countries consistently rate Western industrial countries near the top?

The people who oversee the three studies have heard all these arguments. In general, they respond that it's simply not possible to be biased in favor of the industrial world or the United States or Europe because under international law media freedom applies everywhere. Maintaining it is an obligation of all UN members, as laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. "We're trying to get at freedom of expression as a universal value," said Paula Schriefer, director of advocacy at Freedom House.[22]

The problem is that there is disagreement on what media freedom is. Governments all over the world praise the concept but give very different descriptions of it. Singapore, which consistently gets low rankings in media freedom studies, is a case in point. In a speech in 2005, former Singaporean prime minister Goh Chok Tong dismissed the latest ranking from RSF as "a subjective measure computed through the prism of Western liberals."[23]

These liberals "often argue that press freedom is a necessary ingredient of democracy and that it is the fourth estate to check elected

An equipment vehicle for Radio Rotana, a subsidiary of Saudi Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal's Rotana Group. *Photo by Nisreen Banat.*

governments, especially against corruption," Goh said. "But a free press by Western standards does not always lead to a clean and efficient government or contribute to economic freedom and prosperity." Good media work to achieve common objectives, he said. "Its corporate interests should coincide with the core interests of its home country."

In China, editors have been dismissed and reporters and bloggers have been jailed for violating prohibitions against publishing anything that divulges state secrets or is detrimental to the dignity and interests of the state.

Good media know when to restrain themselves, he said, adding that Western media have on occasion demonstrated that virtue. In Goh's view, the BBC showed commendable restraint in its coverage of the London transit bombings of July 2005. The broadcaster mostly used recorded video images that it could edit and "injected calm by reporting on the speed of the emergency services and the quick recovery of the London stock market." He cited Singapore's experience during the 2002 crisis over the SARS illness. "Our newspapers and TV stations produced special cartoons and programs to drive home messages to promote public hygiene, increase awareness and dispel myths. The SARS episode was one of the most painful moments for Singapore. Without the media working with the Government, Singapore could not have pulled through."

Goh said he did not favor having a "subservient" or "unthinking" press and that coverage should give people a varied but balanced perspective. He repeated themes of responsibility and common societal objectives. "Editors and journalists must have high personal integrity and sound judgment—people who understand Singapore's uniqueness as a country, our multiracial and multi-religious make-up, vulnerabilities, and national goals," Goh said. "Having our media play the role as the fourth estate cannot be the starting point for building a stable, secure, incorrupt, and prosperous Singapore. The starting point is how to put in place a good government to run a clean, just and efficient system."

In its 2009 report, Freedom House ranked Singapore as "Not Free," placing it with Armenia in the 151-152 spot out of 195 countries and territories surveyed. "There are strict defamation and press laws, and the government vigorously punishes the press for perceived personal attacks on officials," the Freedom House report said. "As a result, the vast majority of print and broadcast journalists practice self-censorship." The report said that "films, television programs, music, books, and magazines are sometimes censored" and that "nearly all print and broadcast media outlets, internet service providers (ISPs), and cable television services are either owned or controlled by the state or by companies with close ties to the ruling People's Action Party." RSF also gave Singapore a low rank in its 2009 report, 133rd out of 175 countries rated.

China's government also routinely dismisses its low media freedom ranking (181st out of 196 countries in Freedom House's 2010 rankings). "Such kind of criticism is ridiculous and not worth commenting on," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu told reporters after Freedom House's 2007 survey again placed Chinese media in the "Not Free" category. But, like national officials everywhere, he went on to praise media freedom, essentially saying that Freedom House failed to recognize that China has it. "Freedom of speech and publication of its citizens are protected in China by law," he said. "The Chinese media enjoy sufficient freedom in reporting. Meanwhile, like in any other countries of rule of law, the Chinese media should conduct their work within the scope of the Constitution and law."[24]

In China, working within the scope of the Constitution and law generally means serving the government and Communist Party. Authorities view vast categories of information as something to be held in secret unless release would advance official policies. Editors have been dismissed and reporters and bloggers have been jailed for violating prohibitions against publishing anything that divulges state secrets or is detrimental to the dignity and interests of the state. The Internet is notoriously censored in China.

The Communist Party's Propaganda Department, whose status is signaled by the elegance of its headquarters building near Beijing's Tiananmen Square, has offices at the provincial, municipal, and county levels, and it routinely lets media executives know what it considers permissible.

> **The proper role of media is to "use their distinctive assets and advantages to convey the messages of peace, development, cooperation, mutual benefit, and tolerance."**
>
> — President Hu Jintao

Li Dongdong, deputy director of China's General Administration of Press and Publications (GAPP), told the government-run Xinhua News Agency in March 2010 that a small minority of journalists were giving the profession a bad name because they lacked political judgment. "There are some who have not been thoroughly trained in the Marxist theory of news, or news media ethics," Li said. GAPP would institute training for journalists on these topics and Communist Party propaganda regulations, she told Xinhua.[25] This is not to say that China's media are a monolith in which every word gets pre-clearance from censors. Chinese news organizations sometimes expose corruption. They sometimes give voice to unsanctioned citizen groups. But for the most part, the loosening is not deliberate party policy, but a side effect of past decades' introduction of free enterprise into myriad aspects of Chinese life. Many of the country's TV stations and newspapers, while remaining state-owned, have been cut from the government dole and told to support themselves financially. That means carrying advertising, which means offering content that will draw readers and viewers, which means sometimes broaching subjects that may not please party functionaries back in the capital. Evidence that control is less than total is seen in the periodic public slap-downs that officials give news organizations that they deem to have gone too far. In May 2009, for instance, the government of Guangdong province told state-controlled media there that they should curtail "negative" coverage of officials, public protests, and other sensitive subjects.[26]

In public forums, leaders all the way up to the president have suggested that China has evolved a media that other countries would do well to emulate. The words "harmony" and "peace" figure prominently in these statements. Close cooperation with the government and advancement of common goals is the core concept.

In October 2009, Beijing hosted a World Media Summit bringing together about 300 media executives and officials from all over the world at Beijing's Great Hall of the People. Among those in attendance were Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News Corporation; Tom Curley, chief executive of the Associated Press; and Satoshi Ishikawa, president of Kyodo News. Addressing the group, President Hu Jintao declared that the proper role of media is to "use their distinctive assets and advantages to convey the messages of peace, development, cooperation, mutual benefit, and tolerance." All media organizations should "strive to contribute to building a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity."[27] One way they can do this is to closely cover measures taken to combat the global recession, Hu said, noting that all countries are in the same boat and have moved to strengthen cooperation. Hu's views represent those of a political party that holds monopoly power. Yet it is hard to deny that in many East Asian countries, millions of people well below the level of the leadership view the media's proper role in terms different from those common in the United States and Europe. Japan's national ethic of addressing problems quietly without open confrontation, for example, is reflected in the generally staid reports of its national TV networks and newspapers. Likewise, many analysts posit the existence of an unwritten social contract in China: if the Communist Party continues to deliver a steadily rising standard of living, the bulk of citizens will not challenge its control of the political apparatus, which includes the media.

In Africa too, questions are aired, and not just by leaders, about the surveys' assumptions and whether Western concepts of media's proper role fit the culture of countries there. University of Cape Town professor Francis Nyamnjoh, for instance, has said that he sees an innate conflict between traditional African loyalties to social and ethnic groups and principles that journalists must be aloof from the subjects they cover. The result, he said, can be "media whose professional values are not in tune with the expectations of those they purport to serve. ... Torn between such competing and conflicting understandings of democracy, the media find it increasingly difficult to marry rhetoric with practice ... [and] may opt for a Jekyll and Hyde personality."[28] After RSF issued its 2009 report, Saudi journalist Muhammad Diyab observed: "There are some who believe that the report does not take cultural differences into account and further consolidates the hegemony of Western culture as the one culture that aims to dominate the world. ... The Reporters Without Borders' freedom index continued to save the bottom section of the list for most of the Arab countries."[29]

So, work is underway by a number of groups to develop indexes that everyone will recognize as culturally neutral for the world, or at least for one region of it.

Among the resulting systems is the African Media Barometer (AMB), developed by the Media Institute of Southern Africa and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), a foundation affiliated with Germany's Social Democratic Party. The barometer's stated purpose is not to compare countries one to the other, but to create consistent and credible assessments of media development and freedom in African states so as to facilitate a rise to the next level of quality. The index made its debut in 2005

Radio frequency monitoring station in Thailand.
Photo courtesy of National Telecommunications Commission, Thailand.

with studies of Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, and Kenya. By the end of 2009, it had been applied 47 times in 25 countries, with six of those countries getting three separate evaluations over time.[30] Each assessment is carried out by a panel of about 10 people that convene in the country being examined. Half are media professionals, half are members of various civil society groups. No officials from a country's government are included. Panelists debate the issues and share views before giving 1 to 5 scores on 45 indicators grouped under four assertions of the qualities of an ideal media system:

- "Freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, are effectively protected and promoted.
- "The media landscape, including new media, is characterized by diversity, independence and sustainability.
- "Broadcasting regulation is transparent and independent; the state broadcaster is transformed into a truly public broadcaster.
- "The media practice high levels of professional standards."

The findings are released at a press conference in the surveyed country, with diplomats and other dignitaries invited, with the hope of fueling debate and building political will to address whatever shortcomings have been identified. If they agree, the names of the panel members (though not their individual scorings on the 45 indicators) are normally published in the report.

If much of this seems familiar, it is. The methodology and many of the questions from this index draw liberally from the IREX approach, down to the use of the word "sustainability." There are differences, such as emphasis on the desirability of a three-tiered broadcast system of public, private, and community stations. But all in all, it's hard to point to many assumptions and values in the African Media Barometer that are uniquely "African."

Rather, part of the goal was to create leverage with governments that have a political allergy to the Big Three studies. Concerning the findings of these Washington and Paris-based groups, "criticized governments can more easily say that the report is based on a foreign conspiracy, agenda, or interest than with the AMB, where only local experts from the media and civil society discuss, score, and thus own the product without any input from outside," said Rolf Paasch, former director of fesmedia Africa, an affiliate of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.[31]

Perceptions of Western domination of the world's news media have long been common among some UNESCO member states.

The barometer also invokes the authority of regional agreements that African governments have pledged to uphold—for instance, the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, adopted in 2002 by the African Union's African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Likewise, the idea of a three-tiered broadcast system being desirable draws on the African Charter on Broadcasting, signed by governments of the region in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2001.

Further evidence that this barometer is not solely African comes from pilot applications of the evaluation system in India and Pakistan. According to fesmedia, the barometer "traveled" well, and was found to be acceptable in those countries.

In the meantime, questions of how to measure media development continued to percolate at UNESCO. The organization funds a broad collection of media aid programs around the world, and, like any donor, wants solid information about where its money should go. It is also a UN organization, sensitive to the views of individual member governments and reluctant to act without their approval and cooperation. Perceptions of Western domination of the world's news media have long been common among some UNESCO member states. Thus, as the organization considered how to create its media indicator system, a major objective was something that members would accept as universal.

The job of creating the new indicator system fell to the 39-country intergovernmental council that oversees UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), whose goal is creating free and pluralistic media and strengthening democracy. According to UNESCO, the program has mobilized about $100 million for more than 1,200 projects in more than 140 countries. In 2006, the council commissioned Andrew Puddephatt, a consultant with experience in British and other European human rights, constitutional reform, and media development organizations, to oversee an expert group that tapped people from professional associations, universities, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations.

The world's many systems for measuring media may be converging.

The team identified and analyzed 26 global and regional indexes that evaluate various aspects of media. Of these, 15 got especially close examination. "The existing assessment tools adopt a wide range of categories, which coincide only sporadically," Puddephatt later wrote. "For example, eight of the fifteen initiatives seek to assess degrees of editorial independence, a different eight assess quality of reporting, just four assess degrees of censorship, three look at access to printing and distribution, a different group of eight look at the presence of repressive defamation laws, and so on."[32] The team picked and chose from what they found, devising new indicators when they saw fit.

Political concerns were always present. "Special attention was paid to assure a wide geographical representation among participants, as the IPDC Council considered it important that perspectives from different parts of the world be taken into account when elaborating the indicators," a UNESCO report later said.[33]

Puddephatt noted that during the drafting process "it was suggested that UNESCO consider benchmarking countries against a minimum set of core indicators derived from this approach that were considered the minimum or optimum. At the official level UNESCO members were lukewarm about this option, considering that it would create political difficulties in an international governmental organisation, preferring a diagnostic tool specific to an environment rather than a comparative tool dependent upon subjective judgments and inadequate data."[34]

The final draft came together at a meeting at UNESCO headquarters in Paris in December 2007. In March the following year, the council unanimously adopted it.

The system posits five general categories of indicators for media development:

- "A system of regulation conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism, and diversity of the media: existence of a legal, policy, and regulatory framework which protects and promotes freedom of expression and information, based on international best practice standards and developed in participation with civil society.
- "Plurality and diversity of media, a level economic playing field and transparency of ownership: the state actively promotes the development of the media sector in a manner which prevents undue concentration and ensures plurality and transparency of ownership and content across public, private, and community media.
- "Media as a platform for democratic discourse: the media, within a prevailing climate of self regulation and respect for the journalistic profession, reflect and represent the diversity of views and interests in society, including those of marginalized groups. There is a high level of information and media literacy.
- "Professional capacity building and supporting institutions that underpin freedom of expression, pluralism, and diversity: media workers have access to professional training and development, both vocational and academic, at all

stages of their career, and the media sector as a whole is both monitored and supported by professional associations and civil society organizations.

- "Infrastructural capacity is sufficient to support independent and pluralistic media: the media sector is characterized by high or rising levels of public access, including among marginalized groups, and efficient use of technology to gather and distribute news and information, appropriate to the local context."[35]

These principles echo many of those found in the three major Western-based studies. In one sense, this suggests that the world's many systems for measuring media are converging. It could also reflect that most every country of the world today at least goes through the motions of praising media freedom—among the members of the council that adopted the evaluation standards unanimously were one-party states North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam. They put their stamp on a document that flies in the face of home practice that media must support communist party rule. UNESCO proceeds with an evaluation only if the country's government approves and cooperates. And although the UN body frowns on the practice, countries could choose to be evaluated only on particular indicators.

Once in motion, the evaluation process bears little resemblance to what happens in a Big Three survey. UNESCO's version can take months, involving committees and subcommittees, peer review, input by multiple professional groups, preliminary reports, and final consensus conclusions. Funding may be raised in the country, because UNESCO lacks the money to pay for everything itself. At the end of the process there is no numerical rating or ranking, but rather a report, sometimes lengthy, laying out the findings.

Seeking to modernize its media as it applies for entry into the European Union, Croatia was the first country to take the plunge. UNESCO worked with the government to settle on who would run the evaluation, choosing Zrinjka Perusko, founder and chair of the Centre for Media and Communication Research at the University of Zagreb. Brought into the study were a journalists association, a media ownership association, the public service media, human rights organizations, parliamentarians, the bar association, academics, and the attorney general's office. Over the course of nine months, five workshops were convened to consider each of the five indicators. In September 2009 about 80 study participants convened in the capital, Zagreb, under the auspices of President Stjepan Mesic, to discuss and release findings.

Among the conclusions: Croatia, "despite significant progress regarding media legislation, is still a long way from securing true freedom of the media that will not only be guaranteed by the law declaratively but also truly be applied in practice. The problem of ownership structure and the preference of politicians, non-transparent (often politically motivated) selection of members of the

A reporter for Radio Bhutan interviews a boy.
Photo courtesy of UNESCO.

Council which should monitor the media and ensure their independence, and the exclusion of the public and civil society from the process of making laws, are large problems that the Croatian legislature, but society as well, still need to solve."[36]

Mozambique is another of the first countries to be evaluated using the UNESCO index. Helge Rønning, a University of Oslo media and communications professor with long experience in Mozambique, conducted field work in March and April of 2008, from which came a 100-page preliminary report for the study. His writing underlined the difficulties in arriving at solid conclusions in a country that has very little reliable information on basic functions of the media. Sometimes he had to rely on creative reporting techniques: For newspaper circulation figures in the capital, Maputo, he drew on estimates devised by multiplying the number of newsstands by the number of copies that proprietors said they typically sold in a day. "To apply the indicators only from an outside perspective seems to me to be virtually impossible," Rønning wrote. "What is necessary is a local perspective and knowledge of the language in the country where the indicators are to be applied. They thus do not lend themselves to 'parachute missions.'"[37]

The overall evaluation has been overseen by the Mozambique chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which, as was mentioned above, helped establish the Africa Media Barometer. In February 2010, it published conclusions from the evaluation (not all of Rønning's were included). "Mozambique has a political and legal framework that is generally favorable to freedom of expression, and to pluralism and diversity in the media, although constraints still persist in the practical application of media-friendly laws and policies," MISA stated. Among its recommendations were calls for the repeal of anti-media provisions in security and state secret laws, stricter enforcement of a 20 percent foreign ownership ceiling, and more equitable distribution of state advertising.[38]

A 14-year-old girl conducts an interview for a magazine in Kinshasa.
Photo courtesy of Search for Common Ground.

So far, five countries have undergone UNESCO evaluations but it remains unclear how many eventually will. "It will have to be demand-driven, rather than supply-driven," says Wijayananda Jayaweera, director of UNESCO's Division for Communication Development. But he expresses hope that a media study will become a standard part of UN aid.[39]

He describes the program as "a tool to help, rather than a tool to judge." In his view, the indicators are invested with special legitimacy because they are not seen as serving merely those people agitating for media freedom. "The governments have agreed that this is the level of media development that they wish to see in their own countries," he said. In the meantime, findings can be used as leverage for reform. "No one can disregard these indicators—they are not imposed by anyone. … This is what's universally agreed—a good media system."[40]

Elsewhere, individuals have devised their own rating systems for particular sectors of the media in particular parts of the world. Some use numerical rating systems.

Andrei Richter, a professor at Moscow State University's Faculty of Journalism, designed a system for numerically surveying the legal environment for media in former Soviet republics. It assigned mathematical values to such issues as whether the country had a criminal defamation law concerning officials or limitations on foreign ownership. His study ranked Georgia as having the most liberal system, with a score of 13 out of a possible 15. At the bottom were Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, all with scores of 3.[41]

In an analysis of the numbers, Richter observes that what is in the legal code is not necessarily the last word: "The presence or absence of a particular law is no guarantee of media freedom. What matters is the quality of the law and the media restrictions and guarantees that it contains." Still, he notes that "the very existence (or otherwise) of legal criteria approved by parliament means that there are defined and long-term rules of conduct, and it is easier for the media to live with these than in a situation where the rules change daily at the discretion of officials who are unrestrained by law and therefore beyond control."[42]

OLD MEDIA VERSUS NEW MEDIA

As work to address claims of cultural and ideological bias continues, a parallel effort is targeting perceived technology bias.

All three studies have their roots in times when media essentially equaled print publications and broadcast stations. But starting in the 1990s, new challenges to the dominance of these media arose from computers wired to the Internet, from mobile phones, and other digital devices. As long ago as 1992, demonstrators confronting military rulers in Thailand used mobile phones to disseminate information at a time when newspapers and TV stations were under strict censorship and to move crowds or protestors from place to place.[43] More recently, the Twitter network became a crucial mobilization and news dissemination tool for the Iranian opposition as its members protested the official results of a presidential election. Much of the function of digital media is of course more workaday than that. People check Web sites for news on highway obstructions caused by construction projects or view sports scores sent out as text messages.

The new media technologies have often defied the categorization of the old. Newspapers and TV stations operated under a traditional one-to-many pattern of information distribution. They were capital-intensive institutions doing business from fixed locations and employing large numbers of people. The Internet reduced costs to near zero and ended fixed location. Essentially anyone could now act as a journalist and put out the word through blogs or e-mail listservs. The work might take place one day from a computer in a university dorm, the next from a machine used by the hour in an Internet cafe across town. Information could also circulate quickly and efficiently as mass

A woman learns to use video editing software at a training workshop in Egypt.
Photo courtesy of International Center for Journalists.

text messages addressed to numerous phone numbers. There was also the issue of measuring old-media institutions that were reaching into the new realm, such as newspapers and broadcast stations putting reports on Web sites or sending them out as text messages.

In some countries, old forms of information dissemination are heavily regulated, while new and expanding forms operate in relative freedom.

Monroe Price, of the Annenberg School for Communication, notes that in some countries the old forms of information dissemination are heavily regulated, while the new and expanding ones operate alongside them in relative freedom. A country's broadcast TV, for instance, may operate under tight direction while international satellite TV goes largely unregulated. In a similar way, he notes, "societies that have liberal, much-used blogospheres may reach degrees of freedom even if there are constraints … on legacy [traditional] media."[44]

Guobin Yang, an associate professor at Barnard College, has studied how the complexities and usage patterns of new media make it difficult to assess them in the traditional ways. In China, the Internet is not just a domestic operation, but a transnational one. Human rights activists inside China use it to network with allies beyond China's borders and to publicize rights violations. Chinese living overseas use it to reach into the country, as do foreign advocacy groups. And what Yang calls "cyber-nationalists" use it to protest when they perceive slights to the Chinese nation. Sometimes this includes trying to shut foreign Web sites down.

This intense complexity has made it difficult for the Chinese government to apply the same restrictions that have worked well for old media. "The most important trend in the 15-year history of the Internet in China is that as government control of the Internet tightens, Chinese citizens are becoming more active and creative users of the Internet in expressing dissent and protest," Yang writes. "Thus, speech freedom seems to be expanding at the same time as the state steps up efforts to limit the spaces for public speech."[45]

Thus, Yang cautions, ranking press freedom on the assumption that it "is a quantifiable property may run the risk of leaving out dynamic practices and processes, important aspects of public communication which are rendered extremely complex in the age of the transnationalization of media and communication."

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

Many of the people who design media freedom surveys felt the studies had to change with the times. Beginning in 2000, Freedom House's media freedom report included some comparatively simple tables on rates of Internet use. In June 2008, the organization got much more serious about the task. It convened a meeting of five outside digital specialists at its Washington offices to brainstorm about what form a detailed index methodology should take to measure an array of digital communications technologies including the Internet and mobile phones. The group eventually settled on assessing three broad issues: access to new media, limits on content, and violations of user rights. Later, specific questions were proposed and discarded and proposed again as a digital questionnaire made its way through 10 or so drafts. The final product was sent out to about 20 people around the world for comment. The methodology proposed to examine online access not only in terms of deliberate obstruction by governments, but in terms of the economic realities of building an affordable national broadband and telecommunications network. Freedom House wanted to avoid overly penalizing countries that were too poor to have access for everyone, but were making a good-faith effort to be open with what they did have—South Africa came to mind.

In critiquing the proposed indicators, people from developing countries tended to focus on barriers to access, because without access there could be no online world to assess. But people from industrialized countries, tending to take access for granted, expressed more concern over evaluating such issues as protection of online privacy. Eventually a balance was reached.

The new indicators were crafted also to assess not just the freedom of institutions to put out news by digital means but the freedom of individuals to do the same. This was meant to recognize the erosion of the old model where journalism is practiced as a full-time occupation, under the umbrella of an organization.

For the first survey, Freedom House decided to examine 15 countries. Diversity was sought—industrial, developing; democratic, single-party; well-wired, hardly wired. Georgia was included because its networks had come under cyber attack during the brief war with Russia in the summer of 2008—cyber attacks were specifically addressed in one of the methodology questions.

In critiquing the proposed indicators, people from developing countries tended to focus on barriers to access, because without access there could be no online world to assess.

Methods of information gathering and analysis followed those used in Freedom House's press freedom studies. A series of 19 questions was broken into three categories: Obstacles to Access, Limits on Content, and Violations of User Rights. For each country, a writer was engaged to rate the country's performance against the indicators and to draft a narrative report on the year's developments in digital media. The report and ratings were then discussed by a larger group composed of Freedom House staff and outside specialists. Because this was the index's first scoring and would serve as a baseline, some of the scores brought on debate and major readjustments in these meetings. The writer who had been engaged to rate Britain, for instance, started off giving it the worst possible scores on surveillance of digital communications. The larger group at Freedom House argued that, yes, Britain had issues in that field—authorities there made more than 500,000 requisitions of communications data from telephone companies and Internet service providers in 2007—but that the country could not properly be ranked among the worst surveillance offenders in the world. That score was revised for the better.[46]

Released in April 2009, the survey gave Estonia the best score, 10, while Cuba was the worst with 90.[47] Freedom House plans to expand the study to between 30 and 35 countries in 2010. Ivan Sigal, executive director of the international blogger organization Global Voices, believes that the Freedom House Internet survey gets at many of the right questions. But he can think of quite a few more. What are a country's legal practices considering "fair use" of copyrighted material? This is a big concern for bloggers who post other people's material. Do the software platforms available to a country's bloggers make it easy for anyone anywhere in the world to see their postings, or are the postings visible only to members of a closed online community? Should there perhaps be no gauge of professionalism in the digital world, given that so many of the people who are creating content are amateurs, holding down day jobs in other fields? "We're still figuring out what it is that we want to measure," said Sigal.[48]

For its part, IREX says that it does not intend to include specific digital questions in the MSI. From the start, it has shied away from assessing specific types of media, on the grounds that its objective is to assess a country's general climate. As such, IREX officials argue that their index is adequately measuring digital media as they gain in importance.

Reporters Without Borders, meanwhile, added digital media questions to its list. In line with the group's longtime focus, the questions stress such things as censorship and forms of coercion. The 2009 questionnaire asked: Was access to certain Web sites blocked? Were cyber-dissidents detained for more than a day? The questions do not attempt to measure such things as the geographical reach of a country's network or the cost of using it.

In the meantime, the leaps-and-bounds growth of digital communications is giving rise to separate systems for measuring freedom in that sector. Particular attention is going to

An Egyptian student participates in a training program in Cairo.
Photo courtesy of International Center for Journalists.

mobile phones and other handheld devices as they become the primary platform of digital communications in many developing countries. The United Nations' International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimated in October 2009 that by year's end the world would have 4.6 billion mobile device subscriptions (compared to just 500 million subscriptions by the end of 2009 for broadband Internet).[49]

MobileActive.org, an NGO that seeks to harness mobile communications for social change, is working to create a "Fair Mobile Index" that would assess conditions for mobile users country by country. The idea came out of a conference that the group hosted in Johannesburg in 2008 in which much of the talk concerned the "enabling environment" of mobile communications, said MobileActive.org co-founder Katrin Verclas. Is a country hostile or nurturing to the new methods of staying in touch? Pricing will be the first issue for consideration, through analysis of corporate data and studies by such groups as the World Bank and the ITU. The goal is to develop "a meaningful indicator … as to what constitutes the cost of mobile in comparison to local wage and income conditions and where are the areas that are out of sync," Verclas said.[50]Preliminary assessments suggest that sub-Saharan Africa is the world's most expensive region, that developing parts of Asia are relatively low in cost, and that Latin America is somewhere in between. Reasons for the disparities could include taxes, which in some countries account for up to 25 percent of the consumer's bill, and the lack of competitive telecom environments, which keeps prices artificially high. Contrasting strategies on infrastructure may have an effect as well—some countries have networks used jointly by multiple service providers, while in others each service provider builds its own. Verclas stresses that these are early readings. What she wants is hard facts, which could then be put before government officials, network executives, and civil society groups to bring about reform.

Later on, if funding permits, MobileActive.org hopes to conduct its own fieldwork to expand the indicators and incorporate issues such as surveillance of mobile traffic and censorship. Whatever form the index eventually takes, the group doesn't plan to rank countries. "The shame and blame approach … doesn't seem that pertinent," said Verclas. Rather, the goal is to assemble a body of relevant, accurate, and usable data on mobile costs, access, and security that local advocacy groups can use.

Is it truly possible to reduce to a single number the collective interaction of hundreds of newspapers, Web sites, and broadcast stations; thousands of reporters, editors, and government officials; millions of readers and viewers; billions of words and images?

HOW GOOD IS THE SOCIAL SCIENCE?

Freedom House's Sussman, who originated the scoring approach and used the results to create the tricolored world map, says he knew from the start he would hear claims of distortion. But Freedom House decided that "in this modern civilization, people want a quick fix and a map is one way of getting it." In his view, the map imparts basic information, and with that in hand, many people will be inspired to delve into the nitty-gritty of details that the organization publishes about each country. Certainly, reporters love rankings—individual country numbers are among the facts most noted in media write-ups of the Freedom House studies.

> **"Press freedom indices tend to default to a homogenous view of mass media which facilitates comparisons between countries ... but [this] masks significant differences."**
>
> — Patrick McCurdy, Gerry Power, and Anna Godfrey

Reporters Without Borders also opted for scoring and ranking, and on release day each year it also gets the same burst of media attention. IREX, whose survey is aimed more at helping media professionals plan programs, assigns scores but plays down notions of neighbor-to-neighbor ranking. Its reports place countries in clusters of similar development as indicated by scores. But anyone who wants to can use the numbers to create a full top-to-bottom ranking.

What is the validity of a finding that country X's media freedom is one tiny point different than it was the previous year? People inside and outside the studies generally say that differences as small as that cannot be accurately measured by these studies. IREX has expressed interest in considering the suggestion made over the years that studies publish a margin of error, if that were found to be statistically feasible. Freedom House says that a margin of error would not be viable for its own numbers. The organization's methodology is "not completely scientific," says Karin Karlekar, managing editor of Freedom House's study. "We are producing data, but I would say it's soft data rather than hard data."[51] Nonetheless, statistically questionable tiny shifts routinely translate into very substantial changes in the Freedom House classification, pushing countries between "Free," "Partly Free," and "Not Free."

Crafting questions in public opinion polls is an advanced art, with the objective of avoiding leading the witness and drawing only undisputable conclusions from the answers. Some analysts feel that the media freedom surveys do not measure up to these standards.

"Press freedom indices tend to default to a homogenous view of mass media which then facilitates comparisons between countries," write Patrick McCurdy, Gerry Power, and Anna Godfrey:

> The challenge is that media is an aggregate term. It neatly compresses a dynamic and diverse range of platforms (e.g. television, radio, print, online, mobile) into a single variable. While this consolidated view provides a means to speak generally about a country's "media environment," it also masks significant differences between types of media (platforms), between outlets (within and across platforms) and between those who own and control them (e.g. state, commercial, and community).[52]

The authors note studies from Yemen that found significant differences in the political news coverage of TV, radio, and newspapers that were all government-owned. How then, ask the authors, could there be a valid response to an RSF question: "Do the media report the negative side of government policies?" Moreover, the authors note that a "yes" answer will be taken as evidence of the existence of watchdog journalism, whereas reporting government policies' negative side could be merely due to a political agenda of the media organization doing it. While the authors note that nuance and exception can be expressed in the country-specific narratives that typically accompany the numbers, they contend that the phrasing of the questions could be improved.

Citing an RSF question about whether news was "suppressed or delayed because of political or business pressure," the authors say that in effect, four questions are being asked simultaneously. There's a difference between suppressing and delaying, they say, as there's a difference between political and business pressure. Better, the authors write, to break this down into four questions. Was there news that was suppressed because of political pressure? Was there news that was suppressed because of business pressure? And so on.

The three authors note other shortcomings. The questionnaires tend to focus on news and current affairs programming, even though in many countries important political discourse takes place through such things as call-in shows and dramas. Nor do the studies have built-in ways to account for the influence of one-time big events in a country, such as elections or scandals.

The authors say there is a resistance to rewriting the studies, with maintaining the consistency of questioning being offered as a justification. ["However, the threats to validity and reliability identified in this chapter are not reduced by asking the same questions repeatedly over time and there is no benefit in repeating methodological errors for the sake of consistency."]

Freedom House takes the position that it has to be very careful about altering its questioning system, lest it upset a 30-year run of data that allows comparisons across a stretch of time found with none of the other studies. Morse of IREX notes that long questionnaires run the risk of alienating the person filling them out. Do better results come if a person hurries through a long list of questions, or if he or she gives thoughtful consideration to a shorter one?

Even if all this debate were somehow to end with global agreement on what questions to ask, disagreement would remain over how to answer them.

> **"It is important to cast the net even wider and draw in as many voices as possible as an attempt at 'balancing' the assessment outcomes."**
>
> — Fackson Banda

One issue is the number of people rating a particular country. Freedom House, for instance, gives a lot of responsibility to a single writer/analyst, with a small number of staff members or outside experts adding input later on. "One or a few people can have a large sway on things, which for social sciences is not a good indication," says Devra Moehler, an assistant professor at the Annenberg School for Communication who has used and studied the numbers over the years. Ideally, she said, a survey of this type would have 50 people scoring each country, in order to screen out statistical "noise" and personal bias.[53]

Another issue is the reliability of the people on the rating panels. Do panel members whom an organization signs up tend to be ones who have bought into its world view, and do they answer their questionnaires accordingly? Taking part in a panel may entail time off from work, a stipend, and some travel. Do answers get shaped in part by hopes of getting invited back next year? In a few cases, the same people have served on different organizations' panels. Overlap is sometimes hard to avoid. In a small country, there may be just one person in the entire population who fits the profile that a survey organizer is looking for, say, a woman who heads a media-oriented NGO and is from a particular ethnic group.

Banda of South Africa's Rhodes University cites the danger of respondents "knowing exactly how they ought to respond during focus group or panel discussions, especially when they know the results might be used for advocacy ends which will serve their causes." He questions: "Why, for example, do certain categories of respondents repeatedly describe the media as tools for political repression? ... How can such respondents' responses be checked against other readings? This ... tends to skew the results in favor of the 'anti-establishment' discourse. It is thus important to cast the net even wider and draw in as many voices as possible as an attempt at 'balancing' the assessment outcomes."[54]

Concerning Reporters Without Borders' experts, Holtz-Bacha writes: "We do not know to what extent the experts apply their own experiences and the values of their own culture which influence their view." She notes also that it makes a difference "to whom the experts and correspondents talk in a country before making their judgments: Everybody knows from their own country that, for instance, the perspective of a journalist often differs considerably from that of a publisher."[55]

Leon Morse of IREX says that his organization has worked from the beginning to assure that its panelists are diverse. "If panels were all editors, all owners, all reporters, or all human rights workers familiar with the media, then I would worry about skew. But the diversity provides many viewpoints." He dismisses hopes of getting invited back as a distorting factor—serving on a panel takes just a day or a day and a half and is not particularly lucrative. In any case, he points out, panels are changed a bit every year, so there is no guarantee of a return invitation.[56]

Other analysts challenge whether a universal questionnaire is always the best approach. Price, for instance, notes: "France has a corporatist, statist tradition and one in which there is a heavy emphasis on centralism, but it is a strong democracy. An evaluation system that asked about media freedom in France from inside a French model would be less universal, less useful in many ways, across time and across states. But it would have compensating advantages for understanding the interplay between media institutions and political institutions."[57]

Holtz-Bacha offers a similar view that there is no reliable one-size-fits-all system. Rather, "it is appropriate to compare freedom of the press among similarly developed democracies where similar expectations are brought forward to the media." Due for special examination would be such issues as the impact of national security laws, reliance on freelancers (rather than staff members), and the internationalization of ownership. Deep comparative studies of just a few generally similar countries, she maintains, will let us find out whether Finland, long a top ranker in existing studies, really is "the heaven of press freedom."[58]

An experiment to bring a phone connection to one of the most remote villages in Thailand. *Photo courtesy of National Telecommunications Commission, Thailand.*

WHY HAVE MEDIA FREEDOM IF IT MEANS BAD MEDIA?

So far, this report has examined mainly the measurement of environment—does Country X have a political, economic, and legal environment in which quality journalism can exist?

Of the three studies, only IREX's makes a systematic attempt to measure quality, through MSI questions such as:

"Reporting is fair, objective, and well sourced."

"Journalists follow recognized and accepted ethical standards."

Members of IREX panels are asked to what degree these and other statements of quality reflect reality in the country being studied. In the 2009 review of former communist countries, for instance, the range of quality ran from a low of 0.64 (out of a potential 4) in Uzbekistan to 2.50 in Bulgaria.

Many analysts say that the most important thing is not the environment itself, but what a country's media accomplishes in that environment.

RSF does ask in its questionnaire if there is "frequent detailed investigative reporting on a range of sensitive subjects." But by and large, RSF and Freedom House leave the quality question aside, taking the position that what matters is whether there's an environment in which quality journalism can exist. Ménard has acknowledged that this has at times given RSF some unsavory bedfellows. "We have found ourselves in some difficult situations, defending people who are indefensible," he lamented in an interview with the *Courier* magazine, which focuses on relations between the European Union and developing countries. "Take, for example, the newspaper in Cameroon that published lists of homosexuals in a country where homosexuality is considered a crime. Not only was their list false but such an attitude is immoral and goes against any journalistic ethics. I had a difficult task in asking the government not to imprison them so as not to make heroes of them."[59]

But many analysts say that what ultimately matters is not so much the environment as what the country's media accomplishes in that environment, with whatever environment mixture of freedom and repression it may have. A. S. Panneerselvan, executive director of Panos South Asia, notes that: "[In] regions where data on 'enabling environment' have near perfect scores, like North America, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, the media is fast declining. In sharp contrast to this, there is accelerated plural growth clearly discernible in countries which do not score high on the enabling environment graph, like India, Pakistan, or Nepal."

The "Global" South is not a problem concerning media and the "Global" North is not its solution, he argues. "The American media's weak-kneed reaction to the Iraq War and the South Asian media's strong critique of issues of national and international importance, whether it is the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal or the global financial crisis, are clear examples which enlighten this point," he writes.

Panneerselvan offers Nepal as another case in point: "February 1st 2005 saw King Gyanendra declare himself absolute ruler in Nepal after dismissing the government and declaring a State of Emergency. Despite ordinances, media gags, arrests, and constant harassment, the Nepali media stood up as one to take on the palace onslaught. Radio in Nepal is the most popular medium of news dissemination even in the remotest corners of this Himalayan country. Censoring and silencing could not prevent media from finding newer and newer ways to get news across to the people and the world outside."[60]

Price makes a related point, but from the viewpoint that it is citizens who may not take a lack of freedom sitting down. "[T]he Partly Free/Not Free designations might mask societies where individuals and large swaths of society may be substantially informed—indeed perhaps more informed—on issues of public moment than their counterparts in those societies categorized as 'Free,' though at higher cost to the individual.[61]

"Societies may have a free press and a passive and disinterested citizenry. ... Conversely, there are societies that have a tightly controlled press, but the structure of information diffusion on issues of public importance is robust and communities turn what is available into tools of information and mobilization."

To Price, a prime question is: "Do the media in a particular society actually produce an informed citizenry?" He notes that the definition of "informed" varies from country to country. "One society may think that familiarity with the Bible is a prerequisite for what constitutes being an informed citizen; another may have very high literacy demands in international affairs or economics." But still, he urges new attention to this issue, seeing "media literacy" as a crucial, if elusive, quality to understand. "It is fairly easy to measure and evaluate the number of television and radio stations or the number of newspapers in a state," Price writes, "and it is increasingly possible to find data on the number of Internet users, both in terms of reach and actual use. What remains difficult is to assess what technologies, old and very old, as well as new and experimental, actually have a major impact on persuasion."

But ultimately, Price proposes, "free and independent media are not a good in themselves, but only inasmuch as they support other, more intrinsic, values and goals, such as democracy, a particular economic structure, greater cultural understanding, general human development, and so on."[62]

Workers at Sudan Radio Service pose with one of the station's hand crank-powered radios.
Photo courtesy of Sudan Radio Service.

WHOM TO ASK? EXPERTS OR THE CITIZENS?

To judge the state of the food in a restaurant, should you query the people at its tables, or the chef and waiters? Certainly the staff will be better able to discuss the ingredients, the culinary artistry, the organizational skills that go into producing a meal, as well as whether the restaurant is making enough money to stay in business. But in the end, isn't it best to ask the customers?

If a particular media organization gives people voice, it could follow that it does not much matter whether the organization is owned by government, wealthy investors, or an NGO.

For some years, a competing view has been gaining support that the thing to pay attention to concerning media freedom is a quality known as "citizen voice." This gained credence in the larger world of economic development in the 1990s, as James Wolfensohn made it something of a crusade during his 10 years as head of the World Bank. He initiated a Voices of the Poor program that by the bank's count funneled the views of more than 60,000 low-income people in 60 countries to the high-level (and high-income) people who make decisions on development funding. His idea was that the insights of poor people could help craft better specific programs but also that giving poor people a role in public forums was vital to any country's hopes for economic transformation and democratization.

"I have been to literally hundreds of slums and villages," Wolfensohn said during a speech in Amsterdam in 2000. "The best people you meet are in those slums and villages. They are the people that understand poverty better than any of us."[63]

In the context of media development, citizen voice is "the expression and circulation of the full range of citizen opinions in the public sphere. ... Are all citizens able to participate in the media? Are they able to express their interests in ways that the media pick up and multiply, and that the government hears? Most important, are the voices of marginalized peoples heard, those who are especially in need of poverty alleviation, social recognition, and political representation?" That is the definition of citizen voice used by Thomas Jacobson, Lingling Pan, and Seung Joon Jun.[64]

If a particular media organization gives people voice, it could follow that it does not much matter whether the organization is owned by government, wealthy investors, or an NGO. Viewed from the other direction, ownership doesn't give reliable guidance concerning voice. Most state-affiliated broadcasters rigidly reflect the policy line of the party in power, but others are studiously responsive to the citizenry—the United Kingdom's BBC is sometimes held up as an example of a public broadcaster that listens and reflects and does not become the tool of whoever is in office. Likewise, one privately owned newspaper might look to its readers for guidance, while another might take its cues from the cabinet minister who is its patron.

Jacobson calls the concept of citizen voice in media a present-day representation of an idea presented in the 1956 academic work *Four Theories of the Press*. The idea of voice seems new, he says, because the community of multilateral agencies and national development agencies has only recently given it serious attention in relation to development.[65]

Jacobson and his two co-authors note that some of the Big Three studies do attempt to get at questions of responsiveness to the public. The MSI, for instance, asks whether "state or public media reflect the views of the entire political spectrum, are nonpartisan, and serve the public interest." But, the three authors note, even on this question, the surveys ask professionals, rather than "those who would best seem suited to answer questions about citizen voice, i.e., the citizens themselves."[66]

The authors propose building on work of the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who analyzed how legitimacy of democratic government rests on discourse, on citizens being able to express views to government and draw a response, and in particular on citizens *knowing* that they are being heard. Jacobson and his co-authors note: "Of course, actual discourse in complex societies is largely mediated discourse. Citizen voice can only be possible to the extent that citizen and government views are elaborated in public through the media. However, the mere existence of newspapers, broadcast outlets, and sunshine laws does not guarantee that citizens will be heard. A certain quality of actual discourse is required."[67] So, modifying a question set that Habermas developed for understanding the give and take of general political discourse, the authors have proposed opinion poll questionnaires that would get at the question of citizen voice and the media.

People involved in the major existing surveys generally welcome the idea of measuring citizen voice, but say that it's just not within the scope or resources of their studies.

Habermas saw two areas of consideration for understanding overall democratic discourse. The first is known as "validity claims." Do people believe their government; do they feel it is acting in a sincere way, based on solid knowledge? The second is called "speech conditions." To what extent do citizens feel they get a chance to take part in the political process, are able to raise any issue or idea they want, and feel they get a real hearing? The authors' approach would narrow this down to evaluate the media.

For validity claims, citizens might be asked questions including:

- To what extent do you feel the media are knowledgeable about the subjects they report?
- To what extent do you feel the media behave in a manner that is appropriate given their public responsibilities?

For speech conditions, citizens might be asked:

- To what extent do you feel you and others like you are given *equal opportunities* to present your views in the media?
- To what extent do you feel that the media cover your positions *fully and to your satisfaction*?

The answers would help researchers identify specific shortfalls in citizen voice in a given country. For instance, people might think that in questions of general access, the media are very open, but that there are certain topics that reporters and editors avoid. Findings like those could help in the crafting of new media aid programs. Overall, the authors say, the goal of the survey would be to ascertain, "are the media themselves democratically legitimate in carrying out their Fourth Estate function?"[68] The data could also be used to create an index comparing voice in countries of a region or, ultimately, every country in the world, the authors say.

People involved in the major existing surveys generally welcome the idea of measuring citizen voice, but say that it's just not within the scope or resources of their studies. Moreover, citizens might not be able to provide the information that the studies set out to gather. "I do not think that readers and viewers would be able to answer our questions and provide the in-depth analysis that we get regarding such things as access to information, broadcast licensing, self-censorship, use of market research, efficacy of professional associations and training, etc.," says Morse of IREX.[69]

SO JUST HOW GOOD ARE THESE INDEXES?

The Big Three studies bear the burden of myriad questions about quality, credibility, and approach. And yet…

Conflicting rankings of individual countries do not seem that significant when viewed in terms of groupings of countries.

Freedom House's survey in 2009, for instance, was top-heavy with European countries, which make up 16 of the uppermost 20, along with New Zealand, Palau, Jamaica, and St. Lucia. So was RSF's 2009 line-up—again, 16 of the top-ranked 20 were European. The others were Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. That consistency would seem to be evidence of fair evaluation. Other numbers suggest that home countries by no means always enjoy a home team advantage. "If you look at the countries that do the best in our index, it's European countries," says Karlekar.[70] And in RSF's 2009 study, meanwhile, France ranked 43rd, suggesting that it gets no special consideration.

Becker and Vlad, giving the numbers a scrubbing as political scientists, found general uniformity of outcomes. Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders "reach much the same conclusion over the years about the media systems they evaluate," they wrote. IREX's Media Sustainability Index is difficult to compare directly to the other two because it examines only select countries that are targets of media assistance, leaving out Western Europe and the United States. Still, the authors found correlation where there was overlap of countries surveyed. All three measures, they concluded, appear to be "more similar than dissimilar."[71]

Becker and Vlad also found signs of internal statistical integrity:

> The Freedom House measures of Press Freedom stretch across 28 years. ... The measure should be relatively consistent year to year, when changes are expected

A child looks on as a reporter interviews a man in Hebron.
Photo courtesy of International Palestinian Youth League.

> to be slight, and less consistent across time, when changes are expected to accumulate. In other words, the measure should be reliable (not reflect random error), but valid (reflect real change). The average correlation year to year for the Freedom House measures is .97 ... Freedom House switched from a three-point scale to a 100-point scale in 1993, but the change made little difference in terms of reliability. By tracking the score for an individual year across time, however, it is possible to see that the Freedom House measures are not static. The correlation between the measure of Press Freedom in 1980 ... with 1981, was .92. The correlation between the 1981 measure and the 2007 measure, however, was .57 ... In sum, the data are consistent with the argument that the measure is reliable and valid.[72]

"The Reporters Without Borders measures of Press Freedom also are consistent year to year," Becker and Vlad continue:

> The average correlation is .94. The Reporters Without Borders measures are available only across seven years, but they, too, show evidence of decreasing correlations across time. The 2002 measure of Press Freedom correlates .94 with the 2003 measure but only .83 with the 2008 measure.
>
> The IREX measures of Media Sustainability, or independence, are harder to assess in this way, since IREX has added new countries over time. From 1991 to 1993, the same countries were being measured, and the average correlation year-to-year was .91. The 2001 to 2007 correlation for the same group of countries was .76.

Other findings from Becker and Vlad suggest that the three surveys often, but not always, do a credible job of getting at something resembling citizen voice, even if they do not set out to do so.

The relationship indicates that in those countries evaluated by Freedom House as Free, the citizens also judge the media to be free, and in those countries judged by Freedom House to be low in terms of press freedom, the citizens agree.

The authors examined numbers compiled by the Web site WorldPublicOpinion.org, which asked randomly selected citizens in certain countries the same sets of questions that experts answered for Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House. With Freedom House, comparisons of citizen and expert responses yielded a statistical correlation of 0.81, signaling a high degree of similarity. "While the number of countries involved is small (only 20), it is quite diverse, ranging from Argentina to the United States, with Azerbaijan, Nigeria, India, and Indonesia included," the authors wrote. "The relationship indicates that in those countries evaluated by Freedom House as Free, the citizens also judge the media to be free, and in those countries judged by Freedom House to be low in terms of press freedom, the citizens agree." A comparison of the WorldPublicOpinion findings with those of Reporters Without Borders, meanwhile, found less of a correlation, 0.70. Becker and Vlad did not work with figures from IREX due to the smaller number of countries surveyed both by it and WorldPublicOpinion.[73]

The authors also looked at Gallup polls that measure how much confidence the public of various countries has in their media. "If media systems evaluated as free were judged to be performing at a higher level—and consequently worthy of a vote of confidence—the relationship would be positive." But in fact, it is "ever so slightly negative based on the measures of Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders," the authors wrote—that is, many people tended not to trust media in societies evaluated as free. When comparing Gallup figures to IREX findings in its category measuring journalistic performance, the authors found a small correlation: "The media systems with more professionally solid performance garner more confidence from their citizens."[74]

Moehler of the Annenberg School offers this summary: Despite widespread concerns over the social science credibility of the media freedom studies, "they are almost always in the ballpark of being accurate."[75]

> **There is practically no one who wishes that the three organizations would end their freedom rankings.**

Another way to look at it: Even if one believes that the studies are applying a Western-centric notion of media freedom, they are applying it with reasonable uniformity in all countries of the world and therefore the information that results is worth considering.

In the end, there is practically no one (save perhaps officials in thin-skinned governments) who wishes that the three organizations would end their freedom rankings. In the absence of the ideal, universal, unbiased, statistically flawless index, great numbers of people all over the world rely on the existing ones for a great variety of uses and do so in the belief that the data is solid.

Thus the Freedom House survey figured in the 2009 European Parliament debate on a measure to condemn Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi on media policies. RSF as well jumped into the fray the day before the vote, seconding Freedom House's downgrading of Italy. The parliamentary measure was narrowly defeated. A spokesman for Berlusconi, Paolo Bonaiuti, dismissed RSF as something promoted by previous Italian governments and therefore not to be taken seriously. "The left has made them become famous like Pink Floyd," he said.[76]
When Taiwan dropped from 32nd to 43rd place in the Freedom House country rankings in 2009, opposition politicians there were quick to charge that government policies were partly to blame. A government spokesman gave a conciliatory response, saying that the report showed that there was "room for improvement" in Taiwan's media system.[77]

In Washington, foreign diplomats sometimes come calling at the Freedom House office to contest their countries' rankings. In some capitals, governments crow about the bad numbers of rival states. The news media in Armenia and Azerbaijan, for instance, have sometimes reported how low the other country has scored, according to Freedom House.

The numbers also figure in policy decisions and budget allocations in many industrial world capitals. They are part of the raw data that goes into several categories of World Bank studies, including the Country Assistance Strategy reports, which assess economic, political, and social conditions in individual states to help plan bank programs.

The numbers also figure in decisions at the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees the approximately $700 million that the U.S. government spends annually on services such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Asia. The Freedom House data have a role in deliberations over such questions as where to increase programming or shift it from radio to television. Entered into spreadsheets, the numbers join data from other indexes such as Freedom House's broader freedom rankings, the UN Human Development Index, and the Index of Economic Freedom compiled by the *Wall Street Journal* and the Heritage Foundation. "The virtue of all of these is that you get a score for every country and you can look at the overall progress of each country," said James Morrow, a consultant to the board's staff. "We like their methodology." The board also considers anecdotal information from narrative reports of Reporters Without Borders and IREX in making decisions concerning safety of staff members in the field.[78]

Finally, the studies have a major impact in the academic world. They figure in countless books, dissertations, and journal articles as political scientists slice the numbers this way, parse them that way in search of new relationships, new causes and effects concerning media freedom and evolution in world societies. The Freedom House studies are the most common cited, due to their three-decades-long run of data.

Typical of this genre is a recent study that found that media freedom can be "contagious" across borders, with countries catching it from their neighbors. Authors Russell S. Sobel, Sanjukta Roy, and Nabamita Dutta write:

> Most importantly, television and radio broadcast signals often reach beyond a country's border. Citizens of one country generally have easy access to radio, television, and newspapers from neighboring countries. This makes it possible for them to compare the media at home with that in neighboring countries, and demand changes to domestic media institutions.
>
> Citizens also have greater access to knowledge about the rules and laws governing media from neighboring countries and can use these as models for internal reform. Thus, pressure from an internal population aware of a free press in a neighboring country can compel government to adopt reforms promoting a free media at home.
>
> Alternatively, reform-minded policy makers who wish to improve internal policies can most easily consult with and copy the reforms undertaken in nearby countries. Thus, changes in the media freedom in one country can create a domino effect in which media reforms ripple into neighboring countries through time.

Some analysts suggest that changes in the media freedom in one country can create a domino effect for neighboring countries.

About a quarter of press freedom in a given country is attributable to this effect, the authors conclude. Implicit in the findings is cross-border leverage of media aid. "This suggests that aiding the process of media reform in one country can have significant spillover effects on media reform in neighboring countries." But, the three scholars note, "unfortunately, our results also suggest that the impact works in the opposite direction, in that if one country has a relatively unfree media, that neighboring countries will have worse media institutions as a result."[79]

What did they use to measure levels of media freedom? The Freedom House numbers, which they call "the most comprehensive dataset available on global media freedom." (Like many academics working with the Freedom House numbers, they found it counterintuitive that high scores mean low press freedom and so mathematically inverted the numbers for their study.)

EVALUATING AT THE MICRO LEVEL

If it is tough to rate the entire media system of a country, surely it is simpler to assess a single aid program in that country to see if it made a mark on overall journalistic quality. But evaluation at this micro level has a similar history of competing approaches and theories.

"Donors sit on stores of data that, if accessible, could potentially be used for further qualitative and quantitative study."

— Shanthi Kalathil

The breaching of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union set off a rush of media money and advisors into the former communist societies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. By one count, Bosnia and Herzegovina alone attracted more than $60 million of media aid money after the Dayton peace accord of 1995.[80] As happens during any emergency, paperwork and accounting sometimes got short shrift. It was largely a matter of faith that the money was making a difference. If 50 reporters completed a training seminar in former communist Country A, what result could there be but stronger journalism? Reporters who had once taken their cues from party officials would now know how to ask tough questions, maintain balance, and insist on factual accuracy. Stronger journalism, in turn, could have no result except to improve Country A's general levels of democracy, accountability, and rule of law by putting information into the hands of a newly empowered citizenry.

By the end of the 1990s, donors were often asking for objective evidence of such impact. Programming officials began creating special line items in their budgets for monitoring and evaluation. Sometimes the job was done in-house as part of day-to-day operations, sometimes by outside consultants deemed to have no personal stake in finding success or failure. In a 2005 study of U.S. government-funded media development programs, the U.S. Government Accountability Office found a hodgepodge of evaluation methods being applied in many U.S. missions overseas. "Anecdotal examples, rather than quantifiable measures, are frequently used to demonstrate success," it said.[81]

Shanthi Kalathil, a consultant working with the World Bank, notes that evaluations often had modest goals to begin with. Typically, she explains:

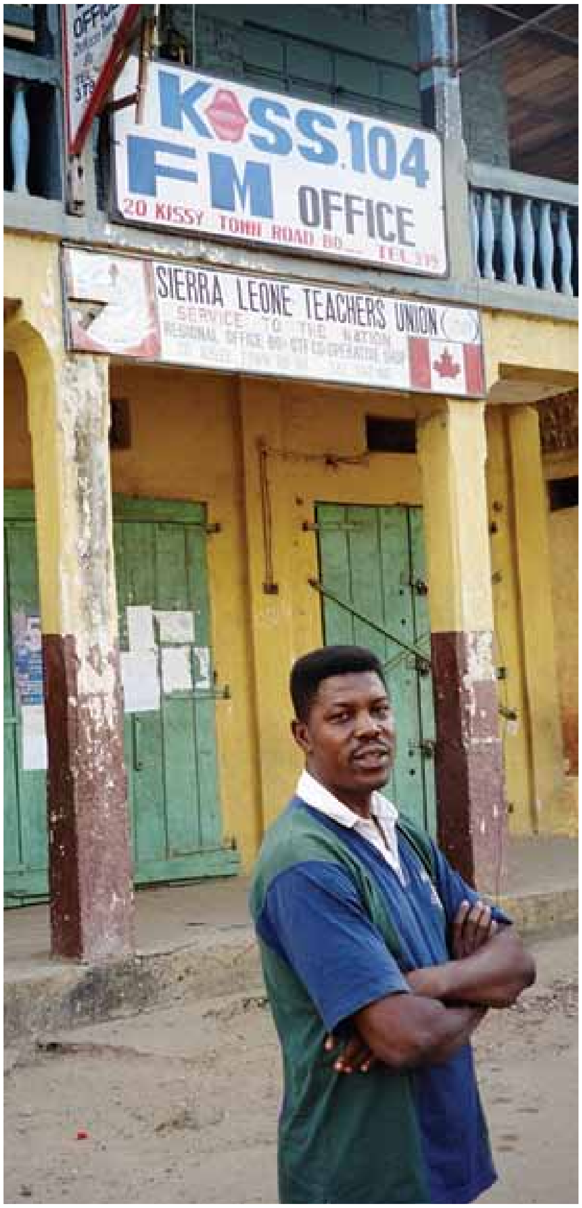
> Evaluations focus on the *internal* success of the individual media programs themselves (did the program meet its stated objectives?). Of those surveyed by this author over the last several years, only a handful of evaluations attempted to draw methodical conclusions about the impact of media assistance on the broader issue of democratization and good governance. This may be because there is no widely usable, standardized template or tool by which one can judge the impact of a particular media development program on the broader governance context. ... The program assessments also remain almost completely divorced from the theoretical literature presented in the communication and political science realms.[82]

But even as evaluation data began to be collected, aid groups that preached the virtues of openness and transparency in government and society at large have often treated that data as a sort of state secret, to be shared only with the donor and other members of the implementing team. "Donors sit on stores of data that, if accessible, could potentially be used for further qualitative and quantitative study," writes Kalathil.[83] "Even if they aren't perfect (i.e., self-reported indicators, project monitoring and evaluation reports by implementers), they may prove useful in some way. However, donors frequently have political reasons for not wanting project evaluations publicized, particularly if the evaluations prove unfavorable." Kalathil notes that if evaluation results were shared generally, there would still be challenges to face, including "identifying the data to be collected, devising a reasonable method for collection, and ensuring reliable collection that does not prove a burden to program implementers and managers." However, she notes, "none of these challenges are insurmountable."

Program monitoring and evaluation remains an evolving art. Many donors now require that an M&E plan be part of any bid to carry out a media program. But with no standard approach, implementers are left to craft their own.

In Savannakhet, a Mekong River province in southern Laos, the training academy of Germany's Deutsche Welle international broadcasting network is funding a new radio service. By fits and starts, Laos has been opening up to the outside world, inviting foreign investment, and giving foreign tourists access to many once closed places. It is also accepting media aid. One thing communist officials would like to do is win back listeners who habitually tune in to stations broadcasting from across the Mekong in Thailand. So the German-funded service is offering a mix of music, sports, health, and on-the-street interviews, broadcast on state radio. For one of its pilot programs, reporters took voice recorders to bus stops to interview people about a controversial change in transportation service. Long-distance buses were no longer going all the way to the center of town but dropping people off at bus stops in outlying areas, from which most had to pay again to complete their journeys. All in all, it's a type of radio quite unusual in the one-party state.

To keep tabs on the project's evolution and impact, Deutsche Welle's academy is relying in part on conventional evaluation methods. In May 2009, the academy flew an evaluator from Germany to Savannakhet to interview 10 staff members and six journalists from outside the radio project. Each was queried in detail on such subjects as job likes and dislikes, what it means to be a journalist in Laos, and professional hopes for the future. Plans call for a second round of interviews with the same people in about a year and a third round in two years, to create comparative data regarding changes in attitude over time.



A man stands in front of a community radio station in Sierra Leone.
Photo courtesy of Developing Radio Partners.

The station is also trying to evaluate by tapping into a form of "citizen voice." In the first days after the radio service began in September 2009, the phone began to ring at the station. Listeners were spontaneously calling in, using the ever-more-common mobile phones. After a while, station staff members fielding calls were using a form with a standard set of questions to ask. Through fliers and announcements on the broadcasts, and through outreach missions by van to surrounding communities, the station sought to get more listeners to call in, by posing simple questions that they could answer: What do you think of the new station? What would you like it to carry? Do you have a story to share? For the most part, the responses have been fairly simple. You have a new program, many callers say. It sounds different, fresh. Some of them react directly to information heard on the program. One caller asked for the phone number of a chicken farmer who had explained his method of successfully selling eggs.[84]

The academy realizes that people who choose to call are a self-selecting sample, not a random one. There is also the question of getting genuine views in a political environment in which people are wary of saying the wrong thing. According to Helmut Osang, head of the Asia Division at Deutsche Welle Akademie, the academy hopes that by continuing to gather and analyze this feedback it will be able to better craft the service and program future money (it spent about €180,000—roughly $245,000—on the project in 2009). So far, the evaluation is a work in progress, and program officials are not sure what the result will be.

Craig LaMay of Northwestern University suggests that media aid organizations seeking to keep tabs on their programs might do well to borrow a business world management tool known as the "performance dashboard." An automotive dashboard gives a driver second-by-second readings on such things as speed, engine heat, and fuel supply. The management variant is an information system that is Web-based, displays real-time data about operations, and is available to everyone in an organization. It is designed "to make conceptual sense out of a hash of descriptive information. It should answer basic questions about the organization's operations, indicate

A group of newspaper vendors in India.
Photo by Sevanti Ninan.

the presence and seriousness of any problems, and guide decisions about future operations," writes LaMay. "In the business literature, the key to getting meaningful measures of performance lies in choosing the right (i.e., understandable and relevant) indicators and then ensuring that data exist to accurately calculate the metric."[85]

LaMay cites the case of the Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF), which has its headquarters in New York. Rather than making grants to media organizations, as so many aid agencies do, the fund invests in them or lends them money. Proponents of this approach say it creates a long-term partnership rather than the often tense donor-supplicant relationship of grant programs. In 2006, seeking a systematic view of its operations, the fund's managers adopted a performance dashboard. As metrics for each client enterprise, they chose sales (what the client collects in advertising or subscriptions, for instance); audience (newspaper circulation, perhaps, or total number of readers or viewers); and long-term viability (this is estimated through a rating scale of seven risk factors). These numbers were all deemed to be knowable, whether through reports from clients, independent audits, or diligent risk analysis. "MDLF's performance dashboard is notable mostly because it shows how the organization as a whole is doing in fulfilling its mission," LaMay writes. Still, he says, it is "susceptible to a lot of methodological second-guessing, the most critical of which has to focus on the accuracy and validity of its metrics. Certainly, where MDLF relies on its clients to provide data, it is hard to know whether those data are collected consistently (for example, weekly or monthly)."[86]

Whatever its strengths, LaMay notes that the performance dashboard will not answer the following question: Is there causality "between MDLF's investment decisions and changes in a particular media organization or the media environment generally in any of the countries where it operates?"

Such links were once taken for granted, but now there is a continuing search for hard evidence of their existence. Most analysts caution against relying on upticks in a country's overall rating. But in rare cases, there can be an unmistakable connection. Freedom House's index, for instance, considers whether a country "has restrictions on the means of journalistic production and distribution." That could mean printing plants. In 2003, Freedom House helped establish the first independent printing plant in Kyrgyzstan. Result? An instant uptick in the Kyrgyz overall press freedom score in that one indicator.

But overall, using the national indicators to judge program-specific effectiveness is dangerous. A four-week training program might give 50 reporters a solid set of journalistic skills. But so what? Could they practice a better form of the craft if their bosses remained wedded to their old ways? Or if the local courts afforded no protection from people angered by newly professional reporting? Or if there was too little advertising in the shaky post-communist economy even to keep the reporters employed?

"Multiple factors affect press dynamics," notes Silvio Waisbord of George Washington University. "For example, a turn towards authoritarianism may rapidly undo slow advances in media democratization supported by global actors. Domestic economic growth may open alternatives for press economies. The coming of administrations committed to media diversity may facilitate the work of global assistance programs."[87] There is growing agreement that to have true effect, media programs must be long-term and part of a larger strategy of assistance that addresses other facets of democratic governance. Waisbord feels that many aid organizations lack the needed patience:

> [T]he promotion of media diversity requires institution-building, a process that runs counter to the notorious impatience of aid agencies with long-term processes. ... The aid grapevine is filled with anecdotes about rushed disbursements for intensive training, updated equipments, fact-finding trips, and other strategically

> questionable decisions driven by bureaucratic imperatives such as spending funds to meet fiscal requirements, expedite program implementation to coincide with high-profile events, and attending demands from Ministries of Information of recipient countries.
> … Indicators measuring effectiveness are unlikely to be overhauled unless efforts to strengthen program evaluation acknowledge and address the realities of aid agencies.[88]

"Countries where the public has access to a free press usually have greater political stability, rule of law, government efficiency in the policy process, regulatory quality, and the least corruption."

—Pippa Norris

Still, media donors and implementers continue to press for solid answers to the nagging question. Does my own program in Country X bring it any closer to the ultimate goal of strengthened democracy there? In recent years, a number of academics have tried to find answers, if not for individual programs but for the sum effect of them all.

One of the most comprehensive studies of this type was commissioned by USAID, a major media aid spender. Between 1989 and 2004 it channeled roughly $300 million of these funds into former communist countries of Eastern Europe.[89] A team of academics examined data from 165 countries spanning the years 1990 to 2004. The researchers' over-all question: Does democracy aid tend to bring greater democracy? Using statistical analysis techniques developed in political science, they worked to filter out the effects of other factors that might influence the growth of democracy. One was gross domestic product growth, which many studies have suggested tends to help a society move toward democratic practices. Another was a possible tendency by USAID planners to direct their "DG" (democracy and governance) money toward countries that were already trending upward.

After months of analysis, calculations, drafts, and revisions, the team published a report in 2008 that found "a robust basis for drawing the conclusion that USAID DG assistance in the post-Cold War period has worked."[90] USAID programs aimed at building democracy generally resulted in countries becoming democratic at a rate faster than they would have otherwise achieved, as measured by movement in the countries' Freedom House democracy numbers.

As part of the study, the researchers analyzed the effects of USAID money that was specifically directed at media and civil society groups. Again, after working to filter out other factors that might alter media conditions—democratic diffusion from other countries or years of prior democracy, for instance—the researchers found statistical evidence that media aid works. "USAID civil society and media assistance have a significant positive impact directly on their respective sectors." A $10 million investment in media aid programs, the study concluded, could be expected to produce a rise of 5.7 points in a 0 to 100 media freedom indicator that the researchers derived from the Freedom House press freedom numbers and other sources.

The USAID study was "not the end-all be-all answer to measuring the relationship between media assistance and democratization," Kalathil writes. "But it serves to usefully highlight how much room for further study exists in this quickly growing field."[91]

Other studies have taken a crack at the question that lies one level higher: If media aid programs do indeed result in better media freedom, does that higher media freedom necessarily improve the overall level of democracy in a country? At a UNESCO gathering in Sri Lanka to mark World Press Freedom Day in 2006, Harvard University political scientist Pippa Norris addressed this issue.[92] In a paper presented to the conference she noted that the belief that "yes" is the answer goes a long way back. "A long tradition of liberal theorists from Milton through Locke and Madison to John Stuart Mill have argued that the existence of an unfettered and independent press within each nation is essential in the process of democratization," she said.

Then Norris went on to look at theories that affluence might promote media freedom. The freest media systems tend to occur in industrialized nations, she noted. A statistical analysis of the world as a whole showed a "moderately strong" correlation between affluence and media freedom. Yet a substantial number of upper-income countries didn't fit the pattern, Singapore, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia among them. And a number of lower-income countries had media that operated with relatively high freedom. Among those she noted was Benin, which ranked 161st among 177 states in the 2003 Human Development Index compiled by the UN Development Programme, and where two thirds of the adult population is illiterate.

Turning to questions of how media might promote democracy, she employed techniques to neutralize the influence of such factors as economic growth, colonial experience, and population size. (Small countries are often believed to be good environments for democratic governments, partly based on the assumption that the fewer people, the greater potential for citizens to take part in key decisions.) On an X-Y graph in which the horizontal axis tracked rising democracy and the vertical tracked rising media freedom, her data mapped out a rough correlation—countries with high democracy tended to have high media freedom. There were exceptions, but, she found: "The impact of media liberalization was the most consistent predictor of democracy out of any of the factors under comparison, even stronger than wealth. ... The models show that countries where much of the public has access to the free press usually have greater political stability, rule of law, government efficiency in the policy process, regulatory quality, and the least corruption.

"Overall," Norris wrote, "the analysis lends considerable support to the claims of liberal theorists about the critical role of the free press, as one of the major components of both democracy and good governance."

Norris thus arrives by way of academic analysis at a conclusion that people in the world of media aid have long held in the gut. The task now is to press ahead with development of new and more accurate ways to measure specific media environments. While existing indicators have served well and tend to point in the right direction, they are by no means foolproof. Here are some recommendations for keeping the improvement practice on track.

A former child soldier receives training in radio journalism in Sierra Leone.
Photo courtesy of USAID.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Organizations that produce the three major studies of media freedom and the many lesser-known ones should continue to work to increase technical sophistication, validity across time, and transparency of sourcing, wherever possible without creating threats to the security of people who help in compiling them.
- Foundations and other organizations that finance the indexes should assure that there is adequate funding whether economic times are bright or cloudy. They should fund an expansion of IREX's Media Sustainability Index to additional countries.
- Governments should resist the temptation to dismiss studies and rankings of media freedom in their countries as outside interference and should consider the findings seriously when crafting media policies.
- Media aid implementers should continue to be cautious in making connections between a specific project in a country and changes in that country's overall press freedom rating. Donors and implementers should work toward common and increasingly sophisticated methods of monitoring and evaluation at the program level.
- Media aid organizations should be more open to releasing their monitoring and evaluation reports, whether they show success or failure, because the findings could help other organizations get better impact for their media aid money.
- Survey administrators should continue work to measure conditions of freedom for the Internet, mobile phone texting, and other digital technologies that are growing rapidly in importance in the world's media systems.

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APPENDIX I

Freedom House's
Freedom of the Press 2010
Table of Global Press Freedom Rankings

Rank 2010	Country	Rating	Status
1	**Finland**	10	Free
	Iceland	10	Free
	Norway	10	Free
	Sweden	10	Free
5	**Denmark**	11	Free
6	**Belgium**	12	Free
	Luxembourg	12	Free
8	**Andorra**	13	Free
	Switzerland	13	Free
10	**Liechtenstein**	14	Free
11	**Netherlands**	14	Free
	New Zealand	14	Free
	Palau	14	Free
14	**Ireland**	15	Free
	St. Lucia	15	Free
16	**Jamaica**	16	Free
	Monaco	16	Free
	Portugal	16	Free
19	**Estonia**	17	Free
	Germany	17	Free
21	**Marshall Islands**	17	Free
	San Marino	17	Free
	St.Vincent and Grenadines	17	Free
24	**Czech Republic**	18	Free
	United States of America	18	Free
26	**Barbados**	19	Free
	Canada	19	Free
	Costa Rica	19	Free
	United Kingdom	19	Free
30	**Bahamas**	20	Free
	St. Kitts and Nevis	20	Free
32	**Austria**	21	Free
	Belize	21	Free
	Japan	21	Free
	Lithuania	21	Free
	Micronesia	21	Free
37	**Australia**	22	Free
	Cyprus	22	Free
	Malta	22	Free
40	**Dominica**	23	Free
	France	23	Free
	Hungary	23	Free
43	**Slovakia**	23	Free
	Suriname	23	Free
	Trinidad and Tobago	23	Free
	Vanuatu	23	Free
47	**Grenada**	24	Free
	Papua New Guinea	24	Free
	Poland	24	Free
	Spain	24	Free
	Taiwan	24	Free
52	**Mali**	25	Free
	Slovenia	25	Free
	Uruguay	25	Free
55	**Ghana**	26	Free
	Latvia	26	Free
	Tuvalu	26	Free
58	**Kiribati**	27	Free
	Mauritius	27	Free
60	**Cape Verde**	28	Free
	Nauru	28	Free
	Sao Tome and Principe	28	Free
63	**Greece**	29	Free
	Israel	29	Free
	Samoa	29	Free
	Solomon Islands	29	Free
67	**Chile**	30	Free
	Guyana	30	Free

Rank 2010	Country	Rating	Status
	South Korea	30	Free
70	South Africa	32	Partly Free
	Tonga	32	Partly Free
72	Benin	33	Partly Free
	Hong Kong	33	Partly Free
	India	33	Partly Free
	Italy	33	Partly Free
76	Bulgaria	34	Partly Free
	Namibia	34	Partly Free
78	East Timor	35	Partly Free
	Serbia	35	Partly Free
80	Montenegro	37	Partly Free
81	Antigua and Barbuda	38	Partly Free
82	Botswana	39	Partly Free
	Dominican Republic	39	Partly Free
	Mongolia	39	Partly Free
85	Croatia	40	Partly Free
86	Burkina Faso	41	Partly Free
87	Mozambique	42	Partly Free
88	Bolivia	43	Partly Free
	Brazil	43	Partly Free
	El Salvador	43	Partly Free
	Romania	43	Partly Free
92	Panama	44	Partly Free
	Peru	44	Partly Free
94	Macedonia	46	Partly Free
95	Ecuador	47	Partly Free
	Nicaragua	47	Partly Free
97	Bosnia-Herzegovina	48	Partly Free
	Lesotho	48	Partly Free
	Philippines	48	Partly Free
100	Argentina	49	Partly Free
	Haiti	49	Partly Free
102	Albania	50	Partly Free
	Comoros	50	Partly Free
	Maldives	50	Partly Free
	Tanzania	50	Partly Free
106	Turkey	51	Partly Free
107	Indonesia	52	Partly Free

Rank 2010	Country	Rating	Status
108	Kosovo	53	Partly Free
	Ukraine	53	Partly Free
110	Congo (Brazzaville)	54	Partly Free
	Fiji	54	Partly Free
	Guinea-Bissau	54	Partly Free
	Nigeria	54	Partly Free
	Uganda	54	Partly Free
115	Kuwait	55	Partly Free
	Lebanon	55	Partly Free
	Sierra Leone	55	Partly Free
118	Bangladesh	56	Partly Free
	Malawi	56	Partly Free
	Mauritania	56	Partly Free
121	Bhutan	57	Partly Free
	Kenya	57	Partly Free
	Senegal	57	Partly Free
124	Seychelles	58	Partly Free
	Thailand	58	Partly Free
126	Georgia	59	Partly Free
	Honduras	59	Partly Free
	Nepal	59	Partly Free
	Paraguay	59	Partly Free
130	Colombia	60	Partly Free
	Egypt	60	Partly Free
	Guatemala	60	Partly Free
	Mexico	60	Partly Free
134	Cambodia	61	Not Free
	Central African Republic	61	Not Free
	Liberia	61	Not Free
	Madagascar	61	Not Free
	Pakistan	61	Not Free
139	Angola	62	Not Free
140	Jordan	63	Not Free
141	Algeria	64	Not Free
	Malaysia	64	Not Free
	Zambia	64	Not Free
144	Iraq	65	Not Free
	Moldova	65	Not Free
146	Armenia	66	Not Free
	Cameroon	66	Not Free
	Cote d'Ivoire	66	Not Free

Rank 2010	Country	Rating	Status
	Morocco	66	Not Free
	Qatar	66	Not Free
151	**Niger**	68	Not Free
	Singapore	68	Not Free
153	**Bahrain**	71	Not Free
	Gabon	71	Not Free
	Guinea	71	Not Free
	Oman	71	Not Free
	United Arab Emirates	71	Not Free
158	**Sri Lanka**	72	Not Free
159	**Burundi**	73	Not Free
	Djibouti	73	Not Free
	Kyrgyzstan	73	Not Free
162	**Togo**	74	Not Free
163	**Brunei**	75	Not Free
	Venezuela	75	Not Free
165	**Afghanistan**	76	Not Free
	Sudan	76	Not Free
	Swaziland	76	Not Free
168	**Chad**	77	Not Free
169	**Ethiopia**	78	Not Free
	Kazakhstan	78	Not Free
	Tajikistan	78	Not Free
172	**Azerbaijan**	79	Not Free
173	**Yemen**	80	Not Free
174	**Congo (Kinshasa)**	81	Not Free
175	**Russia**	81	Not Free
	The Gambia	81	Not Free
177	**Vietnam**	82	Not Free
178	**Rwanda**	83	Not Free
	Saudi Arabia	83	Not Free
	Syria	83	Not Free
181	**China**	84	Not Free
	IOT/PA*	84	Not Free
	Laos	84	Not Free
	Somalia	84	Not Free
	Zimbabwe	84	Not Free
186	**Tunisia**	85	Not Free
187	**Iran**	89	Not Free
188	**Equatorial Guinea**	90	Not Free
189	**Belarus**	92	Not Free
	Uzbekistan	92	Not Free
191	**Cuba**	93	Not Free
192	**Eritrea**	94	Not Free
	Libya	94	Not Free
194	**Burma**	95	Not Free
	Turkmenistan	95	Not Free
196	**North Korea**	99	Not Free

*Israeli-Occupied Territories/Palestinian Authority

Status	Number	Percentage
Free	69	35%
Partly Free	64	33%
Not Free	63	32%
TOTAL	**196**	**100%**

APPENDIX II

IREX's
Media Sustainability Index
Overall Average Scores

Europe and Eurasia 2010

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2010: OVERALL AVERAGE SCORES

0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
Turkmenistan (0.33)	▲ Belarus (0.96) □ Uzbekistan (0.55)	▼ Kazakhstan (1.44) ▼ Russia (1.45) □ Tajikistan (1.45)	□ Armenia (1.85) □ Azerbaijan (1.71) □ Georgia (1.82) □ Kyrgyzstan (1.92) ▼ Macedonia (1.55) ▼ Moldova (1.61)	□ Albania (2.11) ▼ Bulgaria (2.43) □ Montenegro (2.21) ▼ Romania (2.30) ▼ Serbia (2.07) □ Ukraine (2.05)	▼ Bosnia & Herzegovina (2.60) ▲ Croatia (2.61) ▲ Kosovo (2.60)		
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

CHANGE SINCE 2009

▲ (increase greater than .10) □ (little or no change) ▼ (decrease greater than .10)

Annual scores for 2001 through 2009 are available online at http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_EUR/archive.asp

MENA 2008

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2008: OVERALL AVERAGE SCORES

0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
	▲ Libya (0.72) ▼ Syria (0.79) □ Tunisia (0.98)	▼ Iran (1.16) Yemen (1.20) Saudi Arabia (1.50)	▲ Iraq (1.61) ▲ Algeria (1.63) ▲ Bahrain (1.76) □ Palestine (1.76) ▲ Iraq-Kurdistan (1.80) ▲ Oman (1.96) □ Morocco (1.98)	▼ Qatar (2.05) UAE (2.08) ▲ Jordan (2.09) ▲ Kuwait (2.17) ▼ Lebanon (2.19) ▲ Egypt (2.37)			
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

CHANGE SINCE 2005

▲ (increase greater than .10) □ (little or no change) ▼ (decrease greater than .10)

MEDIA SUSTAINABILITY INDEX 2008: OVERALL AVERAGE SCORES

Africa 2008

Eritrea (0.26)	▼ Eq. Guinea (0.79)	▲ Cent. Afr. Rep. (1.47) □ Djibouti (1.38) ▲ Ethiopia (1.35) ▲ Sudan (1.47) ▼ Zimbabwe (1.15)	▼ Burundi (1.95) ▼ Cameroon (1.55) ▼ Chad (1.76) ▲ D. R. Congo (1.73) ▲ Rep. Congo (1.63) Gabon (1.81) □ The Gambia (1.68) ▼ Mali (1.97) ▲ Mauritania (1.93) ▼ Somalia (1.52) Somaliland (1.83) ▼ Togo (1.56) ▼ Zambia (1.89)	□ Benin (2.23) ▼ Botswana (2.34) ▲ Burkina Faso (2.14) ▼ Côte d'Ivoire (2.01) ▼ Ghana (2.45) □ Guinea (2.21) ▼ Kenya (2.13) Liberia (2.04) ▼ Madagascar (2.01) ▲ Malawi (2.47) □ Mozambique (2.19) ▼ Namibia (2.50) □ Niger (2.03) ▼ Nigeria (2.04) ▲ Rwanda (2.40) ▼ Senegal (2.07) ▲ Sierra Leone (2.16) ▲ Tanzania (2.43) □ Uganda (2.43)	▼ South Africa (2.77)		
0 – 0.50	0.51 – 1.00	1.01 – 1.50	1.51 – 2.00	2.01 – 2.50	2.51 – 3.00	3.01 – 3.50	3.51 – 4.00
UNSUSTAINABLE ANTI-FREE PRESS		UNSUSTAINABLE MIXED SYSTEM		NEAR SUSTAINABILITY		SUSTAINABLE	

CHANGE SINCE 2006/2007

▲ (increase greater than .10) □ (little or no change) ▼ (decrease greater than .10)

IREX included Gabon, Liberia, and Somaliland for the first time in the current edition.
Scores for 2006/2007 are available online at http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_Africa/20067/index.asp

APPENDIX III

Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index 2009

Rank	Country	Mark	
1	Denmark	0,00	↑↑
	Finland	0,00	↑
	Ireland	0,00	↑
	Norway	0,00	=
	Sweden	0,00	↑
6	Estonia	0,50	↓
7	Netherlands	1,00	↑
	Switzerland	1,00	=
9	Iceland	2,00	↓
10	Lithuania	2,25	↑
11	Belgium	2,50	↓
	Malta	2,50	NC
13	Austria	3,00	↑
	Latvia	3,00	↓
	New Zealand	3,00	↓
16	Australia	3,13	↑↑
17	Japan	3,25	↑↑
18	Germany	3,50	↑
19	Canada	3,70	↓
20	Luxembourg	4,00	↓↓
	United Kingdom	4,00	↑
	United States of America	4,00	↑↑
23	Jamaica	4,75	↓
24	Czech Republic	5,00	↓
25	Cyprus	5,50	↑
	Hungary	5,50	↓
27	Ghana	6,00	↑
28	Trinidadand Tobago	7,00	↓
29	Uruguay	7,63	↑↑
30	Costa Rica	8,00	↓
	Mali	8,00	↑
	Portugal	8,00	↓↓
33	South Africa	8,50	↑
34	Macedonia	8,75	↑
35	Greece	9,00	↓
	Namibia	9,00	↓↓
37	Poland	9,50	↑↑
	Slovenia	9,50	↓
39	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10,50	↓
	Chile	10,50	↑↑
	Guyana	10,50	↑↑
42	Surinam	10,60	↓↓
43	France	10,67	↓
44	Cape Verde	11,00	↑↑
44	Slovakia	11,00	↓↓
	Spain	11,00	↓
47	Argentina	11,33	↑↑
48	Hong-Kong	11,75	↑
49	Italy	12,14	↓
50	Romania	12,50	↓
51	Cyprus (North)	14,00	↑
	Maldives	14,00	↑↑
	Mauritius	14,00	↓
54	Paraguay	14,33	↑↑
55	Panama	14,50	↑
56	Papua New Guinea	14,70	NC
57	Burkina Faso	15,00	↑
	Haiti	15,00	↑↑
59	Taiwan	15,08	↓↓
60	Kuwait	15,25	↑
61	Lebanon	15,42	↑
62	Botswana	15,50	↑
	Liberia	15,50	↓↓
	Malawi	15,50	↑
	Serbia	15,50	↑
	Tanzania	15,50	↑
	Togo	15,50	↓
68	Bulgaria	15,61	↓
69	South Korea	15,67	↓↓
70	Bhutan	15,75	↑
71	Brazil	15,88	↑↑

Rank	Country	Mark	
72	Benin	16,00	↓
	Seychelles	16,00	↑
	Timor-Leste	16,00	↓
75	Kosovo	16,58	↓↓
76	Nicaragua	16,75	↓↓
77	Montenegro	17,00	↓↓
78	Croatia	17,17	↓↓
79	El Salvador	17,25	↓↓
80	Central African Republic	17,75	↑
81	Georgia	18,83	↑↑
82	Comoros	19,00	↑
	Mozambique	19,00	↑
84	Ecuador	20,00	↓↓
85	Peru	20,88	↑↑
86	Uganda	21,50	↑↑
	United Arab Emirates	21,50	↓↓
88	Albania	21,75	↓
	Ukraine	22,00	↓
91	Mongolia	23,33	↑
92	Guinea-Bissau	23,50	↓↓
93	Israel (Israeli territory)	23,75	↓↓
94	Qatar	24,00	↓↓
95	Bolivia	24,17	↑↑
96	Kenya	25,00	↑
97	Zambia	26,75	↓↓
98	Dominican Republic	26,83	↓↓
99	Lesotho	27,50	↑↑
100	Guinea	28,50	↓
	Indonesia	28,50	↑↑
	Mauritania	28,50	↑
103	Burundi	29,00	↓
	Côte d'Ivoire	29,00	↑
105	India	29,33	↑↑
106	Guatemala	29,50	↓
	Oman	29,50	↑↑
108	USA (extra-territorial)	30,00	↑↑
109	Cameroon	30,50	↑↑
110	Djibouti	31,00	↑↑

Rank	Country	Mark	
111	Armenia	31,13	↓
112	Jordan	31,88	↑↑
113	Tajikistan	32,00	↓
114	Moldova	33,75	↓↓
115	Sierra Leone	34,00	↓
116	Congo	34,25	↓↓
117	Cambodia	35,17	↑
118	Nepal	35,63	↑↑
119	Angola	36,50	↓
	Bahrain	36,50	↓↓
121	Bangladesh	37,33	↑↑
122	Philippines	38,25	↑↑
	Turkey	38,25	↓↓
124	Venezuela	39,50	↓↓
125	Kyrgyzstan	40,00	↓↓
126	Colombia	40,13	=
127	Morocco	41,00	↓
128	Honduras	42,00	↓↓
129	Gabon	43,50	↓↓
130	Thailand	44,00	↓
131	Malaysia	44,25	↑
132	Chad	44,50	↑
133	Singapore	45,00	↑↑
134	Madagascar	45,83	↓↓
135	Nigeria	46,00	↓
136	Zimbabwe	46,50	↑↑
137	Gambia	48,25	=
	Mexico	48,25	↑
139	Niger	48,50	↓
140	Ethiopia	49,00	↑
141	Algeria	49,56	↓↓
142	Kazakhstan	49,67	↓↓
143	Egypt	51,38	↑
144	Swaziland	52,50	↑
145	Iraq	53,30	↑↑
146	Azerbaijan	53,50	↑
	Democratic Republic of Congo	53,50	↑
148	Sudan	54,00	↓↓
149	Afghanistan	54,25	↑
150	Israel (extra-territorial)	55,50	↓

Rank	Country	Mark	
151	**Belarus**	59,50	↑
152	**Fiji**	60,00	↓↓
153	**Russia**	60,88	↓↓
154	**Tunisia**	61,50	↓↓
155	**Brunei**	63,50	NC
156	**Libya**	64,50	↑
157	**Rwanda**	64,67	↓↓
158	**Equatorial Guinea**	65,50	↓
159	**Pakistan**	65,67	↓
160	**Uzbekistan**	67,67	↑
161	**Palestinian Territories**	69,83	↑
162	**Sri Lanka**	75,00	↑

Rank	Country	Mark	
163	**Saudi Arabia**	76,50	↓
164	**Somalia**	77,50	↓↓
165	**Syria**	78,00	↓
166	**Vietnam**	81,67	↑
167	**Yemen**	83,38	↓↓
168	**China**	84,50	↓
169	**Laos**	92,00	↓
170	**Cuba**	94,00	↓
171	**Burma**	102,67	↓
172	**Iran**	104,14	↓
173	**Turkmenistan**	107,00	↓
174	**North Korea**	112,50	↓
175	**Eritrea**	115,50	↓

CIMA Center for International Media Assistance

NED National Endowment for Democracy
Supporting freedom around the world

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National Endowment for Democracy

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