

Is There a Link Between Media and Good Governance?

What the Academics Say

A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance

By Mary Myers

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The Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA), at the National Endowment for Democracy, works to strengthen the support, raise the visibility, and improve the effectiveness of independent media development throughout the world. The Center provides information, builds networks, conducts research, and highlights the indispensable role independent media play in the creation and development of sustainable democracies. An important aspect of CIMA's work is to research ways to attract additional U.S. private sector interest in and support for international media development. The Center was one of the of the main nongovernmental organizers of World Press Freedom Day 2011 in Washington, DC.

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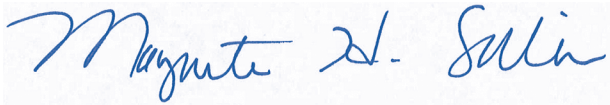
Table of Contents

Preface	3
Author's Note	4
Glossary	5
Executive Summary	6
Amartya Sen	9
Timothy Besley and Robin Burgess	13
Ritva Reinikka and Jakob Svensson	15
Pippa Norris	19
Tim Allen, James Putzel, and Nicole Stremlau	25
Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Guy Berger	29
Conclusion	34
Appendix 1: How the Academics were Chosen	35
Appendix 2: References	36
Endnotes	39

Preface

The Center for International Media Assistance at the National Endowment for Democracy is pleased to publish *Is There a Link Between Media and Good Governance? What the Academics Say*. The report surveys the writing of 11 noted scholars in the field of media development, looking at different media landscapes: established democracies, developing countries, and fragile/post-conflict states.

CIMA is grateful to Mary Myers, an expert on international media development with many years of experience in this field, for her research and insights on this topic. We hope that this report will become an important reference for international media assistance efforts.



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Author's Note

This report aims to bring key academic writing on the issues of media and governance to a non-academic audience and to make a contribution to bridging what is commonly seen as an academic-practitioner divide.

The paper arises from my observations over the years that many people engaged in media assistance tend to say or write that “studies have shown ...” to prove a statement or to back up an argument. For example, Amartya Sen is often quoted as saying that famines never happen in countries with a free press. However, a closer look at Sen’s writing reveals that his statements have never been quite that categorical: He says that countries with a free press and a well-functioning electoral system with viable opposition parties have not had major famines, which is rather more nuanced. This report aims to ask, “What do Sen’s and other studies *really* show?”

Having decided to look at what the academics have to say, the challenge was to decide which academics to choose. I did this by first scanning many policy and background papers circulating among donors and policy-makers for references to academics. Then I polled about 50 professionals in the media assistance fraternity and asked them to list the scholars they quoted most often in the course of their work. My wording was: *“I would like to have your ‘top picks’ of your favourite writers/academics about media and good governance and their paper(s). Which ones do you find yourself quoting most often, or who do you think are the most influential in the field of media development? Please name up to five.”*

More than 30 answers were received, and from these lists I then made a personal judgement about whom to include and whom to leave out, taking into account contemporary relevance (all the scholars profiled are still living); a particularly valuable regional perspective (as afforded by Guy Berger and Francis Nyamnjoh from Africa); and whether or not they had done on-the-ground, empirical research (some of those nominated had not done so and were not selected). I acknowledge with thanks all those who answered my peer-led survey; their names appear at the end of this report. The selection remains, essentially, a personal one, and it must not be read as an official selection endorsed in any way by these respondents, CIMA, or the NED. Nor is this selection meant to dismiss or diminish the importance of those academics who are not mentioned in this report.

A special word of thanks goes to the academics quoted here who kindly reviewed the first draft and suggested several excellent edits and additional points. Finally, I am grateful to Lizzie Goodfriend whose comments and suggestions were particularly useful and insightful.

Mary Myers
June 2012

Glossary

Accountability: Required or expected (of a person, organization, or institution) to justify actions or decisions; responsibility. (Source: *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*).

Agenda-setting: An ideal role for the media, when it calls attention to, and acts as a channel for, citizens' concerns to decision-makers; provides information that would otherwise be unknown; and pressures decision-makers to act on social problems, disasters, crises, and other issues. (Source: Pippa Norris, Ed., *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform*. Washington, DC, World Bank).

Empirical: Based on, concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure logic. (Source: *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*).

Gatekeeping / Journalists as gatekeepers: The process of selection in media work, such as decisions about what constitutes news; who, what, and why something is worthy of media coverage. Gatekeeping can be another ideal function for the media when it acts as a forum for public debate and provides opportunities for participation and voice. (Source: Pippa Norris, Ed., *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform*. Washington, DC, World Bank).

ICT : Information and communication technologies.

Media development: Generally refers to efforts by organizations, people, and sometimes governments to develop the capacity and quality of the media sector within a specific country or region. Many organizations engage in efforts to help the development of free and independent media in countries around the world. These efforts can take many forms, from funding the establishment of an entirely new media outlet to assisting an existing outlet in improving its professional capacity. (Source: Center for International Media Assistance, <http://cima.ned.org/media-development>).

Normative: relating to or deriving from a standard or norm, as in “the normative role of the media”—that is, what the media *should* do. (Source: *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*).

Watchdog journalism: One of the ideal roles for the media, when it functions to guard the public interest, promote government accountability, transparency, and public scrutiny of decision-makers in power by highlighting policy failure, maladministration by public officials, corruption in the judiciary, and scandals in public life and in business. (Source: Pippa Norris, Ed., *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform*, Washington, DC, World Bank).

Executive Summary

“The development world is full of conventional wisdom. Repetition turns back of the napkin estimates into ingrained facts. Case studies are compressed into paragraphs, and research is presented shorn of its assumptions. The danger in all this is that we pursue development policies based on what sounds true, what we want to believe, rather than on the evidence.”

–Dennis de Tray, vice president,
Special Initiatives Center for Global Development, 2007¹

Is there a link between a free media and good governance? Does the existence of a responsible, balanced press reduce corruption? Is the state more accountable in countries with a pluralistic media? Is the media democracy’s magic bullet?

These questions are much-debated, but in the media development-community the dominant view is generally “yes.” A free media system does indeed go hand in hand with good governance and democracy. But where is the evidence? Does this apply everywhere and in all circumstances? And what does the empirical research show? This report looks at the work of some of the most-quoted academics in the field of media and governance, with the aim of presenting some key issues about the mass media and democracy in a brief and accessible way. The scholars included here were chosen to represent a range of views in relation to “the liberal consensus,” which is that a free and plural media is necessarily a “good thing” for the furtherance of democracy, accountability, and development. Some of the scholars introduced here subscribe to this view wholeheartedly, others less so, and yet others have been somewhat misquoted in support of it. The academics profiled here were also chosen because they are well-known (and therefore often quoted) in the field; they have all done empirical (as opposed to only theoretical) research on the way media functions in different countries and societies; and because they are contemporary and relevant.

The report begins with perhaps the most quoted scholar of all, **Amartya Sen**, and looks at what he really says about the media. Sen’s key statements on the links between a free press and famine are examined, and some of the myths about his statements are exposed. Although he is often quoted as saying that famines never happen in countries with a free press, he only talks about *major* famines and he says it is also necessary to have a properly functioning electoral system with viable opposition parties. Furthermore, he assumes conditions like India’s, in which the population is heavily dependent on the state for social protection.

A much-quoted study in India by economists **Timothy Besley** and **Robin Burgess** backs up the broad thrust of what Sen says. They find that when incumbent politicians are shown by the media to have a poor record in responding to food crises, they can be punished by the electorate, which votes them out. In India this translates into increased food relief in areas with higher newspaper

circulation.

Similarly, **Ritva Reinikka** and **Jakob Svensson** are well-known in media circles for the study they did in Uganda about the link between newspapers and corruption, finding that “a strong relationship exists between proximity to a newspaper outlet and reduction in capture” (the corrupt diversion of funds) in the case of local-level officials and grants intended for primary school pupils in rural areas. But, again, a closer look at this work shows the extent to which Reinikka and Svensson have been misquoted: Although they did find a strong link between the newspaper information campaign and reduction in corruption, it was not on the spectacular scale that is sometimes claimed (although not claimed by them). Another viewpoint is that other factors, such as reforms made by the Ugandan government, may have helped to reduce corruption over time, in this case.

Pippa Norris draws on macro indicators to demonstrate correlations and make broad cross-country comparisons. In her research she has found a strong correlation between liberal media landscapes and democracy and good governance, but this does not mean that one causes the other. As with the work of all the scholars profiled here, there are many nuances in what Norris writes; for example, she shows there are some countries, such as Singapore (low on corruption despite restrictions on press freedom), that are interesting exceptions to the supposed link between a free press and less corruption. She also shows, contrary to what one might expect, that there is no correlation between negative reporting (for example, scandalous exposés in the press) and increased mistrust of government. Some of Norris’ other work on media and culture and on the power of propaganda are also summarized here.

As a more overt challenge to the “liberal consensus,” we come to a trio of academics who have worked together at the London School of Economics: **Tim Allen**, **James Putzel**, and **Nicole Stremmlau**. Their approach is rooted in their studies of conflict and fragile states, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and countries in Central Africa, and their views are perhaps best summed up in the title of one of their publications: *Why Templates for Media Development Do Not Work in Crisis States*. Their central contention is that in societies in conflict the media can do more harm than good by exacerbating divisions in society and inflaming hatred. They say there is sometimes a case to be made for restrictions on material that is divisive and inflammatory and that the “template” of simply increasing the number of independent media outlets in a given country will not automatically be beneficial—indeed, it could well do harm. In countries in crisis, they say, the priority is building a viable state first; helping to build a free and plural media system should come afterwards.

Turning to a more regional perspective, the report looks at two academics from Africa, **Francis Nyamnjoh** and **Guy Berger**, who have both analyzed the African media but have quite different things to say about it—the former being more pessimistic, the latter more optimistic about the mission and evolution of journalism in Africa. Both are united, however, in questioning the

A free media system does indeed go hand in hand with good governance and democracy. But where is the evidence? Does this apply everywhere and in all circumstances?

liberal assumptions about the links between democratic outcomes and a free press. Nyamnjoh questions Western assumptions that the press will automatically work in the direction of liberal democracy if it is freed from government control; and Berger says that the mere existence of a free press does not guarantee freedom from corruption and despotism.

Almost all these scholars come to our chosen subject from different conceptual starting points. Much as evidence is a key factor, theory and theoretical method and conceptual categories are also central to the various investigations. For instance, Sen talks about a free press almost tangentially, as part of a developmental perspective. Like Sen, Besley, Burgess, Reinikka, and Svensson are also economists and are interested in the relationship between democracy, accountability and corruption. Allen, Putzel, and Stremlau take as their conceptual starting point the state and tasks of state building, whereas Guy Berger takes the right to freedom of expression. Nyamnjoh's starting point is arguably culture and a post-colonial perspective. Norris' comes from a political science tradition. The difference between positions is not only empirical but theoretical.

The case for press freedom is based on the universal right to freedom of expression, irrespective of whether or not the effects of the media are “positive” or “negative” from a governance perspective.

The short concluding section points out that there are obvious differences between the media environments about which each academic is talking: established democracies, developing countries, fragile/post-conflict states, etc. Stemming from that, the point is made that contexts may vary, but the case for press freedom is based on the universal right to freedom of expression, and this still stands, irrespective of whether or not the effects of media are “positive” or “negative” from a governance perspective.

So, apart from the common-sense recommendation to donors and policy-makers within the aid community, to *do no harm* and to thoroughly *understand media and politics in a given country before intervening*, there is no set of recommendations to a report such as this one, since the aim is to introduce and shine a light on the work of 11 writers, all of whom have different interests, take very different perspectives on the subject of media and democracy, and have different conceptual starting points. It is simply expected that readers will have a fuller sense of what these academics are really saying, will be inspired to discover more of their writings, and will draw their own conclusions.

Amartya Sen



Amartya Sen
(Copyright Harvard University)

Professor Amartya Sen is one of the most quoted academics on the positive effects of a free media. His assertion that no famine has ever occurred in a country with a free press is famous and much-loved by those promoting media development. This section gives an overview of him and his work on media. The following section looks at the work of Timothy Besley and Robin Burgess who complement Sen, because of their work on the same themes, namely: food crises in India and governance and the media.

Sen is a Nobel prize-winning economist from India, currently the Thomas W. Lamont university professor and professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University. According to his profile on the Harvard website,² his research has ranged over a number of fields in economics, philosophy, and decision theory, including social choice theory, welfare economics, theory of measurement, development economics, public health, gender studies, moral and political philosophy, and the economics of peace and war. For those interested in media development his most striking work is an analysis of famines and their prevention in his book *Development as Freedom* (1999)—particularly drawing on the Bengal famine of 1947 which, he says, “I had the experience of witnessing, in its full rigor, as a nine-year-old boy”³ and which killed an estimated 2 to 3 million people. Sen points out that there have been no substantial famines in India since independence and the installation of multiparty democracy “even though severe crop failures and massive loss of purchasing power have occurred often enough (for example, in 1968, 1973, 1979, and 1987).”⁴

In *Development as Freedom* Sen sees the provision of information as a crucial early warning system:

The fact...that major famines have never taken place in a democratic country with a relatively free press and tolerance of opposition parties, indicates the power of public criticism and also the political salience of mass starvation, which receives instant attention in multiparty, electoral politics. A government that has to face criticism from opposition parties and free newspapers, and that has to seek reelection cannot afford to neglect famines, since famines are conspicuous miseries which can be easily brought into the arena of public discussion by newspapers, opposition parties, and active Parliamentarians.⁵

The most elementary source of basic information from distant areas about a threatening famine are enterprising news media, especially when there are incentives—provided by a democratic system—for bringing out facts that may be embarrassing to the government (facts that an authoritarian government would tend to censor out).⁶

He continues: “I would argue that a free press and an active political opposition constitute the best early-warning system a country threatened by famines can have.”⁷

Sen contrasts the situation in modern India, where famines become news, to Chairman Mao’s China during the 1959 to 1961 famine, which killed between 20 and 43 million people and which was hidden from view by Mao’s iron rule.

Elsewhere Sen has elaborated on the connection between free press and famine, as in an online article for the World Association of Newspapers:⁸

The Bengal famine of 1943, which I witnessed as a child, was made viable not only by the lack of democracy in colonial India, but also by severe restrictions on reporting and criticism imposed on the Indian press, which isolated even the Parliament in Britain from the misery in British India. The disaster received serious political attention only after Ian Stephens, the courageous editor of *The Statesman* of Calcutta (then British owned) decided to break ranks by publishing graphic accounts and stinging editorials on October 14 and 16, 1943. This was immediately followed by stirs in the governing circles in British India and by heated parliamentary discussions in Westminster. This, in turn, was followed by the beginning—at long last—of public relief arrangements. The famine ended then, but by this time it had already killed millions.

In this article he gives several other reasons why a free press is important:

- “We have reason enough to want to communicate with each other and to understand better the world in which we live. Press freedom is critically important for our capability to do this.”
- A free press “has an important protective function in giving voice to the neglected and the disadvantaged, which can greatly contribute to human security.”
- “The press has a major informational role in disseminating knowledge and allowing critical scrutiny. The informational function of the press relates not only to specialized reporting (for example on scientific advances or on cultural innovations), but also to keeping people generally informed on what is going on where.”
- “Finally, informed and unregimented formation of values requires openness of communication and argument. The freedom of the press is crucial to this process. Indeed, value formation is an interactive process, and the press has a major role in making these interactions possible.”

Economists Timothy Besley and Robin Burgess (see profiles below) agree with Sen, quoting his 1981 Coromandel lecture, in which Sen says: “India has not had a famine since independence... The government cannot afford to fail to take prompt action when large-scale starvation threatens. Newspapers play an important part in this, in making the facts known and forcing the challenge to be faced.”⁹

Whereas Sen’s writing on the press is a logical deduction rather than the result of empirical research, Besley and Burgess have done the empirical mapping of how political authorities respond to media coverage, and they say, “Our results are consistent with this assessment.”¹⁰

There have been critiques of Sen. For example Jagdish Bhagwati, an Indian-American economist at Columbia University, points out that it is not simply the freedom of the press that is significant but whose views the media expresses: “A free press is important, but it is best to have a press that also reflects broader interests than those of the elite.”¹¹ He also points out that news (say, of a famine) will tend to spread almost of its own accord, but in order for it to have any traction there must also be “the incentive and ability to mobilize” within society in order for citizens to organize “meetings, marches, representations and petitions, [which are] surely difficult, if not impossible, in dictatorships.”¹²

Norwegian economist Thomas Myhrvold-Hanssen, in an online essay from 2003,¹³ takes issue with what Sen writes about the news media in the context of famine, citing the famine in Bihar, in northern India, of 1966-67. He points out that according to Sen’s definition of famine, there have been several occasions, both in India (Bihar) and other electoral democracies, which can be classified as famines, despite the existence of a free press. Myhrvold-Hanssen says, “The free press of India has not proven sufficient for keeping famines at a distance.”¹⁴ He also points to the superficial and inadequate reports in the media during the Bihar famine.

N. Ram, an Indian journalist and editor (writing in Jean Drèze’s¹⁵ and Sen’s edited book *The Political Economy of Hunger*¹⁶) defends Sen but introduces important nuances to the central argument about the link between a free press and famine prevention. He points out that India is a rather special case in having such a vibrant and pluralistic newspaper culture. He also points out that the Indian press is good at covering large-scale and dramatic crises like famines but is not good at covering chronic hunger and poverty, indeed he sees this coverage as “low key, tame and ... frequently incompetent.”¹⁷ Ram makes an important point about the low capacities of the press both in India and in the rest of the Third World, blaming its shortcomings on “policy orientation and bias, entrenched professional routine and habits, the ideological and political predilections of journalists and the influential and trendy currents of the national and international literature

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they are exposed to, a variety of mundane practical constraints, the quality of available resources available to the press, and so on.”¹⁸

It is also important to note that Sen’s contention that true representative democracy and its components (one of which is a free press) prevents famine must be understood as a sufficient but not a *necessary* condition. In other words, famines can be prevented by authoritarian governments, as well as by democratic ones.¹⁹

However, most commentators on Sen acknowledge the soundness of his work and various other studies have drawn a strong link between genuine democracies and famine prevention.²⁰ Sen always says that other factors have to be in place as well as a free press, such as a properly functioning electoral system with viable opposition parties and a situation in which the population is heavily dependent on the state for social protection. Further, Sen’s implication is that plurality and the quality of press coverage must be good—it is not enough just to have a free press in name only. The conclusion that must *not* be drawn from Sen is that a free press alone will always prevent famines.

Timothy Besley and Robin Burgess



Robin Burgess
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Timothy Besley
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Dr. Timothy Besley and Dr. Robin Burgess are economists from the London School of Economics (LSE). Burgess is professor of economics; director, International Growth Centre, co-director, Programme for the Study of Economic Organisation and Public Policy; and Besley is school professor of economics and political science.

In 2000 they did a study of government responsiveness to food crises in India. Their study covers the period 1958-1992 and looks at how the state governments of all of India's 16 states varied in their responses to food shortages brought on by natural hazards such as floods and droughts. These "food shocks" occurred regularly during this period. By looking at many different variables and running a model using complex formulas, Besley and Burgess show that "those [Indian] states that have higher levels of media development are also more responsive (on average) in terms of public food distribution and calamity relief expenditure."²¹

They come to this conclusion by looking at independent data over the 1958-1992 period, for variables such as public food distribution per capita; calamity relief expenditure; electoral turnout in state elections; political competitiveness; newspaper circulation in English, Hindi, and local languages; and food grain production. They show that even Indian states that are richer, more urbanized or more densely populated do not appear to be more responsive to food crises than others; it is the levels of newspaper circulation—especially in local languages (such as Urdu, Bengali, and Telugu)—that make the difference—even in poorer states. To attach some figures to this, they find that "a 10% drop in food production is associated with a 1% increase in public food distribution in states which are at the median in terms of newspaper circulation per capita. However, for states that are in the 75% percentile in terms of newspaper circulation per capita we find that a 10% drop in food production is associated with a 2.28% increase in public food distribution."²² Besley and Burgess say that "these are economically meaningful responses."²³

Their conclusion is that independent, local-language newspapers covering food shortages at a local level over this period in India played a key role by enabling vulnerable citizens to monitor the actions of incumbents and to use this information in voting decisions. When incumbent politicians are shown by the media to have a poor record in responding to food crises, they can be punished by the electorate who vote them out. The study also shows that "a number of other factors, including turnout [in elections], political competitiveness, polarization and the timing of elections affect how governments respond" as well.²⁴ The case of India is particularly marked for the diversity and independence of its written press in contrast to the state-control of the TV and radio. Furthermore, there are relatively high levels of literacy and a relatively well-functioning

representative democratic process. So the presence of an enabling environment is important. But Besley and Burgess emphasize that proper elections cannot deliver “responsive government” without good information provision to voters: “The formal institutions of political competition (such as open elections) are not sufficient to deliver responsive government unless voters have real authority to discipline poorly functioning incumbents. This requires effective institutions for information transmission to voters.”²⁵

Other work on media by Besley and Burgess

- Timothy Besley, Robin Burgess, and Andrea Prat, “Mass Media and Political Accountability,” Department of Economics and STICERD London School of Economics and Political Science, Draft chapter for *The Right to Know: Institutions and the Media* edited by Roumeen Islam, World Bank, Washington, D.C., <http://econ.lse.ac.uk/~tbesley/papers/medbook.pdf>.
- Timothy Besley and Andrea Prat, “Handcuffs for the Grabbing Hand? Media Capture and Government Accountability,” *American Economic Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3, 720-736, 2006.

Ritva Reinikka and Jakob Svensson



Ritva Reinikka
(Copyright World Bank)

Dr. Ritva Reinikka is an economist from Finland and director of the Human Development Group in the Africa Region of the World Bank. Dr. Jakob Svensson is a Swedish economics professor at the Institute for International Economic Studies (IIES) (Stockholm University).

These two writers are well-known for a study they did in Uganda (initially published as a working paper in 2003) that shows the importance of newspapers for reducing corruption by officials at the local level. This study is entitled *Power of Information: Evidence From a Newspaper Campaign to Reduce Capture*.²⁶ (The word “capture” means the corrupt diversion of funds by local government officials.)



Jakob Svensson
(Copyright University of Stockholm)

This study was a follow-up to a 1998 World Bank public expenditure tracking survey, in which Reinikka was involved, that showed that large proportions of central government subsidies to primary schools in Uganda were not reaching their intended beneficiaries because substantial amounts were being skimmed by the district authorities and local politicians, and parents had to make up the difference. Each school student was eligible for up to 8,100 Ugandan shillings per year, but the majority of teachers and parents did not know they were entitled to these per capita grants. In response, the Ugandan government launched an information campaign aimed at ensuring that these grants and school budgets were publicized through newspapers and school notice-boards. Newspapers also carried numerous stories on misuse of the grant program and frequent articles

about schools’ entitlements and responsibilities. Following this publicity, the

World Bank mounted another survey to track public expenditures in 2001. This found that over the period, the percentage of money reaching individual schools increased from 24 percent to 80 percent of the grant. Reinikka and Svensson conclude:

A strong relationship exists between proximity to a newspaper outlet and reduction in capture since the newspaper campaign started, which represents a significant change in pattern from the five-year period preceding the campaign...we find that public access to information is a powerful deterrent to capture of funds at the local level.²⁷

Reinikka and Svensson conducted this study by looking at micro-data from 388 individual schools and examining how close schools were to a newspaper outlet. They also interviewed head teachers (those most likely to demand their full school budget from the local authorities). They found: “Distance to the nearest newspaper outlet is significantly correlated with both schools’ access to a newspaper and head teachers’ test scores on knowledge of the workings of the grant program”²⁸

The study also controlled for head teachers possibly being made aware of the grant-program via concerned parents or by being particularly knowledgeable individuals, rather than learning about it via newspapers. It found that “schools with access to newspapers and thus more extensively exposed to public information about the grant program, on average increased their funding by 13.8 percentage points more than the schools that lacked access to newspapers.”²⁹

They conclude with a more generalized recommendation for the rest of Africa, where similar grant programs in education exist:

A number of other public expenditure tracking surveys show that capture is not a problem specific to Uganda...Local capture in education programs appears to be a serious problem in most African countries...A common denominator in these education programs is that, at best, users have limited knowledge about the public funding they are entitled to...The results presented in this paper suggest the value of making public information available to the beneficiaries (parents and teachers) about the school-funding program.³⁰

Reinikka’s and Svensson’s work has been widely quoted and *misquoted*. In an article for the Center for Global Development, Paul Hubbard, an Australian scholar of international law, puts their work in context and shows that this “popular story” from Uganda is “much more complicated than we have been led to believe.”³¹ Hubbard shows that writers such as Paul Collier have contributed to misunderstandings of Reinikka’s and Svensson’s study:

In his recent book *The Bottom Billion*, economist Paul Collier portrays this popular transparency case study as a promising example of bottom-up scrutiny: “In state-of-the-art statistical research that analyzed this experiment in detail, Reinikka and her colleague Jakob Svensson were able to demonstrate that the media had been decisive—in this case reports in newspapers. So scrutiny turned 20 percent into 90 percent—more effective than doubling aid and doubling it again.” Collier (2007), page 150.³²

Hubbard shows that it is a mistake to attribute the entire reduction in corruption to a single newspaper campaign. Reinikka’s and Svensson’s research focuses on a small but significant element—information provided through newspapers to local schools—and never makes the 20 percent to 90 percent jump claim for newspapers alone. There were many factors other than publicity in newspapers that produced this improvement in Uganda over the period in question (1995-2001), as Hubbard points out. For example:

Schools with access to newspapers and thus more extensively exposed to public information about the grant program, on average increased their funding more than schools that lacked access to newspapers.

- The Ugandan government implemented several reforms. “The prior system of block grants which delivered funds as a lump sum without accountability was replaced in favor of conditional grants that were intended to serve as a check on district officials.”³³
- School enrollment almost doubled in the period because of the introduction of free primary schooling throughout Uganda, so the size of the grants program also rose sharply during this period.³⁴
- International donors such as the World Bank and USAID (which were helping to fund this free schooling) insisted on stricter reporting and accounting for grants, meaning that “the Ministry of Education and Sports conducted audits and commissioned reports on the flow of funds from disbursement through the entire system. These reports identified bottlenecks and delays in the flow of funds.”³⁵

So the size of the gains made by the Uganda government’s information measures (which also included publicity about the grants on radio as well as in newspapers) are obscured by the other reforms and circumstances of the case. Hubbard says, “Reinikka and Svensson’s research demonstrates that information flows make a difference, but they cannot tell us the magnitude of the effect relative to these broader reforms.”³⁶

Hubbard calculates that “when viewed as monetary amounts rather than percentage of entitlements, corruption did not fall so dramatically between 1995 and 2001. On this calculation, the nominal amount of funds that “leaked” fell by a less spectacular 12% over 6 years, even after adjustment for inflation.”^{37 38} Hubbard concludes: “The information campaigns aimed at Uganda’s citizens later became an element of this story, but was not the driving force.”³⁹

It is important that Reinikka and Svensson have the last word. Contacted for the purposes of this report, they stress in a joint e-mail to the author: “we have never claimed that the newspaper campaign can account for the total change we observe. Instead we exploit the newspaper campaign to study the effects of becoming informed.”⁴⁰ They go on to say:

Hubbard points out several factors but no evidence that these [such as government reforms, donor interventions] played any role (no one else has provided such evidence either and during piloting in 2001 of the survey these factors were not mentioned as important in explaining the extent to which money was reaching the school). This of course doesn’t mean they had no impact. However, it seems

“We have never claimed that the newspaper campaign can account for the total change we observe. Instead we exploit the newspaper campaign to study the effects of becoming informed.”

—Reinikka and Svensson

far-fetched to conclude, based on some potential factors, as Hubbard does that the information campaign was not the driving force – because there is no factual information to back this up...Consider the following thought experiment—let’s assume the school furthest away from a newspaper outlet in our sample (controlling for difference in regional income and any other school time-invariant effect) represents what would have happened had there been no newspaper campaign. That school is estimated to have received 33 percentage points less than a school very close to a newspaper outlet. 33 percentage points is more than half of the improvement we observe (of roughly 60%) and while this clearly suggests that the newspaper campaign cannot explain everything, the result also suggests it was an important, and most likely, the most important factor.⁴¹

Pippa Norris



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Professor Pippa Norris is an Anglo-American academic, currently the McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics, at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and she also is a laureate fellow and professor of government and international relations at the University of Sydney. She is a political scientist and public speaker. She served as director of the Democratic Governance Group in the United Nations Development Programme.⁴² Her research compares elections and public opinion, political communications, and gender politics. Although political communications is not her sole or primary focus, she has published extensively on media in the context of democracy, public opinion, and governance, and she is the author of almost 40 books. Within media development circles, she is particularly well-known for editing and contributing to a World Bank book, *Public Sentinel: News Media and Governance Reform* (2010); for her chapter in the Global Forum for Media Development’s overview collection, *Media Matters* (2008); and for her books, *A Virtuous Circle* (2000) and *Digital Divide* (2001).

The aim of *Public Sentinel* is to draw together the current state of knowledge about “how the news media can contribute to good governance outcomes.”⁴³ The introductory chapter sets out the guiding theory behind the book, namely that the capacity of media systems to fulfill the roles ideally required of them depends “on the broader context determined by the profession, the market, and ultimately the state.”⁴⁴ Drawing on past media theory, Norris and Sina Odugbemi, a consultant at the world Bank, posit that these ideal roles of the news media are “as *watchdogs* over the powerful; as *agenda setters*, calling attention to natural and human-caused disasters and humanitarian crises; and as *gatekeepers*, incorporating a diverse and balanced range of political perspectives and social sectors.”⁴⁵

Drawing on the notion of the “public sphere” advanced especially by Jürgen Habermas,⁴⁶ Norris and Odugbemi assert that each of these roles of the media “is vital to the quality of democratic deliberation in the public sphere.”⁴⁷

In the final chapter to *Public Sentinel* the authors conclude by highlighting the way that a series of barriers cause the news media to often fail to live up to the ideal roles of watchdogs, agenda setters and gatekeepers. According to Norris and Odugbemi, these barriers include “restrictions on press freedom by the state, market failures, lack of professional journalistic standards, the weakness of civil society organizations, and limited public access and media literacy.”⁴⁸ The book ends with a series of recommendations to policy-makers about how to address these barriers. The policy-makers addressed are those active in media development, such as multilateral agencies, governments, donors, professional journalism bodies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Norris and Odugbemi look at more evidence for a positive link between a free press and good governance. They present the results of some macro-level research on how freedom of the press, as measured by Freedom House,⁴⁹ relates to perceived control of corruption, measured by the Kaufmann-Kraay indexes.⁵⁰ They show that the general pattern emerging from their exercise is that democratic countries with high degrees of press freedom (such as Canada, Iceland, and Norway) also have high perceived levels of corruption control. By contrast countries that are “consolidating democracies,” with only a partly free media, (such as Tanzania, Lebanon, and Nicaragua), score lower on the corruption-control index.

Finally, countries such as Zimbabwe, Belarus, Syria, and Uzbekistan which are nondemocratic and score low in press freedom, also score low on corruption control. They conclude that “the evidence suggests that there is indeed a systematic link between the roles of the press as watchdogs over the powerful and the transparency of government”⁵¹

However, they do point to some important exceptions such as Singapore, which is widely regarded as low on corruption despite restrictions on press freedom, and Mali, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines, which have high levels of corruption despite scoring high on their media in the eyes of Freedom House. Furthermore, in practice there are perplexing examples where corrupt officials have been reelected—such as in the United States—even when they have attracted widespread publicity about their misdemeanors. Norris and Odugbemi admit that “researchers still understand little about how this relationship [between free press and control of corruption] works in practice, and thus what needs reforming to strengthen good governance.”⁵²

This chapter also contains some metadata analysis of indicators of public health spending, mapped against press freedom. Norris and Odugbemi do this analysis, again using Freedom House measures of press freedom, and correlating them with domestic patterns of public health spending, measured as a proportion of gross national product. As expected, there is a correlation, but the authors do not find such a strong relationship here as between control of corruption and press freedom. They suggest that multiple other factors come into play in analyzing why health expenditure should be high or low, including levels of economic development, the structure and historical legacy of the welfare state, the role of private and public health care, etc. They conclude:

What are needed are more systematic and detailed studies of the media’s impact on policy making, and more sensitive indicators that can connect the dots in the extended chain of causality between the agenda-setting role of the press, public concerns about an issue, and the response of elected officials to social needs in any democratic state.⁵³

The evidence suggests that there is indeed a systematic link between the roles of the press as watchdogs over the powerful and the transparency of government.

Norris's chapter in *Media Matters* entitled "The Role of the Free Press in Promoting Democratization, Good Governance and Human Development,"⁵⁴ contains many of the same arguments as the chapters in *Public Sentinel*, such as discussions of the ideal roles of the media (here defined as "watch-dog," "civic forum," and "agenda-setter") and takes a systematic look at the evidence that more liberal media landscapes strengthen democracy and good governance. She concludes that they do. It also contains a useful analysis of the available indexes and indicators for measuring press freedom, democracy and good governance, such as the World Press Freedom Index,⁵⁵ the World Bank's Governance Indicators,⁵⁶ and the Vanhanen Democracy Index.⁵⁷ The chapter concludes with a look at the distribution of press freedom across the world, showing that there is a "moderately strong correlation between countries with well-developed economies and

Data shows that countries where much of the public has access to the free press usually have greater political stability, rule of law, government efficiency, regulatory quality, and the least corruption.

a free press."⁵⁸ Most decisively, however, Norris uses models derived from Freedom House and Polity IV⁵⁹ data that show that "countries where much of the public has access to the free press usually have greater political stability, rule of law, government efficiency...regulatory quality, and the least corruption."⁶⁰

Norris's chapter in *Public Sentinel* entitled "Limits on Press Freedom and Regime Support" (2010) shows how control of the media "works" in non-democratic societies, such as China, Iran, Vietnam, etc., in that state control of the broadcast media and limits on press freedom *do* achieve their intended—that is, propagandist—effects. Norris and Ronald Inglehart, political science professor at the University of Michigan, find that people with access to only state-controlled media, especially TV and radio, are more likely to

express satisfaction and support for the regime and with the way they are governed than those who are exposed to other sources—particularly the Internet. They use World Bank World Values Survey data and correlate this with data from Reporters Without Borders to show that propaganda works and that media has a direct effect and impact on perceptions of governance. By contrast, people in free democracies with a plural media tend to be more critical of their governments but are more positive toward democratic values. Norris and Inglehart summarize their findings this way: "The study examined how regime support varied under restrictive and pluralistic environments. The macro level comparisons confirmed, as expected, that confidence in government was significantly higher in societies with restrictive rather than pluralistic media environments."⁶¹

In making these assertions Norris and Inglehart are taking issue with those who believe that the media has only limited effect on the audience, as expressed by other academics such as Carl Hovland⁶² and Paul Lazarsfeld.⁶³ However, after they assert that "state control of the airwaves matters," Norris and Inglehart go on to say that it is still unclear exactly *how* this process works and they call for further research. It still remains unclear "whether confidence in government is the result of official propaganda disseminating positive images and messages about the

leadership and authorities, or whether state censorship of independent journalism restricts alternative viewpoints and perspectives.”⁶⁴ They suspect that it is the combination of propaganda and censorship that allows autocracies to reinforce popular support.

In her book *A Virtuous Circle: Reinventing Political Communications in Postindustrial Societies* (2003), Norris looks at whether the news media should be blamed for what is popularly seen as increasing disaffection with politics and growing civic disengagement, particularly in the United States and Europe. She explodes this myth after looking at the news media and the way political parties communicate across 29 OECD countries. Her conclusion is that developments in the news media over the last few decades (for example, greater diversification of formats and platform; the widening scope of what constitutes “news;” the rise of the Internet; increases in the size of the

In Europe and the United States, attention to the news media gradually reinforces civic engagement, just as civic engagement strengthens attention to the news.

news audience) have not “eroded the standards of political coverage, still less contributed towards political malaise. Instead in Europe and the United States, due to a ‘virtuous circle,’ attention to the news media gradually reinforces civic engagement, just as civic engagement strengthens attention to the news.”⁶⁵

The chapter, “Negative News” in Norris’s book *Democratic Deficits* (2011) specifically looks at whether or not exposure to TV news is linked to erosions in public trust in politicians in the West. For instance, does the systematic reporting of political scandals (financial and sexual misdemeanors, incompetence) undermine general confidence in government? By looking at public satisfaction with government against the media’s reporting of scandals

and misdemeanors in the United States and Britain, she concludes that there is no correlation between negative reporting and increased mistrust of government. She therefore argues against popular opinion and those scholars who link an erosion of political trust in America and Britain with aggressive journalism and negative news: “In Britain, the results showed that neither the amount of scandal coverage nor the degree of negative news depressed satisfaction with government.”⁶⁶

However, she concedes that in the United States scandal coverage did depress approval of Congress. She says:

Complex patterns are therefore revealed in each country, rather than a simple narrative. Overall, while providing some limited support for the claims that scandal can damage confidence in government institutions, the lack of consistency among the two cases [of the UK and the United States] means that the results cannot be regarded as highly robust. The analysis therefore suggests the need for considerable caution and for further research into any general claims about how negative news or scandal coverage impacts public opinion.⁶⁷

Norris and Inglehart's book *Cosmopolitan Communications: Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World* (2009) looks at globalized media and culture and asks if there is any truth behind the widely held assumption that expansion of the global media, especially in the North has "Westernized" and negatively affected or eroded cultural diversity, especially in the global South. In common with much of their other work, Norris and Inglehart compare data sets from global surveys. In this case they use the World Bank's World Values Survey, covering 90 societies worldwide from 1981 to 2006. Their conclusion is that the threat of cosmopolitan communications on cultural diversity is commonly exaggerated. Access to mass-media does not necessarily mean cultural imperialism or a devaluing of national culture. There are many cultural and structural "firewalls" put up by societies all around the globe that resist the free flow of ideas, media, and culture for reasons of poverty, isolation, press restrictions, and traditional local socialization processes. In the concluding chapter the authors say:

Access to mass media does not necessarily mean cultural imperialism or a devaluing of national culture.

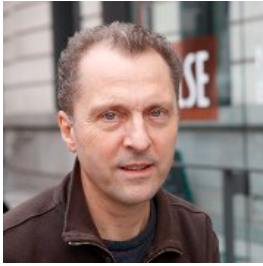
The evidence we have considered throughout the book provides strong grounds for scepticism about the more exaggerated claims concerning the threats to cultural diversity found in countries and societies around the world. The media matters, but only under certain conditions. Parochial societies continue to display distinctive cultural values to those found in the more cosmopolitan nations, and the latter also diverge sharply among themselves.⁶⁸

Other work on media by Norris: The following are a selection of other recent work on media and new ICTs by Norris (most of which are available for full-text download at Pippa Norris' website <http://www.pippanorris.com/>):

- "To Them That Hath...News Media and Knowledge Gaps," Paper for the PIREDEU conference, Brussels, November 18-19, 2010.
- Pippa Norris and John Curtice, "Getting the Message Out: A Two-Step Model of the Role of the Internet in Campaign Communication Flows During the 2005 British General Election," *Journal of Information Technology and Politics*.
- "If You Build a Political Website, Will They Come? The Internet and Political Activism in Britain," (with John Curtice), *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1-21.
- "Did the Media Matter? Agenda-Setting, Persuasion and Mobilization Effects in the 2005 British General Election," *British Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 195-221.
- "The Impact of the Internet on Political Activism: Evidence from Europe," *International Journal of Electronic Government Research*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 20-39.

- Pippa Norris, “Global Political Communication: Good Governance, Human Development and Mass Communication,” *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases and Challenges* 2004, ed. Frank Esser and Barbara Pfetsch, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pippa Norris and Dieter Zinnbauer, “Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Good Governance, Human Development and Mass Communications,” Human Development Report Office. Occasional Paper, Background Paper for the HDR, http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/a2i_abstracts/a2i_voice.html, 2002.

Tim Allen, James Putzel, and Nicole Stremlau



Tim Allen
(copyright LSE)

Dr. Tim Allen is professor of development anthropology at the London School of Economics. Dr. James Putzel is professor of development studies at the Crisis States Research Centre at the London School of Economics. Dr. Nicole Stremlau is Coordinator of the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy at the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies at the University of Oxford, UK.



James Putzel
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These three academics have questioned the prevailing wisdom that media freedoms should be an essential aspect of peace-building in war-torn and crisis states. Their approach questions some fundamentals of the “international community,” which has stressed “accountable governance” as a centrepiece of both peace-building initiatives and programs for social and economic development. Taking examples from recent conflicts in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and the African Great Lakes region, they ask if promoting an open media is really such a good thing:

...this liberal agenda has tended to drive media policy. An open media is seen as a “good thing”, and has been promoted even in somewhat extreme circumstances, such as those that have prevailed in Afghanistan following the US-led invasion. Here we ask if such a strategy is really appropriate.⁶⁹



Nicole Stremlau
(courtesy of Nicole Stremlau)

... as we are currently witnessing in Iraq and Afghanistan ...the political concerns of external actors take precedence over the realities on the ground. There is a strong desire by the rich countries that have been actively involved to have a “victory”—be it by establishing a media environment with 300 competing newspapers [as in Iraq] or facilitating elections in a short timeframe.⁷⁰

In 2005 Allen and Stremlau produced a discussion paper entitled “Media Policy, Peace and State Reconstruction,” in which they argued that in societies that are in the process of resolving conflicts the media can do more harm than good by exacerbating divisions in society and inflaming hatred. They say there is sometimes a case to be made for restrictions on material that is divisive and inflammatory. One of the cases they examine is Rwanda’s genocide of 1994 and the role that Radio Television Libre Milles Collines played in inciting the killing. They make the point that “the error committed in Rwanda of applying the rule of laissez- faire in the name of the principle of liberty of the press must not be repeated” and that “most now agree that it would have been appropriate to clamp down on the hate speech of Milles Collines.”⁷¹

In 2006 the LSE Crisis States Research Centre produced a workshop⁷² report entitled “Why Templates for Media Development Do Not Work in Crisis States,” whose principal authors were James Putzel and Joost van der Zwan.⁷³ The report develops Allen and Stremlau’s arguments further. It recommends that the prime objective of donor assistance in fragile states should be, first and foremost, to support “the formation of a functioning state.”⁷⁴ Not only can

Policymakers should allow and encourage judicious state regulation of the media during the initial phases of state building in order to minimize the potential for divisive violent conflict and maximize the potential for building national cohesion.

“unsophisticated liberalisation of the media ... potentially undermine the state building project” but, contrary to the usual liberal templates, they say, it is necessary for the state sometimes to intervene and to regulate the media: “In situations where national cohesion and consensus is lacking, state or public involvement in the media can, as part of the equation, actually be a constructive force for the social, economic, and political reconstruction and development of a country.”⁷⁵

Among the report’s recommendations: “Where appropriate, [policymakers should] allow and encourage judicious state regulation of the media during the initial phases of state building in order to minimize the potential for divisive violent conflict and maximize the potential for building national cohesion.”⁷⁶ Another recommendation was that in fragile states—where often the ethos of

journalistic integrity and civil society are weak and private media outlets sometimes contribute to exclusionary if not violent politics—policy-makers should consider supporting the establishment of public service broadcasting, governed by a board independent from vested public and private interests.⁷⁷

A further recommendation of this workshop, and of Allen and Stremlau’s paper, is the establishment of some kind of international media watchdog and international laws that “protect information flows and constrain hate speech,”⁷⁸ overseen by a neutral organization like the United Nations. Their opinion is that: “Everyone would feel more comfortable with limitations on media freedoms if states had to request permission to impose them. Perhaps a system could be established similar to how law enforcement officers must request a search warrant from a court.”⁷⁹

Some of these ideas have been further developed in other forums. For example, Putzel’s presentation at a 2010 seminar at the Overseas Development Institute in London⁸⁰ asserted:

1. The freedom of the media, like other rights, can only be achieved incrementally—otherwise there will always be a tit-for-tat struggle between people and state. The state needs to guarantee rights and order.
2. It can be legitimate for the state to curtail media if the alternative is for the state to unravel.

3. In the right conditions, the media can be a check on the state.

At the same forum Putzel also suggested these policy ideas:

1. It can never be appropriate for donors to promote media without understanding the country context. To do otherwise is to violate the “do no harm” principle.
2. It is inappropriate to view the development of media as a measure of state performance.⁸¹

Other work on media by Allen, Putzel, and Stremlau:

Nicole Stremlau, “Customary Law and Media Regulation in Conflict and Post-Conflict States,” in M. Price and S. Verhulst (eds), *Handbook of Media Law and Policy: A Socio-Legal Exploration*, Routledge.

Monroe Price and Nicole Stremlau, “Media and Transitional Justice: Towards a Systematic Approach,” *International Journal of Communication*, 6, 1077-1099.

I. Gagliardone and Nicole Stremlau, “Digital Media, Diasporas and Conflict in the Horn of Africa,” in Marius Dragomir and Mark Thompson, *Mapping Digital Media*, London: Open Society Institute, 23, http://www.soros.org/initiatives/media/articles_publications/publications/mapping-digital-media-digital-media-conflict-horn-of-africa-20120221.

Nicole Stremlau, “The Press and the Political Restructuring of Ethiopia,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 716-732.

Nicole Stremlau, Iginio Gagliardone, and Maria Repnikova, “China in Africa: A New Approach to Media Development?,” *The Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy*, Centre for SocioLegal Studies, Oxford: University of Oxford.

Mareike Schomerus and Tim Allen, et. al, “Southern Sudan at Odds with Itself: Dynamics of conflict and predicaments of peace,” LSE / DESTIN research report, London, <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/businessAndConsultancy/LSEConsulting/pdf/southernSudan.pdf>.

Nicole Stremlau and Monroe E. Price, “Media and Post-election Violence in Eastern Africa,” *The Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (PCMLP)*, University of Oxford, <http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/sites/pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/files/final%201%20ea%20workshop.pdf>.

Nicole Stremlau, Matthew Blanchard, Yusuf Abdi Gabobe, and Farhan Ali Ahmed, “Media and Elections in Somaliland: Lessons from Kenya,” *PCMLP and Annenberg Occasional Paper Series*, <http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/news/2009/role-media-somaliland-elections-new-report-published>.

Monroe Price, Ibrahim al Marashi, and Nicole Stremlau, “Media in the Peacebuilding Process: Ethiopia and Iraq,” in Norris, Pippa (ed) Public Sentinel, 221-243.

M. Price, al Marashi, I., and Stremlau, N., “Polarization and the Media: The Problem with the Governance Agenda in Post-Conflict States.,” Harvard Kennedy School, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Conference/Conference%20papers/Price,%20Al%20Marashi,%20Stremlau.pdf>.

Francisco Gutiérrez and James Putzel, “Politics, Anti-politics, and the Media,” Background Paper in Putzel, James and Joost van der Zwan, *Why Templates for Media Development Do Not Work in Crisis States*, London, LSE Crisis States Research Centre, 2006.

Tim Allen and Nicole Stremlau, “Media policy, peace, and state reconstruction” *Media & Glocal Change Rethinking Communication for Development*, Oscar Hemer & Thomas Tufte (editors) Nordicom and CLACSO, 2005, 493, <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/edicion/media/18Chapter12.pdf>.

Tim Allen and Jean Seaton, Eds., *The Media Of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, Zed Press, 1999.

Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Guy Berger



Francis B. Nyamnjoh
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Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Guy Berger are both African academics who have written influentially about media and governance on the African continent.

Nyamnjoh, originally from Cameroon, is professor of anthropology at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. He has taught sociology, anthropology, and communication studies at universities in Cameroon, Botswana, and South Africa and has researched and written extensively on Cameroon and Botswana.⁸² His writing encompasses globalization, citizenship, media, and the politics of identity in Africa; he has also written novels, plays, and poems. In media circles Nyamnjoh is perhaps best known for his 2005 book *Africa's Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*.

Nyamnjoh's views on the African media are far from optimistic: He talks of "African journalism in ethical crisis,"⁸³ and he says that "the media have assumed a partisan, highly politicized, militant role in Africa. They have done so by dividing citizens into the righteous and the wicked, depending on their party-political leanings, ideologies, and regional cultural or ethnic belongings."⁸⁴

Taking his native Cameroon as a case-study, Nyamnjoh concludes that "given the politicization of the press ... it becomes difficult to argue that it has made a positive contribution to democratization in Cameroon."⁸⁵

Thus, he takes issue with what he calls the "Western tendency to assume that the press would necessarily work in the direction of liberal democracy if it were free of government control."⁸⁶ He regards this as "simplistic," and calls for the West to "predicate more of its assistance to the African media on evidence of professionalism and sign fewer blank cheques than it has done in the past."⁸⁷

At the same time Nyamnjoh argues for a "broader definition of democracy," one that aligns better with African realities; that is "more in tune with the historical experiences, the cultural and economic predicaments of African societies and peoples;" and allows for "ethnic cultural citizenship as well as civic citizenship."⁸⁸ He deplores the way the West has exported a "Barbie doll democracy" to Africa, and that African journalists have not resisted it:

Implementing liberal democracy in Africa has been like trying to force onto the body of a full-figured person, rich in all the cultural indicators of health Africans are familiar with, a dress made to fit the slim, de-fleshed Hollywood consumer model of [a] Barbie doll-type entertainment icon ... Instead of blaming the tiny dress or its designer, the tradition amongst journalists has been to fault the ... popular ideal of beauty, for emphasizing too much bulk.⁸⁹

Nymanjoh's vision is of a new system:

Under such an accommodating system of democracy, some of what are currently perceived as failings on the part of the media (e.g. ethnic biases, partisanship, regionalism) could indeed be healthy practices, as it would be quite understandable to have media defending particular group interests openly, rather than in camouflage as is the case under the liberal democratic model.⁹⁰

In his 2011 chapter entitled “De-westernizing media theory to make room for African experience,” Nyamnjuh expands on these ideas of rethinking democracy and media's place within it. He contrasts the model of Western liberal democracy and its emphasis on the rights and freedoms of the individual, with African popular notions of democracy, “where emphasis is on interdependence and competing cultural solidarities.”⁹¹

Under these notions of democracy, “the media are under constant internal and external pressure to promote the interests of the various groups competing for recognition and representation.”⁹² He therefore sees the best channels for democratic debate as alternative forms of popular media such as websites, street posters, mobile phones, *radio trottoir*⁹³ and clandestine broadcasting. Nyamnjuh is particularly enthusiastic about citizen journalism, seeing it as much more promising than African mainstream media practitioners, who “by sticking to Western canons, often miss the point of African value added in terms of how people communicate and how they share communication with one another.”⁹⁴ New information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer fascinating possibilities, in Nyamnjuh's view:

The best channels for democratic debate are alternative forms of popular media such as websites, street posters, mobile phones, and clandestine broadcasting.

The future for democracy and the relevance of journalism therein would have much to learn from the creative ways in which Africans are currently relating to innovations in ICTs. The same popular creativity that has been largely ignored by conventional journalism in the past is remarkable today all over Africa and amongst Africans in the diaspora.⁹⁵

Other recent work relating to media by Nyamnjuh

- *Mass media and Democratisation in Cameroon in the Early 1990s*, Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group, Bamenda, 2011.
- “Racism, Ethnicity and the Media in Africa: Reflections Inspired by Studies of Xenophobia in Cameroon and South Africa,” *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 57-03, 2010.

- Mirjam de Bruijen and Inga Brinkman, Eds., *Mobile Phones: The New Talking Drums of Everyday Africa*, Leiden, African Studies Centre/Bamenda, Cameroon, Langaa Research and Publishing, 2009.
- Pradip Thomas and Zaharom Nain, Eds., “Media ownership and control in Africa in the age of globalization,” *Who owns the media? Global trends and local resistances*, Zed Books, London, 119-134, 2005.



Guy Berger

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Dr. Guy Berger is a South African journalist and academic, currently the UNESCO director of freedom of expression and media development. From 1994 to 2010 he served as head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University in South Africa. Berger is known for his work on media in southern Africa, as a regular blogger, columnist, and as a key organizer of the annual Highway Africa conference,⁹⁶ which has become the world’s largest gathering of African journalists, discussing issues relating to Internet governance, ICT policy, and media for democracy. His research has covered racism in the media; democracy, development and journalism; new media; journalism education; leadership; alternative press; and the South African media.⁹⁷ There is a growing body of literature coming from African scholars that is challenging some of the more Euro- and Ameri-centric research that dominates academia. Berger, like Nyamnjoh, is one of them. Berger has been particularly influential in the larger pan-African conversation about media development.

In a 2002 article entitled “Theorizing media, democracy relationship in southern Africa,” Berger draws attention to some of the specifics of Africa that challenge prevailing assumptions about civil society and the way democratic processes do, and do not, work. He says:

Theorizing [about] ... public sphere and civil society concepts ... in Africa ... needs to pay attention to internal relationships within civil society, the effect on the public sphere of factors such as class and nationality, the place of the private sphere in the power equation, and globalization and the Internet.⁹⁸

One of Berger’s key publications is his 2010 article “Problematizing ‘Media Development’ As a Bandwagon Gets Rolling.” Here, he asks, “What does media development mean?” Berger makes the point that “media development” when undertaken as an external intervention (typically by a Western donor in a poor country) carries many normative connotations and assumptions. He says that the term needs to be “freed from being treated as only those outcomes that result from external interventions”⁹⁹ and needs to be generally untangled to divide means from ends, and activities from outcomes.

He argues that a better understanding would be gained if “media development” were revised with the aid of concepts like “media density” and “media mobilization” and consideration of

new media.¹⁰⁰ The use of the term “media density,” he says, could help when defining ends and outcomes; it denotes the aim of deepening and increasing media’s capacity to generate and circulate information. Using the term “media mobilization” is less value-laden and would make it clear that such interventions are to capacitate media in some way and would get away from the problem that media development can denote intervention in a meddling or manipulative sense.

Among the many useful clarifications that Berger makes, another is around journalism and ICTs: He points to the “importance of unbundling the meanings of media, and revising the concepts of “media development” to acknowledge the integration of ICT and media worlds, and also to disaggregate journalism from media, and propose a sub-category of “journalism development” and related sub-categories like “journalism mobilization” and “journalism density.”¹⁰¹

In the same article, Berger questions the perspective of the World Bank Institute, which, he says, links media freedom and media pluralism to democracy. He makes the valid point that, notwithstanding the fact that some research has found high levels of perceived media freedom are associated with lower levels of perceived corruption, “the mere existence of a diverse and plural media is no guarantee of an effective antidote to corrupt or despotic state actions.”¹⁰²

The mere existence of a diverse and plural media is no guarantee of an effective antidote to corrupt or despotic state actions.

In 2006 Berger wrote a review¹⁰³ of Nyamnjoh’s book, *Africa’s Media: Democracy and the Politics of Belonging*, in which Berger argues that it is important to distinguish (as he says Nyamnjoh does not) the differences between state media and private media. He argues that the private press, for all its frequent problems, is a greater factor for democratization than the state-owned media, which tends to be a partisan voice of government, despite the fact that it is supposed to be public media, and in this way it is the more unethical of the two.¹⁰⁴

Another of Berger’s publications is the volume he edited in 2011 entitled *Media in Africa: Twenty Years After the Windhoek Declaration on Press Freedom*. In his overview he again takes a different view from Nyamnjoh, asserting that journalistic values of “independence, pluralism, and freedom” are the same all over the world, whether in Africa or the West:

“The idealism that powers their [African journalists’] work is not a Western concern, even if it is shared in much of the West. Instead, it is a universal driver of why people choose to become journalists in the first place. It transcends various national or continental journalisms (in the plural) – i.e. various cultural forms and traditions of journalism.”¹⁰⁵

He is also more optimistic than Nyamnjoh about the state and evolution of the African press, and, looking back over the last 20 years, shows that what he sees as “major improvements” in the African media environment have generally resulted from multi-party elections (42 out of 48 sub-Saharan African countries had held multi-party elections by 2000, according to the World Bank).

But Berger also warns that “although improvements in the media environment generally result from elections, there is no inevitability about this.”¹⁰⁶ He says, “warning lights need to flash ... in relation to a general retrogressive trend in the past decade [2001-2011]. The terrain for journalism [in Africa] is still far from optimum.”¹⁰⁷

A selection of other recent work relating to media by Berger:¹⁰⁸

Bob Franklin and Donica Mensing, “What It Means to Work Toward ‘Excellence’ in African Journalism Education,” *Journalism Education, Training and Employment*, New York: Routledge, 33-47, 2011.

Ian Shapiro and Kahreen Tebeau, Eds., “Contested Media Environments in South Africa: the Making of Communications Policy Since 1994,” *After Apartheid. Reinventing South Africa?*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 332-360, 2011.

J. (Ed) Hatcher, “A research agenda for community media,” *Foundations of Community Journalism: A research primer*, London: Sage, 2011.

“Best Practice in Media Self-Regulation: A Three-Way Test to Avoid Selective Borrowing and Ad Hoc Transplants,” *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 36-57, 2011.

“Empowering the Youth as Citizen Journalists: A South African Experience,” *Journalism*, Vol. 12, No. 6, 708–726, 2011.

Challenges and Perspectives of Digital Migration for African Media. Dakar: Panos Institute of West Africa, 2010 <http://guyberger.ru.ac.za/fulltext//Digitalmigration.pdf>.

Conclusion

From this short survey of some key thinkers, can we conclude that there is a causal link between media and good governance? Does the existence of a free media increase accountability and reduce corruption? Do media influence society in positive ways and liberate the individual? As one would expect, the short answer is “it depends.” There is no consensus or easy, single answer to these questions. Neither is there a set of recommendations in a report such as this one, apart from common-sense recommendations to those donors and policy-makers who may be reading, to *thoroughly understand media and politics in a given country before intervening*, as well as the caution to *do no harm*.

It is hoped that this report has introduced and shone a light on academic research related to subject of media and democracy. There are obvious differences between the media environments that are studied by the scholars profiled above: established democracies (in the case of Norris), developing countries (Nyamnjoh, Berger, Sen, Reinikka and Svensson, Besley and Burgess), and fragile/post-conflict states (Allen, Putzel, and Stremlau), which show the importance of, above all, *context*.

Besides the debate represented by the scholars, it is important to remind ourselves that the case for press freedom is based on the universal right to freedom of expression most fundamentally, and that this stands, irrespective of whether or not the effects of media are “positive” or “negative” from a governance perspective. The message for the international community here is to keep the possibility of developing the media and the promotion of press freedoms on the aid agenda, while bearing in mind the centrality of context.

Appendix 1:

How the Academics Were Chosen

The following e-mail was sent to about 50 colleagues involved with media assistance and communications for development, in the last quarter of 2011.

Dear

I would like to include you in a small peer-led survey of practitioners and thinkers on media and governance. I have been asked by Marguerite Sullivan of the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA) to write a report provisionally entitled “Media Impacts: What are the academics saying?”

This CIMA report will set out in layman’s terms a summary of what the most-quoted contemporary scholars have to say about the impact of a free and independent media on corruption, political participation and accountability in developing and transitional countries. The aim is to bring key academic writing on the issue to a non-academic audience - i.e. the usual CIMA audience - and thereby make a contribution to bridging the academic-practitioner divide. I also aim to interview the selected scholars and get their views on how their writing has been used by donors and practitioners.

I would therefore like to have your “top picks” of your favourite writers/academics about media and good governance and their paper(s). Which ones do you find yourself quoting most often, or who do you think are the most influential in the field of media development? Please name up to five. But feel free to just suggest one... If you don’t have the exact reference to hand, please just mention the author and I will track down the relevant publication(s). I aim to choose about ten in total.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours etc...

Replies were gratefully received from the following people (their organizational affiliations have not been included, since they did not necessarily reply in their professional capacity).

Abbott, Susan	Gagliardone, Iginio	Jankovic, Gordana	Odugbemi, Sina
Adam, Gordon	Gilberds, Heather	Jannusch, Sofie	Peters, Bettina
Arsenault, Amelia	Godignon, Julie	Kalathil, Shanthi	Power, Gerry
Bruce, Daniel	Goodfriend, Elizabeth	Lechien, Olivier	Schoemaker, Emrys
Dacosta, Peter	Greenberg, Josh	Lublinski, Jan	Spurk, Christoph
Dietz, Christoph	Hallonsten, Pia	Machleder, Josh	Susman-Peña, Tara
Etulain, Troy	Harford, Nicky	Mbeke, Peter	Vuillemin, Caroline
Frere, Marie-Soleil	Himelfarb, Sheldon	Noble, Kate	Wilson, Mark

Appendix 2: References

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Myhrvold-Hanssen, Thomas. 2003. "Democracy, News Media and Famine Prevention: Amartya Sen and the Bihar Famine of 1966-1967." <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~dludden/BIHAR1967counterSen.pdf>. May 27, 2012.

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Endnotes

1. Quoted by Paul Hubbard (2007:2) in an article which shows the ways in which Reinikka and Svensson's 2003 work on newspapers and corruption in Uganda has been exaggerated and quoted out of context.
2. See <http://www.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/sen> accessed January 10, 2012.
3. Amartya Sen, 1999:180.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid 87-88.
6. Ibid 181.
7. Ibid.
8. Amartya Sen, "What's the Point of Press Freedom?" 2004, see: <http://www.wan-press.org/article3881.html>.
9. Timothy Besley & Robin Burgess, "The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence From India." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, MIT Press, Vol. 117, No. 4, 2001, 24.
10. Ibid 24.
11. Jagdish Bhagwati, "Democracy and Development: New Thinking on an Old Question," 1995:60.
12. Ibid 59-60.
13. Thomas Myhrvold-Hanssen, "Democracy, News Media, and Famine Prevention: Amartya Sen and The Bihar Famine of 1966-67," 2003.
14. Ibid 9.
15. Jean Drèze is a development economist of Belgian origin who is now a naturalized Indian.
16. Drèze and Sen, 1991.
17. Narasimhan Ram, 1995:173.

18. Ibid.
19. See, for example Alex de Waal, 2000.
20. See, for example, Francesco Burchi, 2011.
21. Besley & Burgess, 2002:17.
22. Ibid 21.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid 24.
25. Ibid 25.
26. See Ritva Reinikka and Jakob Svensson, 2003, but see also their 2004 paper in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, where the baseline results are discussed in detail, and their 2011 paper in the *Journal of Public Economics* which includes the effects on educational outcomes.
27. Ibid 3.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid 14.
30. Ibid 22.
31. Paul Hubbard, “Putting the Power of Transparency in Context: Information’s Role in Reducing Corruption in Uganda’s Education Sector,” Center for Global Development, 2007:1.
32. Ibid 3.
33. Ibid 6.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid 7.
36. Ibid 8.
37. Ibid.

38. On this point, the following note was received by the author from Reinikka and Svensson:
 “We don’t know how Hubbard calculated the “less spectacular 12%” fall in leaked funds. But a back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that this number is wrong. Consider for instance what happened to the average school in our sample (and to make things easy let’s assume that all kids are in p4-p7). Then the real amount of the grant, per student, did not change from 1995 to 2001. And it’s true that enrolment increased a lot-in our sample (for the mean school) from 530 to 949 students. The amount lost in “corruption” for the mean school in 1995 is then: 530 students x \$4.7 per student in grant x (0.75) = \$ 1,868, where 0.75 is the average amount that did not reach the schools in 1995. The amount lost in “corruption” for the mean school in 2001 is 949 students x \$4.7 per student in grant x (0.19) = \$ 847 where 0.19 is the average amount that did not reach the schools in 1995. Thus for the average school, taking into account the increase in enrolment, we observe a fall in monetary amounts of corruption of roughly 55 %!!! That’s actually a very big number!” Email to the author, May 30, 2012.
39. Paul Hubbard, 2007: 9.
40. Reinikka and Svensson in email to author, May 30, 2012.
41. Ibid, some punctuation and explanatory insertions made by author.
42. See Pippa Norris’ website: <http://www.pippanorris.com/>.
43. Sina Odugbemi, *Public Sentinel*, ix.
44. Norris and Odugbemi, 2010 b:5.
45. Norris and Odugbemi, 2010 b:5.
46. Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929) is a German philosopher who theorised the public sphere as, in the words of Norris and Odugbemi, ‘that space between the state and the household where free and equal citizens come together to share information, to deliberate upon common concerns, and to cooperate and collaborate on solutions to social problems’ (Norris and Odugbemi 2010: 6). Habermas has argued that the process of deliberation in the public sphere and the formation of independent public opinion function as a check on state power.
47. Norris and Odugbemi, 2010 b:5.
48. Norris and Odugbemi, 2010 a:370.
49. The state of the world’s press is monitored annually, among other measures of democracy, rights and political freedom, by the U.S.-based NGO Freedom House and is one of the most widely used cross-national indicators. For more information about its methodology, see <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

50. The Kaufmann-Kraay indexes, also known as the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) of the World Bank, monitor multiple dimensions of governance for different types of regimes. They are put together by Daniel Kaufmann of the Brookings Institution, Aart Kraay, World Bank Development Research Group and Massimo Mastruzzi, World Bank Institute. Their control of corruption index combines sources such as data from Transparency International, the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Survey, and the Political Risk Services International Country Risk Guide. For more details, see: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>.
51. Norris and Odugbemi, 2010 a:386.
52. Ibid 383.
53. Ibid 388.
54. Norris, 2008.
55. See Reporters Without Borders website: <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2011-2012,1043.html>.
56. See note re. Kaufmann-Kraay index, above.
57. See <http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Governance/Vanhanens-index-of-democracy/>.
58. Norris, 2008:72.
59. Polity is a research project in political science run by U.S. academics Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers from Colorado State University and Ted Robert Gurr, University of Maryland (Emeritus). Polity 'IV' is the latest version in their data series which contains annual information on regime authority characteristics and transitions for all independent states. See: <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>.
60. Norris, 2008:74.
61. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, 2010:215.
62. Carl Hovland (1912-1961) was an American psychologist, perhaps best known for his work on persuasion and attitude change in the 1930s and 40s on American soldiers in World War II and their reaction to propaganda films. One of his contentions was that people were less likely to be persuaded by a one-sided presentation of a controversial subject than one that mentions the opposing side of the argument as well.
63. Paul Lazarsfeld (1901-1976) was an American sociologist whose "two step flow theory" was part of his work on communications. This theory is that the media do not influence people

directly but indirectly, through opinion-leaders and other personal contacts, especially via face-to-face communication.

64. Norris and Inglehart, 2010:216.
65. Pippa Norris, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/ Acrobat/VIRTUOUS/Conclusions.pdf>, accessed January 9, 2012.
66. Pippa Norris, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/ Acrobat/CriticalCitizensRevisited/Chapter%209.pdf>, accessed January 10, 2012.
67. Ibid.
68. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/ Acrobat/Global%20Communications/Chapter%2011.pdf>, accessed January 10, 2012.
69. Tim Allen and Nicole Stremlau, 2005.
70. Ibid 6.
71. Ibid 7.
72. This workshop was organized in London by LSE's Crisis States Research Centre, the Stanhope Centre for Communications and the Annenberg School for Communication in March 2005.
73. See James Putzel and van der Zwan, 2006. Tim Allen, Monroe Price and Nicole Stremlau were also contributors to this report.
74. Ibid 1.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid 2.
77. James Putzel, in email interview with author, May 24, 2012.
78. Allen and Stremlau, 2005.
79. Ibid 15.
80. Event, "The Role of the Media in Fragile States: Can Donors Help Improve the Quality of Journalism?," October 8, 2010, See event report: http://www.odi.org.uk/events/details.asp?utm_source=event-update&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20100922&id=2484&t

[title=role-media-fragile-states-can-donors-help-improve-quality-journalism#report.](#)

81. Ibid.
82. Francis B. Nyamnjoh, http://www.nyamnjoh.com/2004/11/introducing_fra.html.
83. Nyamnjoh, 2005.
84. Ibid 231.
85. Ibid 248.
86. Ibid 78.
87. Ibid 79.
88. Ibid 250.
89. Francis Nyamnjoh, "Racism, Ethnicity and the Media in Africa: Reflections Inspired by Studies of Xenophobia in Cameroon and South Africa," *Africa Spectrum*, 2010.
90. Nyamnjoh 2005.
91. Nyamnjoh, 2011.
92. Ibid 28.
93. *Radio trottoir* or sidewalk radio, means the sharing of news and information, often secretly under authoritarian regimes, in the form of jokes, gossip, popular songs, graffiti, poems etc.
94. Ibid 29.
95. Ibid.
96. See <http://www.sa-venues.com/events/easterncape/highway-africa/>.
97. Guy Berger, <http://guyberger.ru.ac.za/>.
98. Berger, 2002.
99. Berger, 2010.
100. For a succinct summary of this article, see Huma Haider, Claire Mcloughlin, et al. *Topic Guide on Communication and Governance*, Governance and Social Development Resource

Centre (GSDRC), International Development Department, College of Social Sciences, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, <http://www.gsdrc.org/go/topic-guides/communication-and-governance>.

101. Berger, 2010.
102. Ibid 558.
103. Berger 2006.
104. Guy Berger, in email interview with author, May 28, 2012.
105. Berger, 2011.
106. Ibid 21.
107. Ibid 17.
108. These references are taken from a list of publications on Berger's CV on his website (see note above).

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