

## **FREEDOM OF THE PRESS**

### **A World System Perspective**

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**Abstract** / The world system theory can provide a refreshingly different perspective of global press freedom. The starting point of assessing press freedom should be the world system, not the 'atomistic' nation-state, because one cannot understand the part without knowing the whole, which is more than the sum of the parts. This article proposes the application of a revised formulation of the world system theory – which presumes a capitalist world-economy dominated by three competing center-clusters each associated with a dependent hinterland of peripheral economic clusters – to examine global press freedom. It proposes a three-tiered typology for measuring press freedom at the world system, nation-state and individual levels. It suggests that press freedom indices should factor in the power of the center-clusters, themselves led by a hegemon cluster, to flood the hinterlands technologically with a barrage of information-communication.

**Keywords** / freedom of communication outlets / press freedom / right to communicate / world system

The structural-functionalist modernization paradigm, better known as the dominant paradigm, identified media participation, with accompanying press freedom, as another facet of development (Burrowes, 1996). Wallerstein (1974) turned the tables around when he challenged the basic presumption of the dominant paradigm: that nation-states changed in parallel lines from tradition to modernity. Applying the method of historical social science, Wallerstein theorized that the world system as a whole reflected a given stage of development, and that the part, i.e. the nation-state, was not independent of the whole. Yet, researchers have continued to measure press freedom using criteria solely internal to a state. (The dominant paradigm is associated with Lerner, Rostow and Schramm. As I have pointed out elsewhere [Gunaratne, 2001b: 157], 'Lerner's semitheory postulated that urbanization and literacy, followed by media participation and political participation [voting], produced the critical mass of "modernity" that propelled countries to the takeoff point of self-sustaining economic and social growth'. Thus, the old paradigm establishes a connection between mass media and voting – a connection relevant to the elaboration of this article.)

In another paper (Gunaratne, 2001a), I have proposed a world system model that provides researchers a new framework for mapping press freedom in the world. The proposed model requires linking the notion of press freedom

to global forces, such as the ability of center-clusters to flood the periphery-clusters with a barrage of information-communication notwithstanding the domestic restrictions within a state. So conceived, the measurement of press freedom should include the accessibility of information from exogenous sources.

Moreover, if one were to presume the libertarian concept – ‘a free flow of information unimpeded by any intervention by any nation’ (Hachten, 1999: 21) – as the best expression of press freedom, then research must also address the issue of global press freedom vis-a-vis the vast volume of government-sponsored global information flow (e.g. Voice of America, Radio Moscow, Radio Beijing, Deutsche Welle, BBC, Radio France Internationale). For more than half a century, transnational radio has been ‘a key instrument of international political communication’ (Hachten, 1999: 113). Some 1600 short-wave stations broadcast from 160 countries. Although the ‘freedom principle’ (Merrill, 2000a) debars government from assuming the functions of the Fourth Estate, press freedom advocates hardly raise an eyebrow at government-run media at the international level. As Pillai (1999–2000: 198) points out, ‘The desire to control unfavorable information is common to governments everywhere, only the degree of control differs.’ This desire is far more apparent at the world system level.

I have proposed a reformulation of the world system theory as follows: the modern world-economy comprises three competing center-clusters, each of which has a dependent hinterland of periphery-clusters. The relative power of the three center-clusters – North American Free Trade Agreement, the European Union and the Asia-Pacific economic powers – is unequal. Among these is a hegemon cluster, NAFTA, led by a global state that has more power on the world system than any other.<sup>1</sup> The relative power of the global states within the center-clusters, as well as those within the periphery-clusters, is also unequal. The global information and communication flow most likely follows the pattern of this ‘triadized’ center-hinterland structure.

I have argued that the essential requirement is to move the research focus from the part (i.e. the nation-state) to the whole (i.e. the world system). Thus any analysis of global communication, including the mapping of press freedom, should move in descending order from the world-economy to the center-clusters and their respective hinterlands – the periphery-clusters – and only then to the nation-states within each of the clusters. This approach recognizes the call for future press freedom studies to ‘acknowledge more fully – both at the level of theory and in the research design – the increasingly global character of interlocking power relations’ (Burrowes, 1996: 25). It also pays attention to the increasing internationalization of research in journalism as ‘the media contexts within which journalism is practised assume global proportions’ (Tumber et al., 2000: 6). Moreover, it is consistent with the deductive method of social science, and is particularly appropriate for evaluating a structural theory. My revised world system model is the outcome of my previous attempts to apply macro theory to media analysis (Gunaratne, 2001b, 2001c).

First, in this article, I analyze the transformation of the concept of press freedom from an individual right to a conglomerate right in the course of free-market-stimulated capital accumulation, and propose a hypothesis

associating media freedom and political participation. Second, I examine the empirical methods researchers have used to measure press freedom. Third, I test the proposed hypothesis, and point out the weaknesses of the criteria used for measuring press freedom. Finally, I suggest a scheme to improve the accuracy of such measurement through the world system perspective, and outline the conclusions so derived.

## Concept of Press Freedom

The West has generally associated press freedom with the characteristics of Siebert's so-called libertarian theory of the press (1956) or the CHAOS – competition, heterogeneity, autonomy, openness and selfishness – paradigm (Merrill, 2000a). Stein (1966: 11) does exactly that when he describes a free press as one that 'acts as a market place where ideas, opinions and theories are served up to citizens for their acceptance or rejection' without a government censor hanging 'over the shoulder of the editorial writer'. Powe (1991: 285) says that 'editorial autonomy from government' and 'inability of government to dictate coverage' enable the press to perform its Fourth Estate role – 'a role more secure than the nebulous and inconsistent possibilities in the public's right to know'. Asante (1997) points out the following definitions of *press freedom* in the academic literature: relative absence of government restraints; prevalence of autonomy; and ability to serve as the Fourth Estate that checks the three official branches of the government.

The purpose of a libertarian press is 'to inform, entertain, [and] sell – but chiefly to help discover truth, and to check on government' (Siebert et al., 1956: 7). Within this context, the press enjoys negative rights to publish as it pleases with no concomitant responsibilities. Peterson's formulation of the social responsibility theory of the press, following the Hutchins Commission report,<sup>2</sup> retains the first three tasks of a libertarian press but contends that the chief purpose of the press is 'to raise conflict to the plane of discussion' (Siebert et al., 1956: 7). This approach, therefore, looks at press freedom as a positive right that entails concomitant responsibilities.

The Hutchins Commission (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947: 12) wrote, 'Freedom of the press is not a fixed and isolated value, the same in every society and in all times. It is a function within a society and must vary with the social context.' Hocking (1947: 194), in one of the five special studies done for the commission, emphasized the very point that the concept of the *free press* 'cannot mean the same in every society and at all times'. If this were the case, then measuring freedom of the press based on a set of criteria relevant to one society at a given time is bound to produce questionable results. This view agrees with the contemporary debate on relating press freedom to Asian values and other social values outside western society (Gunaratne, 2000: 5–11). As Philippine journalist Amando Doronila points out, 'While democracy and freedom of the press are inseparable notions, one cannot assume these twin notions take the same focus in Asia as in North American and Western European democracies' (cited in Williams and Rich, 2000: xi). Burrowes (1997), who used the Liberian context to test Stevens's (1971) propositions linking press freedom

to cultural homogeneity and economic development, came to a similar conclusion. Burrowes's study 'highlighted the importance of cross-national testing of propositions to avoid premature generalizing on the basis of conditions that are unique to certain periods and societies' (Burrowes, 1997: 341).

Freedom House, however, has been conducting press freedom surveys worldwide since 1979 classifying the media as 'free', 'partly free' or 'not free' depending on the 'degree to which each country permits the free flow of information' (Table 1). It claims that its survey uses universal criteria starting with the most 'universal unit of concern: the individual' (Sussman, 2000: 9). Freedom House asserts that it merely applies the basic thrust of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (i.e. 'everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression') in assessing press freedom.

Freedom House's view of press freedom is identical to that of the 1981 Declaration of Talloires, which ends with the statement: 'Press freedom is a basic human right.' This declaration was a western response to the clamor for a New World Information and Communication Order. Nordenstreng (1999: 256), however, argues that under international law, the subject and 'owner' of the 'right to freedom of opinion and expression' – a right that 'carries with it duties and responsibilities' – is the *individual*, not the press or media organizations. Thus, Nordenstreng makes a distinction between *freedom of the press* and *freedom of individual expression* thereby contending that press freedom is not a human right. Cullen and Fu (1998: 157) agree that although these two concepts are similar, the differences between the two 'sometimes find themselves in opposition'.

In this regard, one needs to remember the Hutchins Commission's view that 'freedom of speech and freedom of the press were *moral* rights' that carried with them 'accepted *moral* duties' (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947: 9–10). White and Leigh (1946: 2), who authored the report on international communication as part of the work of the commission, urged the press to initiate 'the widest possible exchange of objectively realistic information – *true* information, not merely *more* information'. They balked at the idea of simply writing 'the First Amendment into international law' to allow 'the *unhindered flow* of information' because that 'may merely replace ignorance with prejudice and distortion rather than with understanding' (White and Leigh, 1946: 2). They called on governments and private agencies to share 'the task of stimulating understanding among people through mass-communication media' (White and Leigh, 1946: 16). Thus, they failed to see eye to eye with the libertarian concept of a negative press freedom and even saw a role for the government in news dissemination.

The commission was careful to point out that in the 1790s when the US Bill of Rights – the first 10 amendments to the constitution – came into force, 'anybody with anything to say had comparatively little difficulty in getting it published' because 'the man [*sic*] whose opinions were not represented could start a publication of his own' (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947: 14). Thus, the First Amendment aimed to protect the press from government censorship. A communication revolution had changed those circumstances with the press being transformed into 'big business' resulting in the right of

free public expression losing 'its earlier reality'. Furthermore, concentration of ownership had limited the 'variety of sources of news and opinion', and the freedom of the press could remain 'a right of those who publish only if it incorporates into itself the right of the citizen and the public interest' (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947: 15–18). These observations make it abundantly clear, that the commission did not consider freedom of the press a human right in the American social context of the mid-20th century. Coincidentally, in 1948, the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognized 'the right to freedom of opinion and expression' as a human right (Article 19). However, the UDHR did not specifically mention freedom of the press.

Contemporary scholars have reiterated the preceding views on the press in relation to the time the First Amendment was written, during which time the bourgeois state came to power and the terms 'media' and 'the press' meant the same. 'The press was understood as the printing press, not as the newspaper press, so that freedom of the press was thought of in the same terms as freedom of speech. . . . The press was a tool that citizens used to speak and some of this speech was public' (Nerone, 1995: 156). The same scholar points out: 'The press itself has become globalized. It is no longer only the nation-state out of which the press operates that most significantly determines journalistic practice' (Nerone, 1995: 160). Moreover, the 'press no longer performs the same functions that it did' (Nerone, 1995: 175) during the late 1940s when the Hutchins Commission described the emerging conception of freedom of the press as follows:

*As with all freedom, press freedom means freedom from and also freedom for.*

*A free press is free from compulsions from whatever source, governmental or social, external or internal. From compulsions, not from pressures: for no press can be free from pressures except in a moribund society empty of contending forces and beliefs. These pressures, however, if they are persistent and distorting – as financial, clerical, popular, institutional pressures may become – approach compulsions; and something is then lost from effective freedom, which the press and its public must unite to restore.*

*A free press is free for the expression of opinion in all its phases. It is free for the achievement of those goals of press service on which its own ideals and the requirements of the community combine and which existing techniques make possible. For these ends it must have full command of technical resources, financial strength, reasonable access to sources of information at home and abroad, and the necessary facilities for bringing information to the national market. The press must grow to the measure of this market.*

*For the press there is a third aspect of freedom. The free press must be free to all who have something worth saying to the public, since the essential object for which a free press is valued is that ideas deserving a public hearing shall have a public hearing. (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947: 128–9; Hocking, 1947: 228)*

The Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947: 107) further argued that the founding fathers bracketed freedom of the press with freedom of speech because the press was at first hardly more than a means for extending the speaker's audience. While exhorting that the 'government must set limits upon its capacity to interfere with, regulate, control, or suppress the voices of the press or to manipulate the data on which public judgment is formed', the commission also opined that the government 'may and should enter the field of press

comment and news supply, not as displacing private enterprise, but as a supplementary source' (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947: 116, 128).

More than 30 years later, the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (MacBride Report, 1980/4) pointed out the need to devote special attention 'to obstacles and restrictions [that] derive from the concentration of media ownership, public or private, from commercial influences on the press and broadcasting, or from private or governmental advertising' (Recommendation 57). The report also drew attention to the 1952 Convention on the International Right of Correction (Recommendation 48), thereby expressing its desire to place the right to communicate at the world system level. The concept of the right to communicate includes the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy and the right to participate in public communication (Recommendation 54). Elsewhere, I have elaborated on the parallels between the views of the Hutchins Commission and the MacBride Commission on press freedom and responsibility (Gunaratne, 1998). For example, both commissions recommended minority access and international cooperation regarding the picture of life presented in the media.

Two decades after the MacBride Report, the concentration of media ownership has become more pronounced because of several developments accentuating capital accumulation, e.g. the demise of the socialist bloc, and the US-led worldwide promotion of free-market philosophy. At the beginning of the 21st century, the global media market has come under the domination of a dozen or so mega-media conglomerates, including AOL Time Warner (CNN), AT&T Broadband, Bertelsmann, Disney (ABC), General Electric (NBC), News Corp. (Fox TV), Sony (Columbia Pictures), Viacom (CBS) and Vivendi-Universal. They dominate many aspects of mass media: newspapers, magazines, books, radio, broadcast television, cable systems and programming, movies, music recordings, video cassettes and online services (Bagdikian, 2000; McChesney, 1998; Thussu, 2000). Freedom of the press, contrary to what the framers of the First Amendment most likely had in mind, has moved away from the individual to the media conglomerates. As Curran and Park (2000) point out, under free-market conditions, a close alliance of big business, press and government is poised to engender new systems of power inimical to the general public.<sup>3</sup> Those in media management have attempted to divert attention from the real, as well as potential, business–press–government power axis as when Neuharth (1998: 530) says: 'We in the media have to remind the public that the First Amendment is not just for our protection, but for theirs'. Schwartz (1992: 133) adopts a similar stance when he posits that the framers of the First Amendment provided a separate protection for freedom of the press to give 'an institutional role for publishers and editors to criticize government and public officials to ensure that they would act properly in the exercise of their powers'.

An implicit presumption behind the Fourth Estate role of the press, as well as in the media participation and political participation (voting) variables in the dominant paradigm, is that a free press will lead to enlightenment on public issues that will stimulate political participation and democratic governance. If this were the case, the following hypothesis should stand: political participation

is higher in nation-states with more press freedom than in nation-states with less press freedom.

## Measuring Press Freedom

Globalization in the information era calls for a more accurate measurement of press freedom that encompasses the world system, not just the individual states. Van Belle (2000: 137) claimed that 'a readily available, comprehensive data set that measured global press freedom over an extended temporal domain' did not exist before he compiled an empirical measure of the press freedom of states for the period 1948–95. What did exist were a few cross-sectional studies from the early 1960s (Banks and Textor, 1963; Nixon, 1960, 1965), the empirical studies of Lowenstein (1970) and Kent (1972) and a collection of data from Freedom House that began in 1979. Some were short descriptive summaries of press freedom, such as those of the International Press Institute (IPI) and Inter American Press Association. Lee (1991: 154) refers to these as 'descriptive, journalistic and in many cases subjective case analyses of press situations in individual countries'.

Van Belle (2000: 138) used descriptive summaries such as those of the IPI annual report 'along with country reports by area experts and historical documents pertaining to the country or the region' to code 'the freedom and effectiveness of the press for all states' from 1948 to 1995. He identified as *free* those states where 'the news media are capable of functioning as an arena of political competition'. He identified as *controlled* those states where the government directly controlled the press. In between these two, he identified two other categories: *imperfectly free*, where 'press freedom is compromised by corruption or unofficial influence'; and *restricted*, where the press 'is not capable of functioning as an arena of political competition or debate' though not directly controlled by the government. As a reliability check, he compared the data he derived with the available Freedom House data. Van Belle explained, 'In the process of coding this data, it became clear that in terms of the ability of the press to function freely and independently of the government, the data seem to form a natural dichotomy' (van Belle, 2000: 141).

Nixon (1960) used a panel of three judges to appraise press freedom in 85 nations primarily based on the two main IPI surveys of the 1950s (IPI, 1955, 1959). He derived a five-way classification of press systems based on the degree of *government* controls. In a follow-up study of 117 countries, he used a panel of 'five experts who could evaluate the situation in each country on the basis of their own knowledge' (Nixon, 1965: 6) and place that country on a nine-point scale of press freedom.

Lowenstein (1970), who used 23 factors to develop his Press Independence and Critical Ability (PICA) index, claimed that PICA could measure press freedom 'probably with a good deal of accuracy' (Lowenstein, 1970: 139). Furthermore, he asserted, 'If one agrees that press freedom is closely bound up with democracy, in the Western sense, then one must pay special attention to the predictive capacity of a system for measuring press freedom' (Lowenstein, 1970: 139). Using Lowenstein's data for 94 countries, Kent (1972) narrowly

focused on aspects of government control to find the 'unidimensionality' of 15 variables, including libel laws, licensing, government advertising and government subsidies. Because these two researchers followed the modernization paradigm then in vogue, they too failed to go beyond the endogenous factors within the nation-state.

Weaver et al. (1985), in their study of 134 countries comparing data for 1950 and 1979, also determined press freedom on the basis of the degree of government control of the press. They took into account 'only those restrictions initiated by the government of a country' without considering 'the actual flow of diversity of opinions and ideas within the mass media of a country' although they presumed 'an inverse correlation between the degree of government control and such diversity' (Weaver et al., 1985: 108–9). To determine press freedom in 1950, they used Schramm and Carter's (1960) Guttman scale, which included items on government ownership of newspapers, economic pressures by government on the media, political censorship, restrictions on criticism of government policies and government ownership of broadcasting. To determine press freedom in 1979, they relied on Freedom House's classification, which took into account government ownership of the media, government censorship, restrictions on criticism and other forms of government pressure on the media.

Freedom House has classified the press and broadcasting systems in countries into 'free', 'partly free', and 'not free' categories since 1979. It started assigning numerical scores to each country from 1994 onward using four criteria that it claimed were founded on Article 19 of UDHR (Table 1). Other organizations, such as the IPI, the World Association of Newspapers, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and Reporters sans Frontières have used qualitative criteria to determine worldwide press freedom.

Freedom House measures only the extent to which the endogenous print and broadcast media can keep their content free from the influence of laws and regulations, political pressures and controls, and economic influences. It gives a score of 0–15 to each of the two types of media in relation to each of these three criteria. A fourth criterion, repressive actions, is scored 0–5 for each of the two media types. Thus, the maximum possible score for a country is 100, with 0–30 defined as free, 31–60 as partly free, and 61–100 as not free. Freedom House admits that its survey is not a measure of press responsibility.

## Findings and Discussion

The hypothesis (stated at the end of the section preceding the last) is consistent with the original intention behind the concept of press as the Fourth Estate, as well as with the presumptions of the dominant paradigm: that the main purpose of freedom of the press is to engender an informed public for active participation in democratic governance.<sup>4</sup> Freedom House has determined that 18 countries have the greatest press freedom in the world (Table 1). These comprise two large countries – the US and Germany – nine small countries of Western Europe, three small Caribbean countries, two small Pacific island nations, as well as Australia and New Zealand. We hypothesized that political participation (as reflected in voter turnout at national elections) would be highest in countries

TABLE 1

## Freedom House Press Freedom Indicators 1994–2000 with Data on Voter Turnout and HDI Standing

	Free (First Tier) 0–15							Average	VT (%)	HDI 1998
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000			
Norway	10	8	5	5	5	5	5	<b>6.1</b>	78	0.934
New Zealand	8	8	6	6	6	8	8	<b>7.1</b>	90	0.903
Bahamas	18	8	7	7	7	7	7	<b>8.7</b>	68	0.844
Belgium	7	7	10	10	10	9	9	<b>8.9</b>	91	0.925
Switzerland	11	10	8	9	8	8	8	<b>8.9</b>	43	0.915
Australia	9	7	8	10	10	10	10	<b>9.1</b>	95	0.929
Denmark	11	9	9	9	9	9	9	<b>9.3</b>	86	0.911
Nauru	20	18	6	6	6	6	6	<b>9.7</b>	–	–
Luxembourg	12	10	10	10	10	10	10	<b>10.3</b>	86	0.908
Sweden	11	10	10	10	10	10	11	<b>10.3</b>	81	0.926
Marshall Islands	18	19	8	8	8	8	8	<b>11.0</b>	–	–
Iceland	14	12	12	12	12	12	12	<b>12.3</b>	84	0.927
United States	12	12	14	14	12	13	13	<b>12.9</b>	36	0.929
St Lucia	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	<b>13.0</b>	66	0.728
Jamaica	23	18	11	11	11	11	11	<b>13.7</b>	65	0.735
Austria	19	18	12	12	12	12	12	<b>13.9</b>	80	0.908
Germany	11	18	21	11	11	13	13	<b>14.0</b>	82	0.911
Netherlands	14	18	14	14	14	14	14	<b>14.6</b>	73	0.925

TABLE 1 – continued

	Free (Second Tier) 16–30							Average	VT	HDI
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000			
Canada	13	18	23	11	11	16	14	<b>15.1</b>	69	0.935
Finland	17	15	15	15	15	15	15	<b>15.3</b>	65	0.917
St Vincent and Grenadines	22	12	16	16	16	16	16	<b>16.3</b>	–	0.738
Solomon Islands	22	18	13	14	14	16	18	<b>16.4</b>	64	0.614
Dominica	20	16	16	16	16	16	16	<b>16.6</b>	75	0.793
Barbados	17	19	16	–	16	16	16	<b>16.7</b>	63	0.858
Costa Rica	16	21	18	16	16	16	16	<b>17.0</b>	70	0.797
Portugal	18	16	17	17	17	17	17	<b>17.0</b>	62	0.864
Spain	14	23	17	19	17	21	18	<b>18.4</b>	77	0.899
Ireland	16	15	18	19	21	20	21	<b>18.6</b>	66	0.907
St Kitts and Nevis	21	19	18	18	18	18	18	<b>18.6</b>	68	0.798
Bolivia	20	17	17	20	18	18	22	<b>18.9</b>	70	0.643
Malta	27	24	17	17	17	17	17	<b>19.4</b>	95	0.865
Kiribati	26	24	18	18	17	17	17	<b>19.6</b>	–	–
Cyprus	30	24	16	18	18	16	16	<b>19.7</b>	93	0.886
Czechia	20	21	19	19	19	20	20	<b>19.7</b>	74	0.843
Japan	21	20	21	20	19	19	19	<b>19.9</b>	59	0.924
Grenada	22	20	20	20	20	20	20	<b>20.3</b>	57	0.785
United Kingdom	24	22	22	22	21	20	20	<b>21.6</b>	72	0.918
Estonia	28	25	24	22	20	20	20	<b>22.7</b>	57	0.801
Lithuania	30	29	25	20	17	18	20	<b>22.7</b>	53	0.789
Latvia	29	29	21	21	21	21	24	<b>23.7</b>	72	0.771
Mauritius	30	30	25	25	20	20	17	<b>23.9</b>	80	0.761
Micronesia	25	23	23	23	26	26	24	<b>24.3</b>	–	–

TABLE 1 – *continued*

	Free (Second Tier) 16–30 (continued)									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Belize	29	22	25	25	25	25	25	<b>25.1</b>	90	0.777
Poland	30	29	21	27	25	25	19	<b>25.1</b>	48	0.814
France	19	27	30	26	26	27	24	<b>25.6</b>	71	0.917
Guyana	41	28	26	26	22	22	22	<b>26.7</b>	98	0.709
Korea, South	29	28	22	25	28	28	27	<b>26.7</b>	64	0.854
Taiwan	29	30	30	28	25	25	21	<b>26.9</b>	–	–
Uruguay	23	25	25	29	30	30	29	<b>27.3</b>	92	0.825
Papua New Guinea	25	23	30	30	28	28	28	<b>27.4</b>	81	0.542
Italy	25	30	30	27	27	28	27	<b>27.7</b>	83	0.903
Trinidad and Tobago	29	25	26	30	28	28	28	<b>27.7</b>	63	0.793
Botswana	19	28	30	30	30	30	28	<b>27.9</b>	77	0.593
Chile	30	30	28	30	27	27	27	<b>28.4</b>	86	0.826
Panama	27	22	30	30	30	30	30	<b>28.4</b>	76	0.776
Greece	30	26	29	27	30	30	30	<b>28.9</b>	76	0.875
Israel	30	30	30	28	28	28	30	<b>29.1</b>	79	0.883
South Africa	38	30	30	27	28	28	25	<b>29.4</b>	89	0.697
Namibia	23	23	30	30	30	38	34	<b>29.7</b>	63	0.632
Samoa	30	29	28	28	28	31	34	<b>29.7</b>	86	0.711
	Partly Free (First Tier) 31–45									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Slovenia	40	37	27	28	27	27	27	<b>30.4</b>	74	0.861
Benin	34	31	31	30	30	30	30	<b>30.9</b>	70	0.411
Brazil	27	30	30	30	32	35	33	<b>31.0</b>	–	0.747

TABLE 1 – continued

	Partly Free (First Tier) 31–45 (continued)									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Hungary	30	38	34	31	28	28	30	<b>31.3</b>	56	0.817
Dominican Republic	27	35	38	32	30	30	30	<b>31.7</b>	66	0.729
Mali	43	52	24	24	30	27	26	<b>32.3</b>	22	0.38
Cape Verde	34	32	32	32	32	33	32	<b>32.4</b>	77	0.688
Hong Kong	30	30	30	41	–	–	–	<b>32.8</b>	–	0.872
Argentina	29	29	31	31	36	41	41	<b>34.0</b>	81	0.837
Mongolia	40	41	34	34	34	30	29	<b>34.6</b>	88	0.628
Venezuela	30	49	31	32	33	33	34	<b>34.6</b>	–	0.77
Surinam	43	45	31	31	31	31	31	<b>34.7</b>	67	0.766
Madagascar	45	44	32	32	32	32	32	<b>35.6</b>	–	0.483
Thailand	54	49	31	34	31	30	30	<b>37.0</b>	62	0.745
Tonga	35	37	35	41	39	39	36	<b>37.4</b>	–	–
Ecuador	23	41	38	40	40	40	44	<b>38.0</b>	–	0.722
Burkina Faso	40	37	37	37	39	39	40	<b>38.4</b>	45	0.303
Sao Tome and Principe	52	34	48	48	30	30	27	<b>38.4</b>	65	0.547
Macedonia	–	34	36	33	44	42	42	<b>38.5</b>	73	0.763
Senegal	56	48	31	37	33	33	33	<b>38.7</b>	39	0.416
Bulgaria	43	39	46	44	36	39	30	<b>39.6</b>	68	0.772
Comoros	44	46	35	38	38	38	40	<b>39.9</b>	20	0.51
Antigua and Barbuda	28	35	35	46	46	46	46	<b>40.3</b>	64	0.833
Philippines	55	46	46	46	30	30	30	<b>40.4</b>	79	0.744
India	38	49	48	40	37	37	42	<b>41.6</b>	60	0.563
Malawi	41	43	36	38	40	42	52	<b>41.7</b>	92	0.385
Slovakia	47	55	41	49	47	30	30	<b>42.7</b>	84	0.825

TABLE 1 – *continued*

	Partly Free (First Tier) 31–45 (continued)									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Vanuatu	45	54	42	42	42	42	44	<b>44.4</b>	75	0.623
El Salvador	41	32	41	53	53	53	40	<b>44.7</b>	89	0.696
	Partly Free (Second Tier) 46–60									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Nicaragua	56	53	44	44	40	40	40	<b>45.3</b>	77	0.631
Uganda	84	38	38	38	40	40	40	<b>45.4</b>	59	0.409
Honduras	55	45	34	47	47	48	48	<b>46.3</b>	73	0.653
Romania	55	50	49	47	39	44	44	<b>46.9</b>	76	0.77
Ukraine	44	42	39	49	49	50	60	<b>47.6</b>	70	0.744
Mozambique	61	54	36	50	48	48	48	<b>49.3</b>	80	0.341
Paraguay	41	56	52	52	52	47	51	<b>50.1</b>	80	0.736
Seychelles	44	57	50	50	50	50	50	<b>50.1</b>	87	0.786
Tanzania	60	49	49	49	48	51	49	<b>50.7</b>	77	0.415
Kuwait	67	70	42	44	44	45	48	<b>51.4</b>	80	0.836
Morocco	59	53	48	51	51	51	49	<b>51.7</b>	58	0.589
Sri Lanka	43	41	46	54	50	58	70	<b>51.7</b>	76	0.733
Gabon	58	52	49	50	50	52	55	<b>52.3</b>	–	0.592
Guinea-Bissau	48	50	49	57	57	57	56	<b>53.4</b>	80	0.331
Jordan	52	48	45	48	60	65	57	<b>53.6</b>	47	0.721
Mexico	60	54	52	52	54	54	50	<b>53.7</b>	57	0.784
Russia	40	55	58	53	53	59	60	<b>54.0</b>	62	0.771
Lebanon	46	56	46	46	62	62	61	<b>54.1</b>	44	0.735
Moldova	41	47	62	57	58	56	58	<b>54.1</b>	72	0.7

TABLE 1 - continued

	Partly Free (Second Tier) 46–60 (continued)									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Colombia	49	48	54	55	55	60	59	<b>54.3</b>	45	0.764
Bangladesh	52	49	49	57	57	59	60	<b>54.7</b>	74	0.461
Lesotho	47	52	55	58	58	59	56	<b>55.0</b>	74	0.569
Armenia	52	57	56	56	56	56	57	<b>55.7</b>	52	0.721
Nepal	53	54	52	56	59	59	59	<b>56.0</b>	66	0.474
Guatemala	59	60	56	56	59	60	54	<b>57.7</b>	54	0.619
Fiji	55	56	57	60	60	59	58	<b>57.9</b>	75	0.769
Kyrgyzstan	49	52	60	61	64	64	61	<b>58.7</b>	61	0.706
Zimbabwe	48	59	56	57	61	64	67	<b>58.9</b>	57	0.555
Pakistan	58	59	60	54	58	60	64	<b>59.0</b>	35	0.522
Zambia	50	61	60	61	60	62	62	<b>59.4</b>	40	0.42
Gambia	24	63	62	65	65	70	70	<b>59.9</b>	69	0.396
Djibouti	71	58	52	52	62	62	63	<b>60.0</b>	57	0.447
Peru	58	57	60	56	59	63	67	<b>60.0</b>	63	0.737
	Not Free (First Tier) 61–75									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Croatia	56	56	58	63	63	63	63	<b>60.3</b>	–	0.795
Georgia	73	70	68	55	56	57	47	<b>60.9</b>	68	0.762
Cambodia	50	60	65	65	65	62	61	<b>61.1</b>	–	0.512
Ghana	63	62	62	59	60	61	61	<b>61.1</b>	65	0.556
Qatar	64	64	62	53	62	62	62	<b>61.3</b>	–	0.819
Haiti	87	51	59	59	59	58	58	<b>61.6</b>	31	0.44
Niger	61	61	54	63	63	68	62	<b>61.7</b>	–	0.293

TABLE 1 – *continued*

	Not Free (First Tier) 61–75 (continued)									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Congo (Brazzaville)	59	53	52	45	72	75	77	<b>61.9</b>	–	0.43
Albania	53	67	71	75	56	56	56	<b>62.0</b>	73	0.713
Kenya	60	52	62	59	63	70	70	<b>62.3</b>	65	0.508
Ethiopia	73	59	57	62	62	64	62	<b>62.7</b>	85	0.309
Malaysia	58	64	61	61	61	66	70	<b>63.0</b>	–	0.772
Kazakhstan	60	61	62	64	66	68	68	<b>64.1</b>	63	0.754
Singapore	60	65	61	66	66	66	66	<b>64.3</b>	41	0.881
Bahrain	60	57	60	66	66	69	75	<b>64.7</b>	–	0.82
Central African Republic	80	65	65	65	60	60	60	<b>65.0</b>	–	0.371
Yemen	55	63	68	68	68	68	68	<b>65.4</b>	61	0.448
Indonesia	58	71	74	77	77	53	49	<b>65.6</b>	93	0.67
Laos	70	68	62	62	66	66	66	<b>65.7</b>	99	0.484
Maldives	68	62	68	65	66	66	65	<b>65.7</b>	74	0.725
Guinea	63	66	61	63	69	71	71	<b>66.3</b>	62	0.394
Turkey	59	73	74	65	69	69	58	<b>66.7</b>	87	0.732
Bosnia and Herzegovina	70	72	76	71	74	56	56	<b>67.9</b>	–	–
Bhutan	66	62	62	65	65	80	76	<b>68.0</b>	–	0.483
Palestine	–	94	58	63	65	65	65	<b>68.3</b>	–	–
Tunisia	59	64	70	70	74	74	74	<b>69.3</b>	92	0.703
Oman	68	69	62	67	75	75	71	<b>69.6</b>	–	0.73
Eritrea	80	68	68	68	69	68	68	<b>69.9</b>	–	0.408
Vietnam	71	68	68	69	71	71	75	<b>70.4</b>	100	0.671
Cote d'Ivoire	61	63	74	74	74	74	74	<b>70.6</b>	71	0.42
Mauritania	68	77	71	71	71	71	67	<b>70.9</b>	39	0.451

TABLE 1 - continued

	Not Free (First Tier) 61-75 (continued)									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Rwanda	63	-	74	74	71	72	72	<b>71.0</b>	-	0.382
Liberia	80	71	70	70	70	70	67	<b>71.1</b>	-	-
Azerbaijan	70	69	69	74	74	73	70	<b>71.3</b>	86	0.722
Brunei Darussalam	66	73	74	74	74	74	74	<b>72.7</b>	-	0.848
Swaziland	72	73	69	69	75	75	77	<b>72.9</b>	-	0.655
Nigeria	57	69	92	93	93	55	53	<b>73.1</b>	41	0.439
Togo	85	67	70	70	73	73	74	<b>73.1</b>	-	0.471
Angola	74	68	69	74	74	74	80	<b>73.3</b>	91	0.405
Egypt	75	81	80	70	69	69	69	<b>73.3</b>	48	0.623
Chad	87	72	72	72	70	75	72	<b>74.3</b>	49	0.367
Syria	75	75	75	75	74	74	73	<b>74.4</b>	82	0.66
	Not Free (Second Tier) 76-100									
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average	VT	HDI
Cameroon	79	78	72	72	77	77	77	<b>76.0</b>	76	0.528
United Arab Emirates	75	77	76	76	76	76	76	<b>76.0</b>	-	0.81
Belarus	66	67	70	85	90	80	80	<b>76.9</b>	-	0.781
Equatorial Guinea	76	74	78	78	78	78	78	<b>77.1</b>	95	0.555
Saudi Arabia	71	76	62	80	80	85	90	<b>77.7</b>	-	0.747
Iran	81	83	80	80	78	76	68	<b>78.0</b>	83	0.709
Sierra Leone	81	72	75	75	80	80	85	<b>78.3</b>	50	0.252
Uzbekistan	85	79	75	76	76	79	83	<b>79.0</b>	93	0.686
Yugoslavia (FR)	86	87	77	75	75	81	81	<b>80.3</b>	-	-
China	89	83	83	83	81	81	80	<b>82.9</b>	-	0.706

TABLE 1 – continued

	Not Free (Second Tier) 76–100 (continued)								VT	HDI
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average		
Sudan	88	76	80	85	85	85	85	<b>83.4</b>	55	0.477
Turkmenistan	89	84	84	84	84	85	86	<b>85.1</b>	99	0.704
Burundi	88	88	85	85	85	83	83	<b>85.3</b>	91	0.321
Somalia	–	–	79	86	86	88	88	<b>85.4</b>	–	–
Congo (Kinshasa)	88	85	84	84	84	90	90	<b>86.4</b>	–	0.507
Libya	87	85	89	90	90	92	90	<b>89.0</b>	–	0.76
Algeria	83	99	99	99	97	83	83	<b>91.9</b>	66	0.683
Cuba	96	90	90	95	95	94	94	<b>93.4</b>	98	0.783
Tajikistan	93	93	96	95	94	94	94	<b>94.1</b>	–	0.663
Afghanistan	–	90	90	100	100	100	90	<b>95.0</b>	–	–
Korea, North	90	92	100	100	100	100	100	<b>97.4</b>	–	–
Myanmar	90	99	99	99	99	97	100	<b>97.6</b>	–	0.585
Iraq	99	100	100	100	100	98	98	<b>99.3</b>	94	0.583
Total	8625	8717	8579	8917	8744	8775	8721			
Count	188	190	192	191	191	191	186			
Average	45.87	45.88	44.68	46.16	45.78	45.94	46.89			

Sources: Freedom House, and Human Development Report 2000.

Note: 0 denotes most freedom; 100 denotes least; – indicates that no value was assigned that year; VT denotes voter turnout at latest elections; HDI denotes Human Development Index.

with the highest press freedom (as defined and measured by Freedom House). The data in Table 2, however, fail to confirm it. No statistically significant correlation exists between these two variables for the first-tier free-press countries ( $r = -.26$ ;  $p = .34$ ), the combined first-and second-tier free-press countries ( $r = .06$ ;  $p = .69$ ), or the totality of all countries ( $r = -.02$ ;  $p = .83$ ). However, a statistically significant correlation does exist between press freedom (as defined and measured by Freedom House) and the Human Development Index for both the combined first-and second-tier free-press countries ( $r = -.49$ ;  $p = .00$ ) and the totality of all countries ( $r = -.53$ ;  $p = .00$ ). Merrill (2000b: 198) asserts, 'In the freest press systems in the world, there is not an encouraging sign of significant voter turnout. . . . And there is little evidence that the press is doing anything to increase voting or participate in government generally'.

The failure of the data to confirm our hypothesis leads us to make any one or more conjectures such as: the criteria for measuring freedom of the press are faulty; the press is not performing the role of the Fourth Estate; or political participation is much more than mere voting.<sup>5</sup> In this article, my modest aim has been to help measure press freedom more accurately rather than to resolve the whole conundrum. What is obvious is that the major 'scientific' studies on press

TABLE 2

**Correlation of Press Freedom Indicators (PFI) average for 1994–2000 with Voter Turnout (VT) at last elections, and with Human Development Index (HDI) 1998; Pearson  $r$  and  $p$  value**

Country Group	PFI and VT	PFI and HDI	VT and HDI
Free (first tier)	-0.257 $p = .34$	-0.307 $p = .25$	0.234 $p = .38$
Free (first and second tiers)	0.056 $p = .69$	-0.492 <b><math>p = .00</math></b>	0.017 $p = .91$
Partly free (first tier)	0.17 $p = .43$	-0.151 $p = .44$	0.453 <b><math>p = .03</math></b>
Partly free (first and second tiers)	-0.103 $p = .45$	-0.175 $p = .18$	0.251 $p = .06$
Not free (first tier)	0.045 $p = .83$	-0.125 $p = .45$	0.183 $p = .39$
Not free (first and second tiers)	0.302 $p = .08$	0.066 $p = .62$	0.267 $p = .12$
All countries	-0.018 $p = .83$	-0.531 <b><math>p = .00</math></b>	0.227 <b><math>p = .01</math></b>

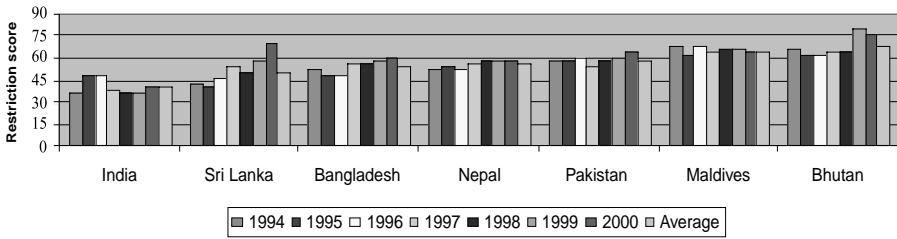
freedom outlined earlier, as well as the annual Freedom House surveys, show various shortcomings when examined through the world system perspective.

First, almost all of the press freedom surveys begin with an aggregate of states to generalize about the world. This individualistic approach places emphasis on the 'atomistic' nation-state as if each state were independent of the world system. In the informational era, globalization has transformed the erstwhile nation-states into 'global' states.<sup>6</sup> If we concede this transformation, it becomes apparent that despite endogenous press restrictions, citizens may have the capacity 'to seek, receive and impart information and ideas' – a human right enshrined in Article 19 of the UDHR – via exogenous media that are generally not subject to state control (e.g. short-wave and satellite broadcasts, global print media, and global new media, including digital HDTV broadcasting linking the Internet, mobile phones and other telecommunication devices). A press freedom index is incomplete and inaccurate without factoring in people's ability to access exogenous media.<sup>7</sup> Malovic and Selnow (2001: 35) refer to the potential of such exogenous media when they assert that the Internet may offer the answer 'to limited public access and to financial and state controls' because 'financial barriers of conventional media are largely absent on the Internet, and . . . government regulators have stayed at arm's length from it'. In the context of such potential, press freedom surveys should begin with the world system and only then derive the presence of states because the totality – the world system – is more than the sum of the states. This simply means that the world system itself has the ability to influence its constituent parts.

Second, almost all of the press freedom surveys have been primarily concerned with assessing the two traditional endogenous media: print and broadcasting, although, beginning 2001, Freedom House started assessing the degree of freedom on the Internet as well. (However, the Internet assessment was limited to 131 countries because of lack of data for 55 other countries for which Freedom House measured only print and broadcasting freedom.) These surveys, in general, have excluded exogenous media that people can access despite the pressures and compulsions on the endogenous print and broadcast media. For example, Freedom House has consistently ranked only three Asian countries – Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – as 'free' for the seven-year period 1994–2000 (see Figures 1–3). From the world system perspective, such an assessment may not be entirely accurate. In South Asia, although Sri Lanka has resorted to continual censorship on news relating to the communal civil war since 1982, the Tamil rebels have established a global communication network of exogenous media to inform themselves and their supporters worldwide. Even though the government has power over the public broadcasting system and the most well-established newspaper group, Sri Lanka also has a vigorous opposition press and private broadcasting companies. The people are free to access exogenous media. In Southeast Asia, Singapore citizens have access to a multitude of exogenous media, as well as freedom to travel, despite the docile endogenous media, and the citizenry are perhaps much better informed than those in many 'free' countries.<sup>8</sup>

Third, almost all the surveys cited presume that press freedom is primarily freedom from government. As pointed out already, those who framed the US

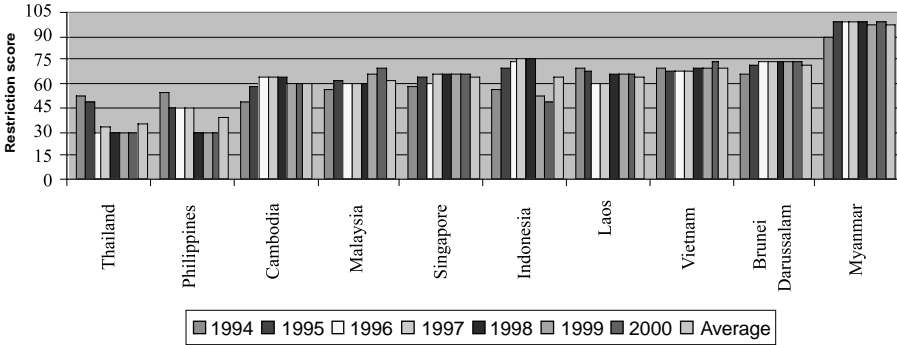
**FIGURE 1**  
**South Asia: Press Freedom 1994–2000**



Note: Free 0–30; partly free 31–60; not free 61–100.

Source: Freedom House (1994–2000).

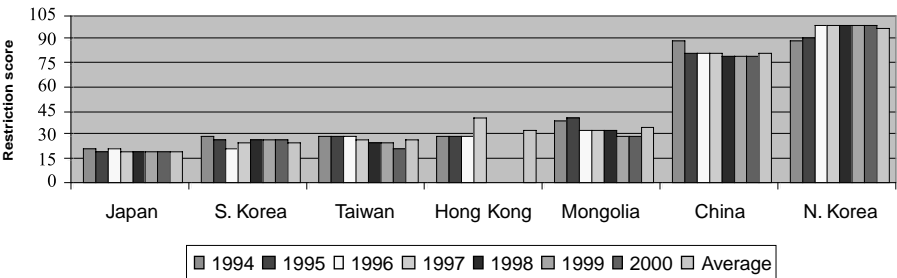
**FIGURE 2**  
**Southeast Asia: Press Freedom 1994–2000**



Note: Free 0–30; partly free 31–60; not free 61–100.

Source: Freedom House (1994–2000).

**FIGURE 3**  
**East Asia: Press Freedom 1994–2000**



Note: Free 0–30; partly free 31–60; not free 61–100.

Source: Freedom House (1994–2000).

Constitution thought of freedom of the press as an extension of the individual's freedom of speech that should be protected from government clampdown. In 1791, when the First Amendment stipulated that 'Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press', the press meant the printing press, not the newspaper press that eventually evolved into conglomerates. Thus the constitutionally protected freedom of the press is an individual right, not a conglomerate right. As the Hutchins Commission has pointed out, press freedom in the contemporary context is a moral right that entails responsibilities on behalf of the citizens – the real 'owners' of that freedom. Although Freedom House surveys refer to press freedom as an individual human right, the empirical reality of the moment is that it has long ceased to be so. An ideological bias becomes apparent when press freedom surveys originating in the West continue to slight the pressures and influence of commercial interests on the press while emphasizing those of the government. Meadows (2001: 6) cites the 'extraordinary concentration of media ownership in Australia' that has led to the 'construction of the audience as consumers rather than as citizens', thereby serving commercial interests. Global concentration of the media clearly shows commercial pressures approaching the level of compulsions, as the Hutchins Commission warned, and as Gerbner's (1993) case studies demonstrate. Referring to the phenomenon of 'invisible censorship', Thom (1999: 31) says that readers in the western world may never know the extent of press 'restrictions based on what publishers are willing to print and what advertisers are willing to support'. A more careful assessment of the 'compulsions' imposed by commercial, institutional and other interests is vital to construct a more accurate index of press or media freedom.

Finally, if we continue to have faith in freedom of the press as an individual human right, then our starting point should be the assessment of that freedom at the world system level. What is freedom of the press for the world as a single unit? If a free press means freedom from government interference, to what extent are the governments in the center-clusters and the hinterland-clusters involved in world information dissemination? Whose pressures and compulsions do the conglomerates that dominate the world's information-communication flow follow? Do the global mass media provide a voice for the majority of humanity in a world democracy? Scholars should put aside ideological bias to find an answer to the question posed in the second sentence of this paragraph.

## Conclusions and Proposals

*Pressures* on the press are inevitable in a dynamic society, but letting those pressures – whether from governmental or commercial interests – transform into *compulsions*, as the Hutchins Commission warned, would obstruct the practice of democracy, defined as governance based on popular will for the welfare of all citizens. Therefore, I have drawn attention to the need for assessing press freedom more objectively and accurately by paying greater attention to non-governmental compulsions that obstruct the implementation of democracy so defined. Measuring press freedom requires a clear definition of the press. In the late 18th century, the press meant only one medium: print. Today, it includes

**FIGURE 4****Typology for Measuring Press/Communication-Outlets Freedom**

Level of Analysis	Level of Freedom		
	Low	Moderate	High
World system			
Nation-state			
Individual			

broadcast and online media as well. (A more accurate substitute for the term ‘freedom of the press’ in the contemporary context would be ‘freedom of communication-outlets’.)

The foregoing assessment forces us to re-examine the question of the centrality of ‘press freedom’ in democratic governance. At the dawn of the 21st century, when the mainstream ‘press’ has become the equivalent of the media conglomerates, doubts arise about its claim to be the unwritten Fourth Estate. Commercial compulsions on media content, as much as governmental compulsions, are present both at the world system level and at the nation-state level. Thus the assessment of press/communication-outlets freedom is incomplete without considering everyone’s freedom of opinion and expression (i.e. right to communicate) for revitalizing democracy at both levels.

Data do not show an association between democratic participation (voting) and ‘press/communication-outlets freedom’. The latter concept must include the elements of the individual’s right to communicate both at the world system and at the nation-state levels. This approach requires measuring ‘press/communication-outlets freedom’ at three levels: the world system, the nation-state and the individual (see chart depicted in Figure 4).

At the *world system level*, the criteria for measuring press freedom should include government involvement and interference in the mass media, the technological ability of center-clusters to dominate the global information flow, as well as the compulsions of the commercial conglomerates that affect media content. Communication-outlets intended for audiences cutting across the boundaries of nation-states fall into this category, e.g. international news agencies, international broadcasters and online news disseminators targeting external audiences. At the *nation-state level*, the criteria should include both governmental and commercial compulsions on content of the endogenous media, as well as the degree of accessibility of exogenous media. Communication-outlets targeting domestic audiences fall into this category. At the *individual level*, the criterion should be Article 19 of UDHR: ‘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.’

To build on the suggestions made in the preceding paragraph, let us examine the applicability of the four Freedom House criteria, based on Article 19, at the three levels of the world system. The first criterion is laws and regulations that influence media content. A better criterion applicable at all three levels would be '*effective* laws, regulations, and *conventions* that influence media content'. The addition of the words 'effective' and 'conventions' makes a significant difference. At the world system level, a body of international law relating to mass media exists to which global media conglomerates and other international media operators pay little attention. Similar ineffective laws may exist at the nation-state level, and by extension, at the individual level. (For instance, some countries have ceased to use the criminal defamation law although it may remain in the books.) Any law negatively affecting the communication-outlets will affect the individual rights as well. On the other hand, the recognition of 'conventions' is important considering that they exist both at governmental and non-governmental levels. At the world system level, numerous unwritten conventions (e.g. downplaying the angles inimical to the interests of the global communication-outlets, national or racial stereotyping) affect the media content. The same phenomenon exists at the nation-state level that affects the individual's right to communicate. Moreover, at the nation-state level, countries with no written constitutions (e.g. Britain) may follow conventions that affect the right to communicate.

The second Freedom House criterion is 'political pressures and controls on media content'. At the world system level, the ownership or the financing of global communication-outlets by governments or their proxies, as well as government pressures on global media conglomerates, do affect media content. The same situation exists at the nation-state level. Such pressures also impinge on the individual's right to communicate.

The third Freedom House criterion is 'economic influences over media content'. At the world system level, a more accurate measurement requires a clear recognition that economics play on the dissemination of information by the global media conglomerates. The same recognition is necessary at the nation-state level. This criterion must cover the territory well beyond the economic pressures governments exercise through advertising and newsprint allocations. Advertising does have an effect on media content depending on the market size of the communication outlet. Economic considerations often deter the media from providing more than a glimpse of world news. These considerations do impinge on the individual's right to communicate.

The fourth Freedom House criterion is 'repressive actions (killing journalists, physical violence, censorship, self-censorship, arrests, etc.)'. Because this criterion is a hodgepodge that overlaps with the first three criteria, its usefulness is debatable.

A more useful approach is to ascertain accurately the individual's right to communicate by establishing his or her ability 'to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers'. The indices of opinion freedom at the three levels are inextricably interrelated thereby demonstrating the part-whole interdependence. Each index will impart information vital to the understanding of freedom of press/communication-outlets

worldwide. Furthermore, we can construct a subindex of freedom at the world system level using the 'triadization' concept to determine the relative freedom of the press/communication-outlets in the three center-clusters – NAFTA, EU and Asia-Pacific powers. The mechanics of construction involves an individual-level index associated with each nation-state-level index accompanied by a single world-system-level index (and its 'triadized' subindices).

A major question to ask in devising these indices should be: how well are the people informed about local, national and international developments for meaningful political participation in democratic governance? Measurement of press/communication-outlets freedom without relating it to democratic participation is a mere academic or ideological exercise. One suggestion is to correlate the individual and the nation-state index with a public affairs knowledge index specifically relevant to each nation-state. Such a knowledge index must invariably be based on a random sample of voting-age citizens.

My aim has been to kick-start a debate on how best to improve the method of measuring press freedom worldwide. Libertarianism and authoritarianism are two complements or opposites neither of which can dominate the world. Applying the Hegelian dialectic, their clash produces an ongoing synthesis of the middle ground (e.g. a variation of social responsibility) as the dominant press/communication-outlets characteristic of the world. Extreme libertarianism is similar to a Hobbesian state of nature. I have elaborated this phenomenon in another essay (Gunaratne, 2001d).

Finally, another perspective from which to look at press/communication-outlets freedom would be to start with a conceptual distinction of the tripartite system – *media*, *journalism* and *publics* – that has emerged as a result of professionalization of journalism and the cultivation of the notion of editorial independence. As originally conceived, press/communication-outlets freedom, an extension of the individual freedom of speech, meant the unhindered circulation of opinion and expression within the bounds of common law. However, journalism has over time 'professionalized' opinion and expression. Hartley (2000: 44) identifies professional journalism as 'redaction'. Press freedom indices have mostly, though imperfectly, focused on the pressures and compulsions on redaction, the equivalent of the contemporary 'press'. The world system theory offers a framework to examine the nature and impact of redaction itself. Is redaction tied to the peculiarities of an 'atomistic' nation-state, is it a universal practice, or is it both? To what extent has redaction itself limited the unhindered circulation of opinion and expression despite the availability of desktop publishing, talkback, or online interaction? Do the global media conglomerates, which thrive on market-driven journalism, limit the cultivation of different models of redaction (e.g. developmental journalism, public journalism)? These and similar questions should enable us to shift the investigation of press freedom from a western focus to a more universal focus.

## Notes

This is a revised version of a paper the author presented to the International Communication Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the AEJMC

convention in Washington, DC, 5–8 August 2001. He is grateful to Professor Kurt Kent, University of Florida, for suggesting the three-tiered typology after reading the draft of this article. The author also acknowledges the help of Associate Professor Charles Okigbo, North Dakota State University, Associate Professor Carol Lomicky, University of Nebraska-Kearney, and the anonymous reviewers.

1. See Gunaratne (2001a) for details on my 'triadization' formulation. Researchers wedded to network analysis claim that *relations* between nations (based on trade, telecommunication, etc.) do not support the proposition of a 'triadized' world system. I derived my model from an analysis of the value of world exports (which network analysts dismiss as a mere *attribute*) by geo-economic regions. However, whether one views the world system as a single unit or as a 'triadized' structure will not affect the argument adduced in this article for measuring press freedom at different levels of the world system.
2. A five-page abstract of the Hutchins Commission report, as well as a sample of press reactions following the release of the report in July 1947, appears in a double-issue of *Nieman Reports* (winter 1999 and spring 2000), which contains a selection of 'outstanding writing' published in *Nieman Reports* during the last half of the 20th century.
3. Gerbner (1993) elaborates on two case studies to document the power of the US business–press–government axis to distort press coverage of global realities, especially in areas affecting the media's own interests: first, the press performance before, during and after the adoption of the UNESCO Mass Media Declaration in 1978; and second, the general US press coverage of the 1982 UNESCO conference that preceded the USA's withdrawal from UNESCO (Gerbner, 1993: 111).
4. This interpretation of press freedom is not universal. As an anonymous referee wrote, 'It seems to represent the Western ethnocentric attitude not very popular around the globe, and probably impossible to achieve. . . . [One should] consider how social, cultural, political and economic factors combine to create societies and their values – not all subscribe to the Western variety.' Hocking (1947: 194), as already mentioned, emphasized the very point that the concept of the *free press* 'cannot mean the same in every society and at all times'. The world system theory leads to the same conclusion: that an inherent feature of the world system is the core–periphery inequality – an inequality applicable to press freedom as well.
5. Malovic and Selnow (2001) draw attention to the view that voting does not necessarily equate democratic participation. They say, 'To know if people truly govern, one must look beyond the lines at the polling booths and into the process that leads to electoral judgments' (Malovic and Selnow, 2001: 38).
6. See Gunaratne (2001a) for the genesis of the terms 'atomistic' nation-state (attributable to A. Bergesen) and 'global' state (attributable to P. McMichael).
7. The permissiveness on allowing citizens access to exogenous media varies at the nation-state level. Myanmar, North Korea and Taliban-led Afghanistan are examples of the most restrictive. Malaysia, for example, does not censor the Internet.
8. These two countries, however, are not randomly selected. In international tests on science and math, Singapore students often rank at the top. With some caution, one can extrapolate this to knowledge of public and world affairs, and to the general population.

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