



The role of the free press in promoting democratization, good governance, and human development (*)

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Synopsis:

What is the role of the free press in strengthening good governance, democracy and human development? To explore these issues, *Part I* presents the analytical framework, develops the core testable propositions, and summarizes the previous research literature on the topic. *Part II* outlines the comparative framework, evidence, and research design. This study utilizes a large-N cross-sectional comparison to analyze the impact of press freedom on multiple indicators of democracy and good governance. Freedom House provides the principle measure of Press Freedom with annual data available from 1992 to 2005. *Part III* describes the distribution of press freedom and regional trends. *Part IV* analyzes the impact of these patterns. The regression models control for many factors commonly associated with processes of democratization and good governance, such as wealth, ethnic fractionalization, and colonial histories. The results confirm that the free press does matter for a range of indicators of good governance, and it is integral to the process of democratization. The *Conclusion* summarizes the key findings and considers their consequences for strengthening political and human development and thereby alleviating poverty.

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What is the role of the free press in strengthening good governance, democracy and human development?¹ A long tradition of liberal theorists from Milton through Locke and Madison to John Stuart Mill have argued that the existence of a unfettered and independent press within each nation is essential in the process of democratization by contributing towards the right of freedom of expression, thought and conscience, strengthening the responsiveness and accountability of governments to all citizens, and providing a pluralist platform and channel of political expression for a multiplicity of groups and interests.² The guarantee of freedom of expression and information is recognized as a basic human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948, the European Convention on Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The positive relationship between the growth of the free press and the process of democratization is thought to be reciprocal (see Figure 1). The core claim is that, in the first stage, the initial transition from autocracy opens up the state control of the media to private ownership, diffuses access, and reduces official censorship and government control of information. The public thereby receives greater exposure to a wider variety of cultural products and ideas through access to multiple radio and TV channels, as well as the diffusion of new technologies such as the Internet and mobile telephones. Once media liberalization has commenced, in the second stage democratic consolidation and human development are strengthened where journalists in independent newspapers, radio and television stations facilitate greater transparency and accountability in governance, by serving in their watch-dog roles, as well as providing a civic forum for multiple voices in public debate, and highlighting social problems to inform the policy agenda.³

Through this process, many observers emphasize that a free press is not just valuable for democracy, a matter widely acknowledged, but the final claim is that this process is also vital for human development. This perspective is exemplified by Amartya Sen's argument that political freedoms are linked to improved economic development outcomes and good governance in low-income countries by encouraging responsiveness to public concerns. The free press, Sen suggests, enhances the voice of poor people and generates more informed choices about economic needs.⁴ James D. Wolfensohn echoed these sentiments when he was the president of the World Bank: "*A free press is not a luxury. A free press is at the absolute core of equitable development, because if you cannot enfranchise poor people, if they do not have a right to expression, if there is no searchlight on corruption and inequitable practices, you cannot build the public consensus needed to bring about change.*"⁵

[Figure 1 about here]

More liberal media landscapes are therefore widely regarded as strengthening democratization and good governance directly, as well as human development indirectly. These claims are commonly heard among popular commentators, donor agencies, and the international

community. But what systematic evidence supports these contentions? Despite historical case-studies focusing on the role of the press in specific countries and regions, it is somewhat surprising that relatively little comparative research has explored the systematic linkages in this process. Much existing research has also focused on assessing the impact of media access, such as the diffusion of newspaper readership or television viewership, rather than press freedom. Beyond paying lip service to the importance of political rights and civil liberties, work on democratic institutions has tended to emphasize constitutional arrangements, including the impact of electoral and party systems, federal or unitary states, and parliamentary or presidential executives, while neglecting to analyze comparable evidence for the role of the news media as part of the democratization process.⁶ To explore these issues, *Part I* presents the analytical framework, develops the core testable propositions, and summarizes the previous research literature on the topic. *Part II* outlines the comparative framework, evidence, and research design. This study utilizes a large-N cross-sectional comparison to analyze the impact of press freedom on multiple indicators of democracy and good governance. Freedom House provides the principle measure of Press Freedom, with annual data available from 1992 to 2005. This indicator is strongly correlated with the independently developed Press Freedom Index created by Reporter's Without Borders, increasing confidence in the reliability of the Freedom House measure. *Part III* describes the distribution of press freedom and regional trends. *Part IV* analyzes the impact of this pattern. The regression models control for many factors commonly associated with processes of democratization and good governance, including levels of economic development, colonial origins, population size, and regional effects. The results presented confirm that the free press does matter for good governance, and it is integral to the process of democratization. The *Conclusion* summarizes the key findings and considers their consequences for strengthening development.

I: The roles of the news media as watch-dog, civic forum, and agenda-setter

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, early modernization theories assumed a fairly simple and unproblematic relationship between the spread of access to modern forms of mass communications, economic development, and the process of democratization. Accounts offered by Lerner, Lipset, Pye, Cutright and others, suggested that the diffusion of mass communications represented one sequential step in the development process. In this view, urbanization and the spread of literacy lead to growing access to modern technologies such as telephones, newspapers, radios and television, all of which laid the basis for an informed citizenry able to participate effectively in political affairs.⁷ Hence, based on a strong connection between the spread of communications and political development, Daniel Lerner theorized: *"The capacity to read, at first acquired by relatively few people, equips them to perform the varied tasks required in the modernizing society. Not until the third stage, when the elaborate technology of industrial development is fairly well advanced, does a society begin to produce newspapers, radio networks, and motion pictures on a massive scale. This, in turn, accelerates the spread of literacy. Out of this interaction develop those institutions of participation (e.g. voting) which we find in all advanced modern societies."*⁸

By the late-1960s and early-1970s, however, the assumption that the modernization process involved a series of sequential steps gradually fell out of fashion. Skepticism grew, faced with the complexities of human development evident in different parts of the world, and the major setbacks for democracy with the 'second reverse wave' experienced in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia.⁹ There was growing recognition that widening public access to newspapers, radio and television was insufficient by itself to promote democracy and development, as these media could be used to maintain autocracies, to reinforce crony capitalism, and to consolidate the power of media oligopolies, as much as to provide a democratic channel for the disadvantaged.¹⁰ Access remains important, but this study theorizes that the news media is most effective in strengthening the process of democratization, good governance, and human development where they function as *watch-dog* over the abuse of power (promoting accountability and transparency), as a *civic forum* for political debate (facilitating informed electoral choices), and as an *agenda-setter* for policymakers (strengthening government responsiveness to social problems).¹¹

The role of journalists as watchdogs of the powerful

In their 'watchdog' role, the channels of the news media can function to promote government transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny of decision-makers in power, by highlighting policy failures, maladministration by public officials, corruption in the judiciary, and scandals in the corporate sector.¹² Ever since Edmund Burke, the 'fourth estate' has traditionally been regarded as one of the classic checks and balances in the division of powers.¹³ Investigative journalism can open the government's record to external scrutiny and critical evaluation, and hold authorities accountable for their actions, whether public sector institutions, non-profit organizations, or private companies. Comparative econometric studies, and historical case studies of developments within particular countries such as Taiwan, have explored evidence for the impact of the news media upon corruption. Brunetti and Weder, amongst others, found that there was less corruption in nations with a free press. The reason, they argue, is that journalist's roles as watchdogs promote the transparency of government decision-making process, and thereby expose and hinder misuse of public office, malfeasance, and financial scandals.¹⁴ In competitive multiparty democracies, voters can use information provided by the media to hold parties and leaders to account by 'kicking the rascals out'.

By contrast, control of the news media is used to reinforce the power of autocratic regimes and to deter criticism of the government by independent journalists, through official government censorship, state ownership of the main radio and television channels, legal restrictions on freedom of expression and publication (such as stringent libel laws and restrictive official secrets acts), limited competition through oligopolies in commercial ownership, and the use of outright violence and intimidation against journalists and broadcasters.¹⁵ In Malaysia, for example, human rights observers report that the state has manipulated the media to stifle internal dissent and forced journalists employed by the international press to modify or suppress news stories unflattering to the regime.¹⁶

Elsewhere governments in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia, among others, commonly place serious restrictions on press freedom to criticize government rulers through official regulations, legal restrictions and state censorship.¹⁷ It remains more difficult for governments to censor online communications, but nevertheless in nations such as China and Cuba, state-controlled monopolies provide the only Internet service and thereby filter both access and content.¹⁸ Media freedom organizations demonstrate that each year dozens of media professionals are killed or injured in the course of their work. In Colombia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zimbabwe and Egypt, for example, many journalists, broadcasters and editors have experienced intimidation or harassment, while journalists in many parts of the world face the daily threat of personal danger from wars or imprisonment by the security services.¹⁹

The role of the news media as civic forum

Equally vital, in their civic forum role, the free press can strengthen the public sphere, by mediating between citizens and the state, facilitating debate about the major issues of the day, and informing the public about their leaders.²⁰ If the channels of communication reflect the social and cultural pluralism within each society, in a fair and impartial balance, then multiple interests and voices are heard in public deliberation. This role is particularly important during election campaigns, as fair access to the airwaves by opposition parties, candidates and groups is critical for competitive, free and fair multiparty elections. During campaigns, a free media provides citizens with information to compare and evaluate the retrospective record, prospective policies and leadership characteristics of parties and candidates, providing the essential conditions for informed choice.²¹ The role of the news media as a civic forum remain deeply flawed where major newspapers and television stations heavily favor the governing party, in the amount or tone of coverage, rather than being open to a plurality of political viewpoints and parties during campaigns. This principle has been recognized in jurisprudence from countries as varied as Ghana, Sri Lanka, Belize, India, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zambia.²² There are many cases where electoral observers have reported that pro-government bias on television and radio has failed to provide a level playing field for all parties, exemplified by campaigns in Russia, Belarus, and Mozambique.²³ In Madagascar, for example, Andriantsoa et al argue that the process of liberalization and privatization has undermined the older state-controlled media which once consolidated the grip of autocrats across much of Africa, facilitating multiparty electoral democracies.²⁴

By contrast, where the media fails to act as an effective civic forum, this can hinder democratic consolidation. State ownership and control is one important issue, but threats to media pluralism are also raised by over-concentration of private ownership of the media, whether in the hands of broadcasting oligopolies within each nation, or of major multinational corporations with multimedia empires.²⁵ It is feared that the process of media mergers may have concentrated excessive control in the hands of a few multinational corporations, which remain unaccountable to the public, reducing the diversity of news media outlets.²⁶ Contemporary observers caution that the quality of democracy still

remains limited where state ownership of television has been replaced by private oligopolies and crony capitalism, for example in nations such as Russia, Brazil and Peru which have failed to create fully-independent and pluralistic media systems. Broadcasting cartels, coupled with the failure of regulatory reform, legal policies which restrict critical reporting, and uneven journalistic standards, can all limit the role of the media in its civic forum or watch-dog roles.²⁷

Speaking truth to power

Lastly, the news media also functions as an agenda-setter, providing information about urgent social problems and thereby channeling citizens' concerns to decision-makers in government. Particularly in cases of natural disaster, public officials often suffer from a breakdown in the usual channels of communication. As illustrated by the dramatic failure of government over the Katrina debacle in the United States, and the poor internal communications among official agencies which hindered the delivery of effective emergency relief, timely and accurate information about the scope and nature of any disaster is vital if officials are to respond effectively. In these situations, independent reporters can act as a vital channel of information for decision-makers, helping to make democratic governments more responsive to the needs of the people. For example, Besley and Burgess examined the Indian case, and established that regional states with higher levels of newspaper circulation proved more active during an emergency in responding to food-shortages.²⁸ The reason, they suggest, is that political leaders learn about local problems more accurately and in a timely fashion when journalists function as an intermediary by reporting local conditions at the grassroots, and the role of the media as an agenda-setter can also pressure the government to respond to local problems.

II: Data, indicators, and research design

For all of these reasons, where the press is effective in these roles, we would expect that greater press freedom should help to promote democracy, good governance and thus human development.

Measuring press freedom

To explore some of the evidence, the annual Freedom House index of Press Freedom can be used as the standard cross-national indicator. As discussed in the Technical Appendix, press freedom is measured in this index according to how much the diversity of news content is influenced by the structure of the news industry, by legal and administrative decisions, the degree of political influence or control, the economic influences exerted by the government or private entrepreneurs, and actual incidents violating press autonomy, including censorship, harassment and physical threats to journalists. The assessment of press freedom distinguishes between the broadcast and print media, and the resulting ratings are expressed as a 100-point scale for each country under comparison.

Evaluations of press freedom in 191 contemporary nations were available in the Freedom House annual index from 1992 to 2004.

[Figure 2 about here]

To check whether the results of this measure proved reliable, the Freedom House index was compared with the Worldwide Press Freedom Index, which is independently produced by Reporters without Borders. The results of the comparison of these sources, illustrated in Figure 2, show a strong correlation across both these measures, with just a few outliers where the organizations disagree in their rankings. Both indices differ in their construction, data sources, and conceptualization. Despite this, these organizations largely confirm similar findings, which increases confidence in the reliability of the measures. Many of the countries scoring most highly on press freedom by both these indicators are highly developed nations, such as New Zealand, the Netherlands and Sweden, as expected given the strong linkage between affluence and democracy. But other countries with high press freedom are classified by the UNDP as having only moderate or even low development, including Mali and Benin, Nicaragua and El Salvador, as well as Burkina Fasa. The countries which rank as having the least free media by both organizations include Cuba, Eritrea, China and Turkmenistan.

Measuring democracy

The dependent variables are indicators of levels of democracy and good governance. Recent years have seen growing attempts to gauge and measure systematic, valid and reliable indicators of the quality of democracy in a wide range of countries worldwide. Three measures are compared in this study: the Polity IV project's measure of constitutional democracy, Vanhanen's indicator of participatory democracy, and Przeworski et al's classification based on contested democracy. These represent the most widely-cited indicators of democracy commonly used by scholars and policy analysts in comparative research. They each have broad cross-national scope and a lengthy time-series, with data based on annual observations classifying regimes worldwide.²⁹ Freedom House's index of liberal democracy is also widely used, but this is not employed in this study as the measure contains freedom of the press as one of its core components. The reason to adopt more than one measure is that no single indicator is best for all purposes, instead as Collier and Adcock suggest, specific choices are best justified pragmatically in terms of the theoretical framework and analytical goals in any study³⁰. The most prudent strategy, adopted by this study, is to compare the results of analytical models using alternative indicators, to see if the findings remain robust and consistent irrespective of the specific measures of democracy which are employed for analysis. If so, then this generates greater confidence in the reliability of the results and we can conclude that the main generalizations hold irrespective of the particular measures which are used.

Measuring good governance

The study also draws on the measures of good governance developed by Kaufmann et al for the World Bank.³¹ This dataset is based upon subjective perceptions of five indicators of good governance, drawing on multiple surveys of experts, that assessed the degree of political stability, the rule of law, government efficiency, regulatory quality, and levels of corruption in each nation. Political stability is important as this reflects the regular rotation of government office, consolidation of the 'rules of the game', continuity in constitutional practices, and lack of political violence due to acts of terrorism. The rule of law concerns the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary and courts, perceptions of violent or non-violent crime, and the enforceability of contracts. Government efficiency is gauged by perceptions of the quality of the public service and the independence of the civic service from political pressures. Regulatory quality refers to public services and the difficulty of conducting routine business transactions. Lastly, perceptions of corruption reflect the success of a society in developing fair, transparent and predictable rules for social and economic interactions. Subjective judgments may prove unreliable for several reasons, including reliance upon a small number of national 'experts', the use of business leaders and academic scholars as the basis of the judgments, variations in country coverage by different indices, and possible bias towards more favorable evaluations of countries with good economic outcomes. Nevertheless in the absence of other reliable indicators covering a wide range of nations, such as representative surveys of public opinion, these measures provide one of the best available gauges of good governance. It should be noted that none of the indicators of good governance that were selected included measures of freedom of the press as part of their construction. If the free press plays an important role in promoting government accountability and responsiveness, then this should be evident in these indicators. The regression analysis models are presented for the five Kaufmann indicators of good governance and the three standard indicators of democracy provided by Polity IV, Vanhanen, and by Cheibub and Gandhi, to double check whether the key findings are confirmed and the results are robust irrespective of the particular measure which is selected for analysis.

III: The Distribution of the Free Press

The contemporary pattern of press freedom shows considerable variations around the world. As illustrated in figure 3, as expected, the most liberal media were found in the industrialized nations, including the most affluent economies and longest-standing democracies. Latin America and South-East Asia proved the regions which also scored relatively highly in freedom of the press, with the Arab states proving the least free. Despite the growing audience for the more independent and aggressive style of journalism found in *Al Jazeera*, and moves to liberalize the press in other nations in the region, this region lagged behind others to a marked extent. The map illustrated in Figure 4 breaks the comparison down by countries around the world, showing important contrasts within Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Although the countries scoring most highly in press freedom tend to be found in North America, Western Europe and Scandinavia, and developed nations in Asia-Pacific, nevertheless

some poorer developing nations, such as Mali, Benin and South Africa, also scored well on journalistic freedom.

[Figure 3 and 4 about here]

The relationship between economic development and press freedom is explored more fully in figure 5, which contrasts both factors. The results show a moderately strong correlation but there are also important outliers in this relationship. Hence there are a range of nations located in the bottom right-hand corner of the scatter-gram which are relatively affluent and yet with restrictions on an independent press, notably Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Malaysia. In Singapore, for example, the People's Action Party (PAP), founded and originally led by Lee Kuan Yew, has maintained its unbroken rule in government since 1959, despite a regular series of multiparty contests challenging their hegemonic status. One reason contributing to the ruling party's predominance is their strong control of the press and news media, for example the leading newspaper of Singapore, the *Straits Times*, is often perceived as a propaganda newspaper because it rarely criticizes government policy, and it covers little about the opposition. The owners of the paper, Singapore Press Holdings, have close links to the ruling party and the corporation has a virtual monopoly of the newspaper industry. Government censorship of journalism is common, using the threat or imposition of heavy fines or distribution bans imposed by the Media Development Authority, with these techniques also used against articles seen to be critical of the government published in the international press, including *The Economist* and *International Times Herald Tribune*. Internet access is regulated in Singapore, and private ownership of satellite dishes is not allowed. Due to this record, the Reporters Without Borders assessment of Press Freedom Worldwide in 2005 ranked Singapore 140th out of 167 nations.

[Figure 5 about here]

By contrast, there are other nations which have low per capita GDP and yet which are relatively free in media communications, notably those nations located in the top-left quadrant of Figure 5. One example is Benin, which is widely regarded as a successful African democracy with constitutional checks and balances, multiple parties, a high degree of judicial independence, and a lively partisan press which is often critical of the government. Benin ranks 161st lowest out of 177 states in the 2003 UNDP Human Development Index, with a per capita GDP (in Purchasing Power Parity) of \$1,115. One third of the population lives with incomes below the poverty level and two-thirds of the adult population is illiterate. Despite this, the country is categorized as 'free' by the 2006 Freedom House index, comparable to Argentina, Mexico, and Romania in its record of civil liberties and political rights.

IV: The impact of the free press on good governance and democracy

The key question is whether press freedom is related to democracy and good governance, even using multivariate regression models controlling for many others factors which are commonly

associated with political development. The relationship between *wealth* and democracy has been a long-standing observation which has withstood repeated tests in the social sciences and accordingly the models entered levels of economic development (measured by logged per capita GDP in Purchasing Power Parity). The models also control for the effects of the *historical pattern of colonial legacies*. An association between the past type of colonial rule and contemporary patterns of democracy has been noted by several observers; for example Clague, Gleason and Knack report that lasting democracies (characterized by contestation for government office) are most likely to emerge and persist among poor nations in ex-British colonies, even controlling for levels of economic development, ethnic diversity, and the size of the population.³² The *Middle East* is also entered into the analysis, since many observers have pointed out that this region has been least affected by the trends in democratization since the start of the third wave, and indeed to be the least democratic region worldwide. The degree of *ethnic heterogeneity* is also entered into the models, on the grounds that deeply-divided societies are widely assumed to experience greater problems of democratic consolidation. Nations were classified according to the degree of ethnic fractionalization, based on a global dataset created by Alesina and his colleagues.³³ The models also control for the impact of the *size of the population* in each country. Ever since Dahl and Tufte, the idea that size matters for democracy has been widely assumed, and Alesina and Spolaore have provided the most detailed recent examination of this proposition.³⁴ Smaller nations are expected to be easier to govern democratically, for example the smaller the population, the greater the potential for citizen participation in key decisions.

[Table 1 and Figure 6 about here]

The results of the analysis in Table 1 confirms that the free press is significantly associated with levels of democracy, even after employing the battery of economic and social controls. The results appear to be robust irrespective of the particular indicator of democracy which is selected, despite major differences in the conceptualization and measurement processes used by Polity IV, Vanhanen, and Przeworski et al/Cheibub. Indeed the impact of media liberalization was the most consistent predictor of democracy out of any of the factors under comparison, even stronger than wealth. The pattern was inspected visually in figure 6, using the Polity IV measure of democracy, to examine the goodness of fit and to identify any obvious outliers. As the scatter-plot shows, there are a few countries which fall quite far below the line, such as Russia, Guatemala and Bangladesh, suggesting that limits on independent journalism in these nations may be more severe than might be expected from other indicators of democracy, such as holding free and fair elections for the major government offices. And there are other countries well above the line where the free press is particularly strong, given their overall level of democratization.

The models were replicated for the five selected indicators of good governance and again the results, presented in Table 2, proved significant and consistent. The models show that countries where

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

[Table 2 about here]

Conclusions

Overall the analysis lends considerable support to the claims of liberal theorists about the critical role of the free press, as one of the major components of both democracy and good governance. This serves to confirm what many have long suspected or uncritically assumed, but such confirmation is important in order to reintegrate studies of the structure of political communications into standard approaches to explaining the process democratization. The structure of the news media and the roles that journalists adopt is an important component of more comprehensive understandings of regime change. Nevertheless despite these findings, there are many questions remaining for future research. The analysis presented here has not been able to explore which of the three roles of the free press – as watch-dog, as civic forum or as agenda-setter – is most important in these relationships. Plausibly, for example, the effectiveness of the press as watch-dogs should have the greatest impact upon stamping out corruption, while their function in calling attention to social problems should influence government effectiveness. It probably requires detailed case-studies focusing upon how the news media work in particular countries to flesh out these linkages. Moreover the limited cross-sectional analysis presented here cannot seek to disentangle some of the reciprocal relationships between the government and the media which may be at work, and time-series analysis of developments over time would provide a more satisfactory handle on these matters. Lastly the analysis has not sought to demonstrate the indirect effects of the free press on levels of human development, as proposed in the last stage of the analytical model. Nevertheless it remains plausible, as many other studies suggest, that improving democracy and good governance will ultimately contribute towards the eradication of poverty, particularly by making governments more accountable and responsive to human needs.³⁵ The study therefore confirms many of the assumptions about the role of independent journalism, which are pervasive in liberal theory, including the core argument that the free press matters, both intrinsically and instrumentally. Policies which eradicate limits on the free exchange of information and communication, whether due to state censorship, intimidation and harassment of journalists, or private media oligopolies, therefore have important consequences for those seeking to strengthen both political and human development.

Figure 1: Analytical framework

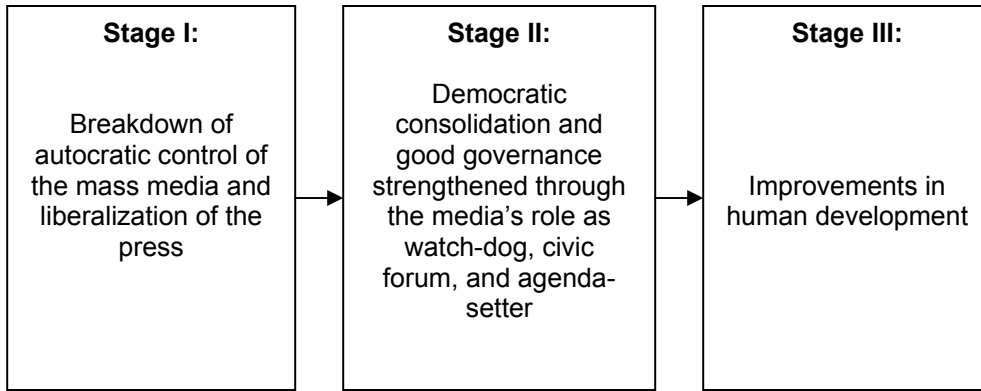
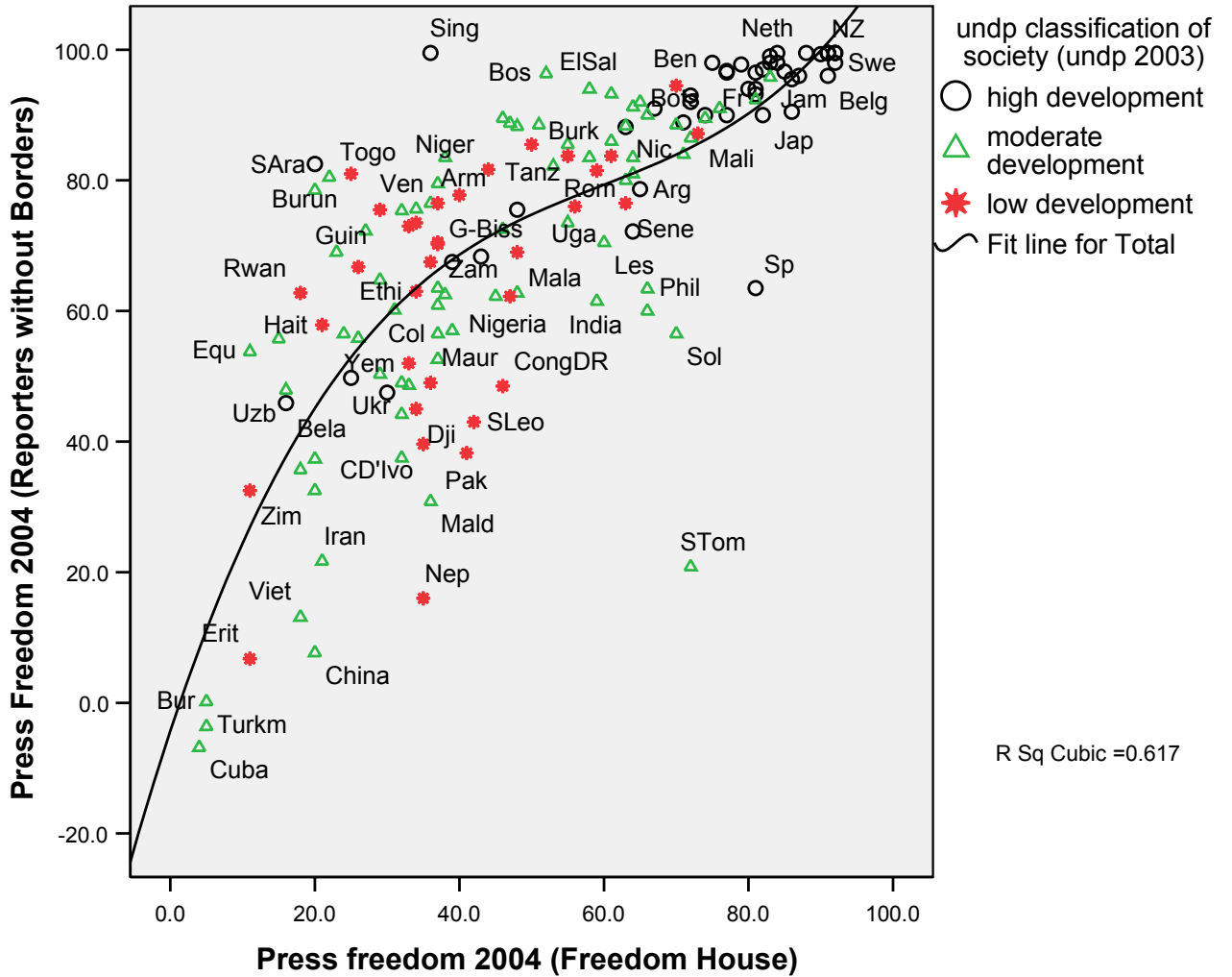


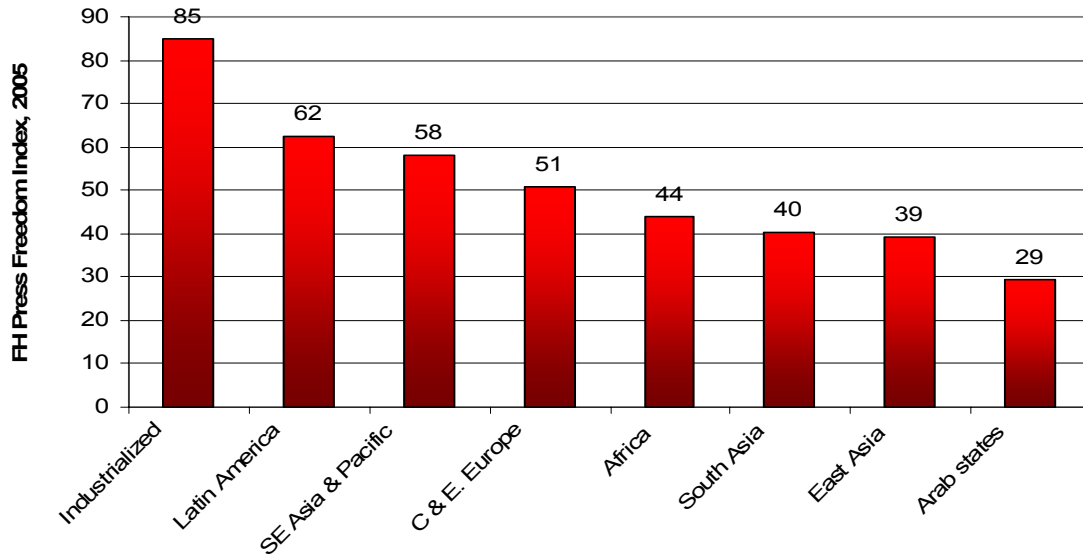
Figure 2: Press freedom in 161 nations worldwide, 2004



Note: Freedom House press freedom index, 100pts. Reporters without Borders press freedom index, 100 pts. See technical appendix for the construction of each index. Levels of development for each society classified by the Human Development Index, UNDP 2003.

Sources: Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org; Reporters without Borders

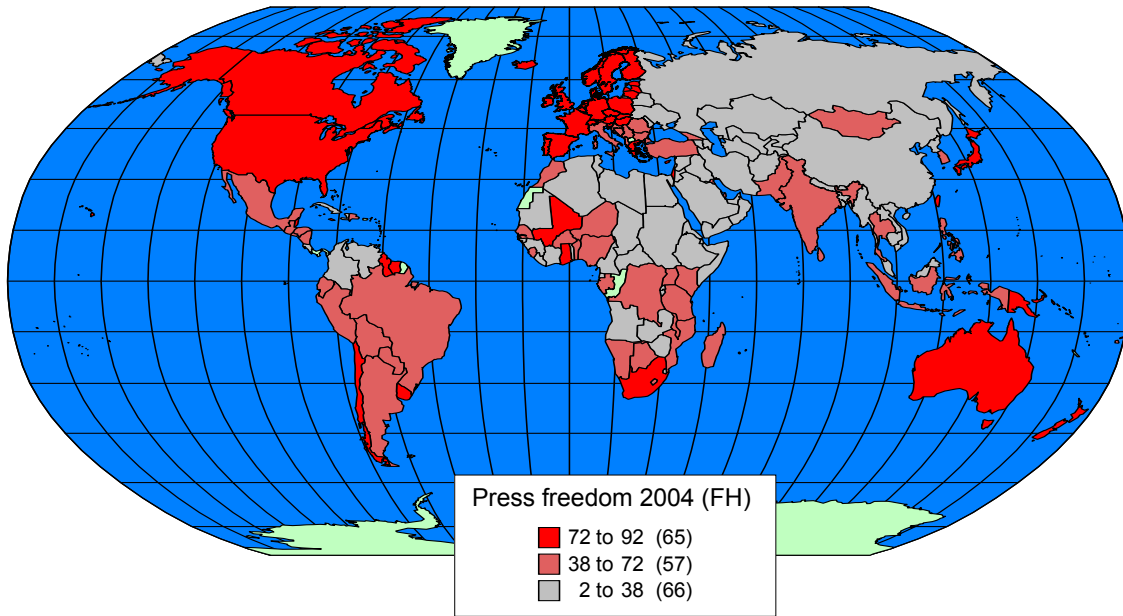
Figure 3: Press freedom by global region, 2005



Note: Freedom House press freedom index, 100pts.

Source: Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org

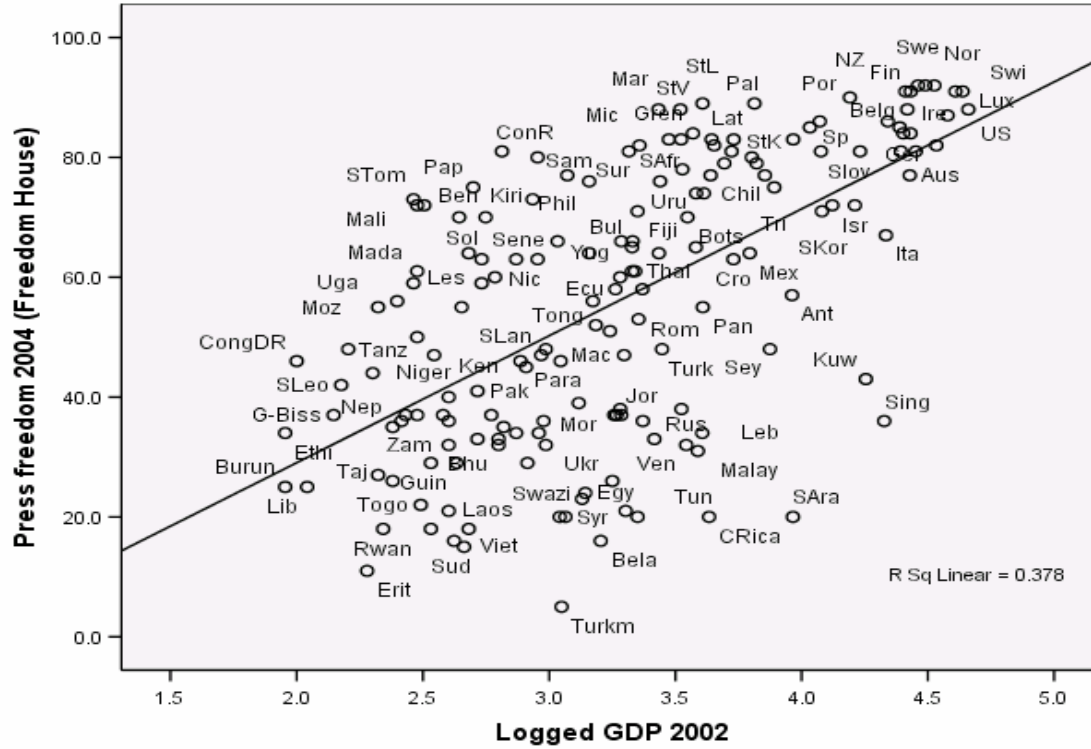
Figure 4: Global map of press freedom, 2005



Note: Freedom House press freedom index, 100pts.

Source: Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org

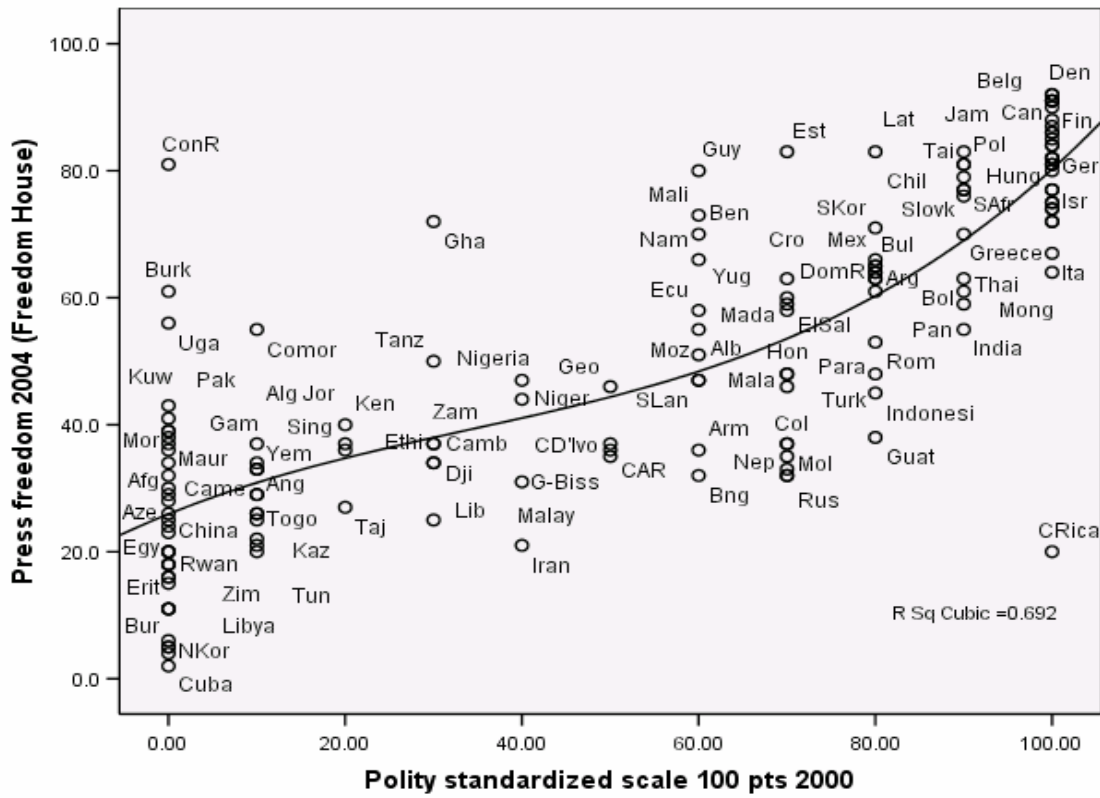
Figure 5: Press freedom by level of economic development



Notes: Freedom House press freedom index 2004, 100-pt scale. Logged per capita GDP in PPP 2002, World Bank.

Source: Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org

Figure 6: Press freedom by level of democratization



Notes: Freedom House press freedom index 2004, 100-pt scale. Polity IV autocracy-democracy scale, standardized to 0-100 points.

Source: Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org; Polity IV

Table 1: The free press and democracy

| | Constitutional democracy | | | Participatory democracy | | | Contested democracy | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------------|-------------|------------|---|-------------|------------|
| | Polity IV | | | Vanhanen | | | Przeworski et al/ Cheibub and Gandhi | | |
| | b | se | p | b | se | p | b | (se) | p |
| Press Freedom | 1.23 | .102 | *** | .436 | .066 | *** | .073 | .013 | *** |
| CONTROLS | | | | | | | | | |
| Log GDP/Capita | .000 | .000 | N/s | .000 | .000 | *** | .000 | .000 | N/s |
| Ex-British colony | -6.13 | 4.62 | N/s | -6.69 | 2.59 | ** | -.362 | .497 | N/s |
| Middle East | -10.68 | 6.88 | N/s | -1.48 | 4.91 | N/s | -1.68 | .969 | * |
| Ethnic fractionalization | -22.2 | 8.41 | *** | -21.1 | 5.08 | *** | -1.08 | .893 | N/s |
| Population size | .000 | .000 | N/s | .000 | .000 | N/s | .000 | .000 | N/s |
| Constant | 3.10 | | | 2.1 | | | -2.57 | | |
| N. of countries | 142 | | | 150 | | | 181 | | |
| Adjusted R² | .673 | | | .558 | | | .568 | | |

Note: Entries for Constitutional Democracy and Participatory Democracy 100-pointscales are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients (with their standard errors in parenthesis) for the cross-national analysis in 2002. The entries for Contested Democracy are logistic regression. For details of all the variables, see Technical Appendix A. Significant at * the 0.10 level, ** the 0.05 level, and *** the 0.01 level.

Table 2: The free press and good governance

| | Political stability | | | Government effectiveness | | | Regulatory quality | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| | b | se | p | b | se | p | b | (se) | p |
| Press Freedom | .013 | .003 | *** | .013 | .002 | *** | .017 | .002 | *** |
| CONTROLS | | | | | | | | | |
| Log GDP/Capita | .000 | .000 | *** | .000 | .000 | *** | .000 | .000 | *** |
| Ex-British colony | .010 | .128 | N/s | .115 | .083 | N/s | .059 | .088 | N/s |
| Middle East | .164 | .211 | N/s | .360 | .144 | ** | .276 | .153 | N/s |
| Ethnic fractionalization | -.948 | .243 | *** | -.428 | .157 | *** | -.347 | .167 | * |
| Population size | .000 | .000 | N/s | .000 | .000 | N/s | .000 | .000 | N/s |
| Constant | -.475 | | | -.982 | | | | | |
| N. of countries | 163 | | | 172 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R² | .45 | | | .74 | | | .689 | | |

| | Rule of Law | | | Corruption | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| | b | se | p | b | se | p |
| Press Freedom | .014 | .002 | *** | .012 | .002 | *** |
| CONTROLS | | | | | | |
| Log GDP/Capita | .000 | .000 | *** | .000 | .000 | *** |
| Ex-British colony | .169 | .078 | * | .073 | .089 | N/s |
| Middle East | .536 | .135 | *** | .296 | .153 | * |
| Ethnic fractionalization | -.551 | .147 | *** | -.466 | .168 | *** |
| Population size | .000 | .000 | N/s | .000 | .000 | N/s |
| Constant | -1.01 | | | | | |
| N. of countries | 172 | | | 170 | | |
| Adjusted R² | .77 | | | .73 | | |

Note: The indicators of good governance are from Daniel Kaufmann, Daniel, Aart Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi. May 2003. 'Governance Matters III: Governance Indicators 1996-2002.' <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/pubs/govmatters3.html>

Entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients (with their standard errors in parenthesis) for the cross-national analysis. For details of all the variables, see Technical Appendix A. Significant at * the 0.10 level, ** the 0.05 level, and *** the 0.01 level.

Technical Appendix

1. Freedom House Index of Press Freedom

The Freedom House survey of Press Freedom has been conducted every year since 1980. Countries are given a total score from 0 (best) to 100 (worst) on the basis of a set of 23 methodology questions divided into three subcategories. Assigning numerical points allows for comparative analysis among the countries surveyed and facilitates an examination of trends over time. The degree to which each country permits the free flow of news and information determines the classification of its media as "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free." Countries scoring 0 to 30 are regarded as having "Free" media; 31 to 60, "Partly Free" media; and 61 to 100, "Not Free" media.

Sources

The FH data is derived from overseas correspondents, staff and consultant travel, international visitors, the findings of human rights and press freedom organizations, specialists in geographic and geopolitical areas, the reports of governments and multilateral bodies, and a variety of domestic and international news media. The 2005 report covers development occurring in the previous year.

Methodology

Through the years, FH has refined and expanded their methodology without altering the comparability of data for a given country over the 25-year span, or the comparative ratings of all countries over that period.

The examination of the level of press freedom in each country currently comprises 23 methodology questions divided into three broad categories: the legal environment, the political environment, and the economic environment. For each methodology question, a lower number of points are allotted for a more free situation, while a higher number of points is allotted for a less free environment. The diverse nature of the questions seeks to encompass the varied ways in which pressure can be placed upon the flow of information and the ability of print, broadcast, and Internet-based media to operate freely; in short, FH seek to provide a picture of the entire "enabling environment" in which the media in each country operate. Each country is rated in these three categories, with the higher numbers indicating less freedom. A country's final score is based on the total of the three categories: a score of 0 to 30 places the country in the Free press group; 31 to 60 in the Partly Free press group; and 61 to 100 in the Not Free press group.

The *legal environment* category encompasses an examination of both the laws and regulations that could influence media content and the government's inclination to use these laws and legal institutions to restrict the media's ability to operate. We assess the positive impact of legal and constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression; the potentially negative aspects of security legislation, the penal code, and other criminal statutes; penalties for libel and defamation; the existence of and ability to use freedom of information legislation; the independence of the judiciary and of official media regulatory bodies; registration requirements for both media outlets and journalists; and the ability of journalists' groups to operate freely.

Under the *political environment* category, FH evaluates the degree of political control over the content of news media. Issues examined include the editorial independence of both state-owned and privately owned media; access to information and sources; official censorship and self-censorship; the vibrancy of the media; the ability of both foreign and local reporters to cover the news freely and without harassment; and the intimidation of journalists by the state or other actors, including arbitrary detention and imprisonment, violent assaults, and other threats.

The third category examines the *economic environment* for the media. This includes the structure of media ownership; transparency and concentration of ownership; the costs of establishing media as well as of production and distribution; the selective withholding of advertising or subsidies by the state or other actors; the impact of corruption and bribery on content; and the extent to which the economic situation in a country impacts the development of the media.

2. Reporters without Borders: Worldwide Annual Press Freedom Index, 2005

The Reporters without Borders index measures the state of press freedom in the world. It reflects the degree of freedom journalists and news organizations enjoy in each country, and the efforts made by the state to respect and ensure respect for this freedom.

The organization compiled a questionnaire with 52 criteria for assessing the state of press freedom in each country. It includes every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of issues, searches and harassment). It registers the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for such violations. It also takes account of the legal situation affecting the news media (such as penalties for press offences, the existence of a state monopoly in certain areas and the existence of a regulatory body), the behavior of the authorities towards the state-owned news media and the foreign press, and the main obstacles to the free flow of information on the Internet. The index reflects not only of abuses attributable to the state, but also those by armed militias, clandestine organizations or pressure groups that can pose a real threat to press freedom.

The questionnaire was sent to partner organizations of Reporters Without Borders (14 freedom of expression groups in five continents) and its 130 correspondents around the world, as well as to journalists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists. A scale devised by the organization was then used to give a country-score to each questionnaire. The 2004 index is based solely on events between 1 September 2003 and 1 September 2004. It does not look at human rights violations in general, just press freedom violations. The 100-pt index is reversed for analysis, so that a higher score represents greater press freedom.

Appendix A: Description of the variables and data sources

| Name | Description and source | Obs. |
|--|--|------|
| Ethno-linguistic fractionalization | The share of languages spoken as 'mother tongues' in each country, generally derived from national census data, as reported in the <i>Encyclopedia Britannica 2001</i> . The fractionalization index is computed as one minus the Herfindahl index of ethnolinguistic group share, reflecting the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a population belonged to different groups. <i>Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat and Wacziarg 2003.</i> | 181 |
| Polity IV Constitutional democracy index | The Polity IV project classifies democracy and autocracy in each nation-year as a composite score of different characteristics relating to authority structures. The dataset constructs a ten-point democracy scale by coding the competitiveness of political participation (1-3), the competitiveness of executive recruitment (1-2), the openness of executive recruitment (1), and the constraints on the chief executive (1-4). Autocracy is measured by negative versions of the same indices. The two scales are combined into a single democracy-autocracy score varying from -10 to +10. The democracy-autocracy index for 2000 was recoded to a 20-point positive scale from low (autocracy) to high (democracy). Monty Marshall and Keith Jagers. 2003. <i>Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2003</i> . http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/ | |
| Vanhanen Participatory Democracy Index | Vanhanen developed a scaled measure of democracy in each country according to two criteria: the degree of <i>electoral competition</i> (measured by the share of the vote won by the largest party in the national legislature), and also the degree of <i>electoral participation</i> (the proportion of the total population who voted in national legislative elections), which is combined to yield a 100-pt index of Participatory Democracy. Tatu Vanhanen. 2000. 'A new dataset for measuring democracy, 1810-1998.' <i>Journal of Peace Research</i> 37(2): 251-265. | |
| Cheibub and Gandhi Contested Democracy classification | This classification of regimes from 1950-1990 was originally developed by Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi, and the time series was subsequently extended to 2000 by Cheibub and Gandhi. This approach defines regimes as autocratic if the chief executive is not elected, the legislature is not elected, there is only one party, or there has been no alternation in power. All other regimes are classified as democratic. In democratic states, therefore, those who govern are selected through contested elections. Jose Cheibub and Jennifer Gandhi. 2005. 'A six-fold measure of democracies and dictatorships.' Unpublished paper. | |
| Political stability | Indicators which measure perceptions of the likelihood that the government in power will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means, including terrorism. <i>Kaufmann, Kray and Zoido-Lobaton 2002.</i> | 177 |
| Voice and accountability | Indicators measuring the extent to which citizens are able to participate in the selection of governments. This includes the political process, civil liberties, political rights and media independence. <i>Kaufmann, Kray and Zoido-Lobaton 2002.</i> | 190 |
| Government | Indicators of the ability of the government to formulate and | 186 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----|
| effectiveness | implement sound policies. This includes perceptions of the quality of public services, the competence and independence of civil servants, and the ability of the government to implement and deliver public goods. <i>Kaufmann, Kray and Zoido-Lobaton 2002.</i> | |
| Human Development Index (HDI) | The Human Development Index (HDI) 2001 is based on longevity, as measured by life expectancy at birth; educational achievement; and standard of living, as measured by per capita GDP (PPP \$US). <i>UNDP Human Development Report 2003.</i> | 170 |
| Population size | The estimates total population per state (thousands). <i>World Bank World Development Indicators 2002.</i> | 187 |
| BritCol | The past colonial history of countries was classified into those which shared a British colonial background (1), and all others (0). <i>CIA The World Factbook 2004. www.cia.gov</i> | 191 |
| Middle East | This classified the regional location of nations into those Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa (1) and all others (0). | 191 |

(*) Note: This study is drawn from a larger forthcoming manuscript, Pippa Norris. 2007. *Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?* New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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⁴ Amartya Sen. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books; T. Besley and R. Burgess. 2001. 'Political agency, government responsiveness and the role of the media.' *European Economic Review*. 45(4-6): 629-640.

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