

# Freedom in the modern world

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



Freedom in the Modern World Freedom of Choice, Religion and Rights all depends on the amount of Freedom of the Press within a country. Remor J. Gamutan Reg. 1868 August 3, 2011 ENG 101 B - Section 70 B Professor Hans Straub Introduction: Unlike the past, the world today is more united in diversity. Most countries in the modern world, boast unity of people from different cultures and backgrounds with the same nationality. With unity in diversity comes freedom of oppressed races and culture.

Freedom is a word most of the young generations are very proud of; however, it is only a theory for some people from Third World countries and non-democratic nations. According to Sudeshna Pal who is an economist at Georgia College and State University, racial tension and other instabilities within a country, such as, crime, religious problems, ethnic clashes and many more, can be solved by giving more freedom to the press. (Bailey, 2011) The media is regarded by many, as a powerful tool to create peace within a country, given that journalists have the freedom to write what they need.

Creating a free press allows a country's citizens to not only criticize their government's activities but also to give them more knowledge about what is happening within their nation, and what they can do to revolutionize it, to improve its situation. Criticism for governments may not be the easiest to handle, especially when it's coming from the majority of the nation's people. It could be viewed as futile for some countrymen; nonetheless, it is a positive way of informing the government of what the country needs through the people's perspective, in addition to theirs. Rummel, 1989) This research highlights the importance of liberty of the press, and its positive correlation

to freedom of religion, freedom of choice, rights and overall freedom within a country. This is designed to compare and contrast the prevailing problems of different nations and the amount of freedom the press have, in relation to the overall rights of the people. Furthermore, I am going to discuss the countries with the least amount of freedom and the countries with the most, in the modern world.

My research also provides information about the conditions and factors that contribute to the overall liberty of each citizen within a nation. Freedom of the press: Advantages and disadvantages of Free Media Liberty in the press means that the government does not restrict much of what's being published, especially the news that they think are politically threatening. All well-established newsmen know the importance of delivering the truth to the people especially the things that relate to politics.

According to R. J. Rummel, may it be politically undermining or encouraging, the citizens of a country have the right to know the truth about the activities of their current governments. The reason why freedom of the media is the key to national stability is because the citizens possess the power to suggest or show their perspective and views towards the government and it even promotes revolution if a political party is generally viewed as corrupting the system. Rummel, 1989) This allows a nation's leaders to work in tandem with the citizens on improving all aspects of the country, and thus eliminating corruption and weak political figures, much like the natural selection in the theory of life. Such great advantages that comes with a free press is common during the " People's Power Revolution" in the Philippines, in 1986. As an example of how a nation can be improved through media liberation,

the act of revolution by the Filipino's that year is well documented and known throughout the whole world.

This shows that with freedom of the press, the whole nation has access to the true intentions of their leaders and can stand united as one to overthrow him/her. (Delotavo, 2006). Through lack of media censorship by the Philippine government, the people were well aware of the corruption of its political leaders. Despite the implementation of martial law, underground newspapers were distributed and a “ call” by the Catholic Church for the nation to stand united against one common enemy (the president), was successful.

The success of the press united all the Filipinos, which caused an uprising and resulted into the current regime (at that time), being overthrown, in the most non-violent manner. The streets of EDSA and majority of Manila (now Metro Manila), were flooded with millions of people as they sought to remove from power the current president of that time, Pres. Ferdinand Marcos. The people stood united, without any violent act. They were simply chanting words with the intention of pleading the president to step down from power.

With cameras feeding live videos of the revolution all over the world, it was inevitable for Marcos to surrender without any reaction. (Delotavo, 2006). Not long after Marcos, another president; Pres. Joseph Ejercito Estrada, got taken off from power and sent to jail, through the same process, in retaliation to the alleged “ plunder” that he committed, which has been published by the press. After those incidents, the next generation of political leaders in the Philippines aims to be very truthful and convincing in each of their annual State of the Nation Address (SONA), which is broadcasted live on TV.

When the President states his/her plans and report the use of the government funds during the SONA, the entire nation is watching because that date is regarded as a national holiday in the Philippines. Such “revolution” is common all over the world today, and most countries have freedom of the press for the sole purpose of educating the people and keeping them knowledgeable about current political events. The sharing of non-censored information from the government to its citizens reduces the instabilities within a country.

These instabilities are measured in seven ways by Sureshna Pal as “ethnic tensions, external and internal conflicts, crime and disorder, military preparation in government, and religious tensions.” (Bailey, 2011), as she analyzed the data from 98 countries. She found out from her analysis that a rise in freedom of the press creates a decrease of all the measures of instability within a country. These are the advantages of having a liberal media. According to the, World Public opinion; a report of results from 22 nations released during the International Freedom Day in 2008, most countries prefer freedom of the press.

As shown in Fig. 1, most nations, except for majority of the Muslim dominated lands which compose of Egypt, Turkey, Palestine Territories, Iran, Jordan and Indonesia, voted for the idea of press freedom. The average vote for liberty of the press between the 22 countries is 57% while only 35% believed that the government must have the power to censor the media from publishing things that could be politically threatening for the government. (World Public Opinion).

Most Muslim dominated countries believe that the government has the right of censorship because of the Islamic culture. Islam has a long history of authoritarian tradition, and press restrictions are considered as a right of the government by these countries to “ preserve political stability”. Such stability is not necessarily the overall stability within the country which is described by Pal to be measured in seven different ways, but stability in terms of the people in power. However, this does not mean that such countries do not desire more press freedom.

Countries like Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, and the Palestine Territories are among those Muslim countries who voted that their nations could do better with more liberty of the media as shown in the chart below. Despite these figures and known advantages of having freedom of the press, many can still argue that too much liberty of the media, especially during conflict and war, can be a great disadvantage. This is because the press could be dominantly biased on one opinion, and that simple facts and figures could be manipulated. (World Public Opinion)

According to K. A Soxman’s article, TMI, Tet and the Media, most of the American people who are in the USA during the Vietnam War were easily persuaded that USA was going to lose the war, and many American soldiers have already died. The latter was in fact the truth; however, the media were convincing enough that the American citizens assumed that reports from the press were 100% accurate. This resulted in to a lack of support to the soldiers in Vietnam from the USA, and the majority of the American people sought the return of the soldiers back home.

The press were biased against the war and reported that the Tet offensive was a lost battle where in fact, US soldiers have won that fight and could have, arguably, carried on to ultimately win the war. (Soxman, 1980). The same happened during the war in Iraq. Since the tragedy of 9/11, rumors have spread that USA was trying to invade and conquer Iraq for their oil, and many other reasons. Those are rumors deemed to be true for some “irresponsibly biased” media who never revealed the true intentions of the American government.

Since then, such reports took its toll on the government, and they have been heavily criticized as liars and greedy by their own people. Biased reports made the US regime pay a heavy price after the war on Iraq with unlimited criticism. (Grieder, 2004). The disadvantages of freedom of the press are that it could be misleading. During war and conflict, as part of human nature, many take sides of a story and believe it to be true, even the media. With such beliefs, come strong arguments that can be very convincing if manipulated well by the educated. It can also be true in terms of political issues.

A certain group of the media may be on one side while another would be on the “other side”. This also explains why most of the Muslim dominated countries shown in Fig. 1 voted against press freedom because such countries have long history of documented internal conflicts. However, with the right precautions and the right of the government to question, not necessarily censor such reports, could resolve conflicts. With groups of the media on different sides of a story, the result could be disagreement in the

short run, but, it is a perfect way to debate and analyze the positives from each side and create a positive resolution in the long run.

Freedom of the Press: The Countries with the Least Freedom of the press and its conditions According to the article, Countries with the Least amount of Press Freedom in the World, which used the data that was released by Reporters without Borders in October 2009, the top five nations with the least amount of liberty of the media are Eritrea, North Korea, Turkmenistan, Iran and Burma. Following the report in 2006 by the “Committee to protect Journalists (CPJ)” on the, 10 Most Censored Countries, North Korea was always among the top because of its Communism. Most of these countries are hardly democratic.

In a communist country like North Korea, reports of famine, poverty and even murder by government officials are never reported. This is because “all” the domestic news-related matters are fully controlled by the government. Radio channels, television and even newspapers always publish their communist leader, Kim Jong Il’s wisdom. On a tragic incident that occurred in April 2004 near the border of China, where a munitions train exploded, the amount of people who died were not reported, instead the North Korean press reported the loyalty of the people towards their leader by saving his portraits before their beloved families.

The picture shown in Fig. 3, however, shows the devastation of such incident, provided by the World Food Program, where there were 150 people recorded “dead” and thousands were injured. (“10 most censored countries,” 2006). Many of the negative occurrences within the country are never revealed to the world, leaving its citizens at the mercy of their leader. Almost all of the

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top ten least free countries in terms of media liberty have the exact same problem in that their leaders isolate the country from the rest of the world to gain full control of their nation and to erase all threats that could potentially overthrow them.

Freedom of the Press: The Countries with the Most Freedom of the press and its conditions Shown in Fig. 4, in the 22 nations that were assessed by World Public Opinion, the country which had the most amount of freedom of the media is the UK with 71% voting for “ a lot”, and 22% voted for “ some”, followed by the USA with 66% who responded with “ a lot”, while 26% voted for “ some”. Both countries are very democratic countries and have very few or no internal conflict between ethnic groups and racial tension.

The same pattern applies for the top ten countries with the most freedom of the media, from the data collected by Reporters without Borders, in the article Countries with the Least Amount of Press Freedom in the World. The nations which belonged to the bottom of that list has the highest press freedom and least government censorship, and those countries are Sweden, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Finland, Denmark and many more which are mostly from Europe and North America. Such results prove R. J.

Rummel’s argument on his article, Freedom of the Press—A Way to Global Peace, that free media promotes democracy to be and accurate claim. Overall freedom within a Country: The Measurement of Overall Freedom? Pal, according to Bailey in the article, Peace and the Press: Media Bolster Social Cohesion, has conducted an analysis of the correlation between press freedom and the “ seven measures of instability” within a country. These instabilities were measured as ethnic tensions, external and internal

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conflicts, crime and disorder, military participation in government, and religious tensions.

Such instabilities are described by Pal to only improve with the increase of liberty by the press, quoting Thomas Jefferson's wisdom, " Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. " (Bailey, 2011). Those measures were close to the actual measurement of a country's overall freedom once compared to the thorough report of Freedom in the World 2011: the Authoritarian Challenge to Democracy, written and compiled by Arch Puddington.

Thus, the overall freedom of a country is measured based on these conditions: whether or not there is an open political competition, respect for religion and civil rights from the government, how significant the independent civic life is, independence of media, and strength of the rule of law. Given these conditions, three broad categories are derived, Free, Partly Free, and Not Free, with the conditions given in the Box (Fig. 5). A country, as stated in Fig. should possess positive values of the conditions written there, which includes freedom of religion, political right of the people, and right of speech which can be included in the category of independent media. According to Puddington's report, there are 87 countries which represent 45% of the world's 194 countries that are considered as " free". That consists of 43% of the world's population. However, there are 47 countries that were categorized as " not free", which represents 24% of the world's countries.

In total, the population stands at 2, 434, 250, 000 people or 35%, a surprising number despite the increase of democratic nations throughout the

years. Overall freedom within a Country: The Countries with the least amount of overall freedom Of the 24% of the World countries (47 nations) which are categorized as “ not free”, there are nine which are absolutely the worst in terms of Overall Freedom. In relation to having the least amount of Press Freedom, North Korea, Turkmenistan, Iran and Burma are again amongst these countries categorized as the worst.

The people are thought to have no political rights, no freedom of choice and civil liberties which include freedom of religion and many more. This further proves the importance of a liberal media, and why it is considered by many as the most important tool within a country to keep its peace. It is well reported that lack of freedom only haunts the Authoritarian nations and cultures. Most democratic nations are categorized as “ free” countries, where the press is relatively free of restriction and all the other measures of instabilities are low.

Overall freedom within a Country: The Countries with the most amount of overall freedom In Puddington’s review, he did not state the countries with the highest amount of overall freedom because of its lack of importance compared to the “ not free” countries, in which his report focuses on. However, in the regional patterns shown in page 9 of his report (shown as fig. 6 below), the Americas and Western Europe, which has the most democratic countries, has the most number of free nations. This is similar to the “ Countries with the Most Freedom”, in page 10 of this research paper; both regions also had the most liberty of media.

Analysis: Freedom in the world According to all the data collected in this research, Democratic Nations are the most “ free” nations in the world in <https://assignbuster.com/freedom-in-the-modern-world/>

terms of all the conditions that were mentioned before. In the figures and charts taken from Puddington's thorough review, which will be shown on the next few pages, it can be derived that Democracy is indeed "the best policy" and in relation to the data collected earlier in terms of Freedom of the press, most "free" nations, are democratic and have a high press freedom. Conclusion: Both Sudehsna Pal and R. J.

Rummel are right when they claim that press freedom is the key for democracy and peace. In the Country Breakdown by status, "Not free" countries are the last in terms of the number of nations within that category. However, it has the second largest population, shown in the population breakdown. In the Regional data, it is clear that the regions found to have the most freedom of the press, have the most overall freedom. It is very surprising that the countries that are "not free", which have few political rights and civil liberties, have 35% of the world's total population, whereas the countries which are "free" has 43%.

Nevertheless, there is a positive correlation between press freedom and overall freedom of a country. This shows the importance of a liberal press within a nation, because with no restrictions to report what is needed, the government could stay honest to its people to avoid negative criticisms. It also allows the citizens to be well educated about what is going on within their country and can act upon their own to help the government resolve internal issues. References: Countries with the least amount of Freedom in the World. (2009), [http://www.blatantworld.com/feature/the\\_world/least\\_free\\_national\\_press.html](http://www.blatantworld.com/feature/the_world/least_free_national_press.html). (2011, July 19) Delotavo, A. J. (2006). Ethical Considerations on Ecclesio-Political <https://assignbuster.com/freedom-in-the-modern-world/>

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