

Examining the Linkage Between Journalistic Performance and Citizen Assessments of Media

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A B S T R A C T

The measures of press freedom widely used in the academic literature and by advocates for developmental assistance incorporate measures of journalistic performance. Professional evaluators are asked not only to assess whether the media are able to operate independently of government but also whether they actually do operate in service of the democratic goals of societies. Research has shown that these established systemic measures of media freedom are internally consistent, highly intercorrelated, and reflect known changes in media systems across time. Some research also has shown that these measures of media freedom based on the assessments of elites also are correlated with measures of public opinion. Using limited samples, researchers have shown that those countries ranked high in media freedom by elite evaluators are those in which the general population also reports the existence of media freedom. One of the anomalies of the earlier work has been the finding that confidence in the media on the part of the citizenry is empirically unrelated to press freedom. The research reported here explains that anomalous finding by showing that differences in the social and political environments of countries had masked the relationship between press freedom and confidence in the media.

Media freedom has been viewed as a characteristic of the nation state, linked in much of the western literature to other state characteristics such as level of democratization, extent of civil liberties, government transparency and even economic liberalization. On close examination, media freedom has revealed itself to be a rather complex and even contentious concept. For some, at least, it is a measure of quality of performance. Free and independent media are those meeting professional standards and serving the citizenry.

Governments, nongovernmental organizations, and, increasingly, scholars, rely heavily on the ratings of a small number of organizations to gauge media freedom and, in the view of some, media performance. The measures by Freedom House, Reporters without Borders and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) are used most extensively. While these measures are designed to reflect freedom from governmental constraint, they also are supposed to reflect the critical role the media play in society, that is, their professional performance.

Earlier work has shown that these established systemic measures of media characteristics are internally consistent, highly intercorrelated, and reflect known changes in media systems across time. Recently completed research also shows that these measures of media freedom based on the assessments of elites within the societies and external experts also are correlated with measures of public opinion. Specifically, those countries ranked high in media freedom by elite evaluators have been found to be those in which the general population also reports the existence of media freedom. This has been the first test of the expectation that the citizenry views media freedom in a similar way to how elite organizations do, and that journalistic performance is a meaningful evaluation criterion for the citizenry as well as to society's elites and external organizations.

One of the anomalies of the earlier work has been the finding that confidence in the media on the part of the citizenry is empirically unrelated to press freedom. Specifically, those persons in countries with high levels of press freedom have no more confidence in the media than do those in countries with low levels of press freedom (English, 2007; Becker & Vlad, 2009a).

This paper extends that earlier work by taking advantage of data from the Gallup World Poll not previously available. Gallup has gathered data from representative samples in more than 150 countries around the world on levels of confidence in the media. The measure of evaluation of the media is part of a core set of questions used by Gallup to evaluate institutions, such as the military, judicial system and the courts, the national government, and financial institutions and banks.

The data show that confidence in the media is at least mildly related to press freedom if the sample is partitioned on a key variable: the level of repression of expression in the society.

The Concept of Media Freedom

Discussions of media freedom are deeply rooted in both the political science and the mass communication literature. Linz (1975), for example, listed freedoms of association, information, and communication as essential components of democracy. Gunther and Mughan (2000, p. 1) called mass media the "connective tissue of democracy." O'Neil (1998) wrote that without the freedom of communication mass media provide, the foundation of democratic rule is undermined.

Early definitions of press freedom focus primarily on freedom from government control. In their classic work, *Four Theories of the Press*, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) identified four models or theoretical types of media. The first, historically, was the authoritarian type, where the government controlled the press through prior censorship and through punishment after publication. They labeled a more current variant of the authoritarian model the Soviet Communist type. The libertarian model was seen as the counterpoint to the authoritarian model. The primary feature is the absence of government control. The fourth model, social responsibility, holds that the media have obligations to society that accompany their freedom. According to Lowenstein (1970), a completely free press is one in which newspapers, periodicals, news agencies, books, radio and television have absolute independence and critical ability, except for minimal libel and obscenity laws. The press has no concentrated ownership, marginal economic units or organized self-regulation.

Weaver (1977) distinguished three components of press freedom: the relative absence of government restraints on the media, the relative absence of nongovernmental restraints, and the existence of conditions to insure the dissemination of diverse ideas and opinions to large audiences. Piccard (1985) distinguished between negative press freedom (the absence of legal controls, such as censorship) and positive press freedom (the ability of individuals to use the media).

Some have argued that definitions of media freedom should include other concepts, such as the role of media in nation building, economic development, overcoming illiteracy and poverty, and building political consciousness. (Hachten, 1987) and Hagen (1992) focused on media democratization and proposed altering the top-down, one-way flow of messages from contemporary mass media to the public by increasing citizen participation. Breunig (1994) called press freedom one type of freedom of communication. Others were freedom of speech, freedom of opinion and information freedom.

Curran (1996) has distinguished between the classic liberal perspective on media freedom and the radical democratic perspective. The classic liberal perspective focuses on the freedom of the media to publish or broadcast. The radical democratic perspective focuses on how mass communications can mediate in an equitable way conflict and competition between social groups in society. Within the classical liberal perspective, according to Curran, is a “strand” arguing that the media should serve to protect the individual from the abuses of the state. Within the radical democratic perspective is a “strand” that argues that the media should seek to redress the imbalances in society.

According to McQuail (2005), the concept of media freedom includes both the degree of freedom enjoyed by the media and the degree of freedom and access of citizens to media content. Price (2002, p. 54) has argued that the “foundation requirement” for media freedom is that government does not have a monopoly on information. For Rozumilowicz (2002), the question of who controls the media is critical to consideration of whether it is free and independent. She argued that there must be a diffusion of control and access supported by a nation’s legal, institutional, economic and social-cultural systems. Thus, free and independent media “exist within a structure which is effectively demonopolized of the control of any concentrated social groups or forces and in which access is both equally and effectively guaranteed” (Rozumilowicz, 2002, p. 14).

Whether mass media lead or follow change, whether they mirror or mold society, and whether they should be conceptualized as agents of change or of the status quo are questions that permeate the discussion of media freedom (Jakubowicz, 2002). Gunther, Montero, and Wert (2000) found evidence in their research in Spain that media aided in the transition to a consolidated democracy by helping to legitimate the new regime and by contributing to the socialization of the public in ways of democratic behavior. Ette (2000), based on research in Nigeria, argued that media can undermine democracy and that it is not even clear the press has a common understanding of how it should serve the cause of democracy.

In the view of Downing (1996), the media are pivotal in the determination of power in both nondemocratic and democratic regimes. He argued that in the process of change from authoritarian to nonauthoritarian regimes, the media are integral in the struggle that emerges between political movements and the authoritarian state. The media continue to play a role through the transition stage into the consolidation stage. Gunther and Mughan (2000) argued that political elites in various types of regimes believe the media are important in shaping the views of the public and they attempt to develop policies according to their economic, social, and political purposes.

Rozumilowicz (2002) argued that a media structure that is free of interference from government, business or dominant social groups is better able to maintain and support the competitive and participative elements that define democracy and to contribute to the process of democratization. According to her argument, free and independent media also buttress the societal objectives of democracy, help create a complementary economic structure, foster greater cultural understanding and provide for general human development. In this view, independent media also allow individuals to find a public forum in which to express opinions, beliefs and viewpoints to their fellow citizens and they inform, entertain and enrich the lives of the citizen through the profusion of ideas, opinions and visions. Free and independent media also provide for an expression of options so that meaningful decisions can be made to guarantee access to the less privileged in society, giving them voice.

It is clear from these conceptualizations that media freedom includes both a sense of lack of constraint and a sense of performance consistent with that independence. The performance should be defined at least in part by the needs of society and the view that the media play a role in creating an informed citizenry that can contribute to a functioning democracy.

Correlates of Press Freedom

Researchers have been creating measures of press freedom and linking those measures to both antecedents and consequences of that freedom since at least the 1960s. Nixon (1960) demonstrated a positive relationship between press freedom as measured by International Press Institute (IPI) classifications of media systems around the world and per capita income, proportion of adults that are literate, and level of daily newspaper circulation. Gillmor (1962) used the same IPI and found little evidence that the religious tradition of a country was associated with press freedom. In a later study, Nixon (1965) employed a panel (rather than the IPI ratings) to rank press freedom in countries around the world and replicated his earlier findings of the importance of economic development, literacy, and growth of the mass media. Farace and Donohew (1965) used the Nixon press freedom measures to show that life expectancy, population, and education also were related to press freedom.

Lowenstein (1970) empaneled judges around the world to rate Press Independence and Critical Ability based on 23 separate indicators, including restraints on media through legal and extra-legal controls, ownership of news agencies or their resources, self-censorship, and economic hardship that could extinguish some voices. He found that the resultant classification of the media closely matched that of Nixon. Kent (1972) examined the Lowenstein measures and found them to measure a single dimension of press freedom. Nam and Oh (1973) used Nixon's press freedom measure to show that political systems in which the various players have freedom of activity also have a free press. Weaver (1977) used the Lowenstein (1970) and Kent (1972) classification of press freedom and showed that increases in economic productivity lead to less stress in the political system. Weaver also showed that decreased political stress leads to increased press freedom. Weaver, Buddenbaum and Fair (1985) attempted to replicate these findings but concluded instead that increases in economic productivity in developing countries may have negative effects on press freedom rather than positive ones. For the 1985 analyses, Weaver and his colleagues used the measures of press freedom developed by Freedom House, a nongovernmental organization based in Washington, D.C.

Breunig (1994) gathered data on offenses against communication freedom through a content analysis of the Bulletins of the International Journalism Institute in Prague between January 1, 1988, and October 9, 1991. He also examined the legal protection of communication freedom, as written into the constitutions and related documents of nations of the world, and another measure of press freedom, namely offenses against communication freedom. He found that states that guarantee communication freedom in their legal documents did not necessarily provide for more freedom. Van Belle (1997, 2000) developed a measure of press freedom by coding the International Press Institute's annual reports and historical documents and showed that this measure correlated highly with the Polity III measure of democracy. Democracy is one of the two measures of regime type in Polity III (Jagers & Gurr, 1995). Van Belle next showed that the free press measure was a better predictor than the Polity III democracy measure of conflict between countries. The data show that countries that have a free press do not go to war with each other. Van Belle (1997, 2000) found that his measures of press freedom correlated highly with those of Freedom House.

Using the Freedom House measures of press freedom, Besley and Prat (2001) found that press freedom was negatively related to corruption and to political longevity of office holders. Using these same measures, Brunetti and Weder (2003) replicated the finding of a negative relationship between press freedom and corruption in a cross-sectional study. They also used panel data to show that the direction of the relationship was from press freedom to decreases in corruption. Jacobsson and Jacobsson (2004) used the Freedom House index of press freedom to show that press freedom is the outcome of economic wealth and of low market concentration in the consumer goods industries. Islam (2002) used both the Freedom House measures of press freedom and its measures of democracy to demonstrate a relationship between the two concepts. Carrington and Nelson (2002) used the Money Matters Institute Wealth of Nations Triangle Index to empirically link media "strength" and "strength" of the local economy.

Gunaratne (2002) also used the Freedom House measures of press freedom in an examination of the relationship between press freedom and political participation, as measured by voter turnout at national elections, and found that no such relationship existed. (Gunaratne did

find evidence of a relationship between the Freedom House measures of press freedom and the UNDP Human Development Index, which measures a country's achievements in health, knowledge and standard of living). Gunaratne argued that the failure of the Freedom House measures to show a relationship with citizen participation indicates that the measures are faulty. First, he said, the measures are of nation-states, rather than the global communication system. Second, the measures focus too heavily on traditional print and broadcast media. Third, they focus almost exclusively on freedom from government. Fourth, the freedom should be viewed as an individual, rather than an organizational, right.

Norris and Zinnbauer (2002) used the Freedom House measures of press freedom from 2000 and World Bank measures of development and found that press freedom is associated with good governance and human development. Nations with high scores on the Freedom House measures of press freedom were found to have less corruption, greater administrative efficiency, higher political stability, and more effective rule of law. The countries with a free press also had better development outcomes such as higher per capita income, greater literacy, less economic inequality, lower infant mortality rates, and greater public spending on health.

Guseva, Nakaa, Novel, Pekkala, Souberou and Stouli (2008) built on the earlier work of Norris and Zinnbauer (2002). They produced a comprehensive overview of correlations between “indicators of environments conducive to media freedom and independence” and indicators of human development, human security, stability, poverty reduction, good governance and peace. The analysis again used the Freedom House measures of press freedom and World Bank statistics on governance for 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004. The team concluded that press freedom is strongly associated with both the degree of development and the level of poverty in a country. Press freedom also was found to be positively correlated with governance; countries without press freedom have governance problems. Press freedom also was positively correlated with low levels of military expenditures.

Finkel, Perez-Liñam, Siligson and Azpuru (2008) have compared countries where USAID provided democracy assistance from 1990 to 2003 with those that did not receive assistance and used the Freedom House press freedom measures to show that USAID media assistance produced effects on the media sectors. The team also concluded that media freedom led to development of civil society and democratization. Norris and Inglehart (2009) used the Freedom House measures in their examination of the effects of global media on cultural convergence around the world. They concluded that these effects are greatest in what they call cosmopolitan societies and used the Freedom House measures to index cosmopolitanism. Both Finkel et al. and Norris and Inglehart combined the Freedom House measure of press freedom with other measures of media to create a new index for their analysis. Norris and Inglehart (2010) used the Freedom House measures to examine the relationship between press freedom and confidence in government. They found that confidence in government was higher when press freedom was lower.

The normative work of Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) on media systems generally and press freedom specifically spurred Hallin and Mancini (2004) to attempt an empirical classification of media systems today. Their analysis goes far beyond that earlier framework and compares media systems in terms of the development of media markets, the extent to which the media system reflects the major political divisions in society, the

development of journalistic professionalism, and the degree and nature of state intervention in the media system. In their examination of 18 European and North American states, they found evidence of three different types of media systems, even though all of the countries examined were considered to have a free media. They called the models the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model, the North/Central European or Democratic Corporatist Model, and the North Atlantic or Liberal Model. Hallin and Mancini's central argument is that media freedom is part of a broader set of political, social and even geographic characteristics of nations.

Confidence in the Institutions

Public support for political institutions has been a central concern in the political science literature. Listhaug and Wiberg (1995) took the position that confidence in institutions is a middle-range indicator of support for or acceptance of the legitimacy of the political system. Norris (1999) saw confidence in institutions as one of the dimensions of a broader concept of political support. Norris and Inglehart (2010) talked of confidence in political institutions as an indicator of regime support.

Listhaug and Wiberg (1995) differentiate between confidence in government institutions and confidence in private institutions. Examples of the former are the armed forces, the educational system, the legal system, the police, parliament and the civil service. Examples of non-governmental institutions are the church, trade unions, major companies and the press. Using survey data from the European Value Systems Study Group, which included measures of each of these institutions, they found empirical support via factor analysis for this distinction.

Arguments about Linkages

The most straight-forward expectation, and the one that has driven the existent analysis of the relationship between public confidence in the press and systemic measures of press freedom, is that citizens in a free media environment should have confidence in their media (English, 2007; Becker & Vlad, 2009a). Empirically, that relationship has not been found to be present. The finding by Norris and Inglehart (2010) that confidence in government is inversely related to press freedom suggests the possibility of a more complex relationship as well between press freedom and confidence in the media.

In an open political and social environment, free media would have the opportunity to be more critical of all institutions in society and might well be seen in a negative context as a result. In a more restricted political and social environment, on the other hand, the critical stance of the media relative to other institutions might have positive consequences for the evaluation of the media.

Measuring Characteristics of Media Systems: Media Freedom and Independence

As the review above indicates, the most widely-used measure of media systems is of media freedom and independence. Three organizations are dominant in the production of quantitative measures of these concepts: Freedom House, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), and Reporters without Borders.

The Freedom House, IREX and Reporters without Borders measures of press freedom and independence are designed to measure characteristics of media systems from the point of view of elite evaluators. These are individuals with knowledge of the operation of the media and the ability to assess it based on established standards. A potentially different perspective is that of

the citizens, who may have less knowledge of the operation of the media but more of an understanding of its role in their daily lives.

The best known and most widely used measure of the press freedom is that of Freedom House. A non-governmental organization based in Washington, D.C., Freedom House was founded in 1941 to promote democracy globally. Since 1978, Freedom House has published a global survey of freedom, known as *Freedom in the World*, now covering 194 countries and 14 territories (Freedom House, 2010a). This indicator is widely used by policy makers, academics, and journalists. In 1980, as a separate undertaking, Freedom House began conducting its media freedom survey—*Freedom of the Press: A Global Survey of Media Independence*—which in 2010 covered 196 countries and territories (Freedom House, 2010b).

For Freedom House, the concept of interest is press freedom, which it links to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 holds that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media. (Freedom House, 2008). Freedom House says it seeks to provide a picture of the entire “enabling environment” in which the media in each country operate and to assess the degree of news and information diversity available to the public in any given country, from either local or transnational sources.

To measure the press freedom concept, Freedom House attempts to assess the political, legal, and economic environments of each country and evaluate whether the countries promote and do not restrict the free flow of information. In 2010, the research and ratings process involved several dozen analysts (Freedom House, 2010b). These analysts and advisers gather information from professional contacts, 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 ratings are reviewed individually and on a comparative basis in a series of six regional meetings with the analysts, ratings advisers with expertise in each region, other invited participants and Freedom House staff. Freedom House then compares the ratings with the previous year’s findings. Major proposed numerical shifts or category changes are subjected to more intensive scrutiny. These reviews are followed by cross-regional assessments in which efforts are made to ensure comparability and consistency in the findings. Freedom House asks the raters to use 109 questions divided into three broad categories covering the legal environment, the political environment and the economic environment. Each country is rated in these three categories and assigned a value, with the higher numbers indicating less freedom.

While many of the questions focus on government constraint, several deal explicitly with journalistic performance (Freedom House, 2009). Examples are the following: Do media outlets that express independent, balanced views exist? Is media coverage excessively partisan, with the majority of outlets consistently taking either a pro- or anti-government line? Are there unspoken ‘rules’ that prevent a journalist from pursuing certain stories? Is there avoidance of subjects that can clearly lead to censorship or harm to the journalist or the institution? Is there censorship or excessive interference of journalists’ stories by editors or managers? Are there restrictions on coverage by gentlemen’s agreement, club-like associations between journalists and officials, or traditions in the culture that restrict certain kinds of reporting? Does the public have access to a

diverse selection of print, broadcast, and electronic sources of information that represent a range of political and social viewpoints? Are people able to access a range of local and international news sources despite efforts to restrict the flow of information? Do media outlets represent diverse interests within society, for example through community radio or other locally-focused news content? Does the press cover political developments and provide scrutiny of government policies or actions by other powerful societal actors? Is there a tradition of vibrant coverage of potentially sensitive issues? Do journalists pursue investigative news stories on issues such as corruption by the government or other powerful societal actors? Do government officials or other actors pay journalists in order to cover or to avoid certain stories? Are journalists often bribed? Are pay levels for journalists and other media professionals sufficiently high to discourage bribery? Do journalists or media outlets request bribes or other incentives in order to cover or hold certain stories?

Prior research has shown that the three internal dimensions of press freedom as measured by Freedom House are highly interrelated (Becker, Vlad & Nusser, 2007; Becker & Vlad, 2009b). That research also has shown that the Freedom House measures are highly correlated with those of IREX and Reporters without Borders.

Gallup World Poll: Measures of Citizen Assessment of Media

The Gallup World Poll continually surveys residents in more than 150 countries, representing more than 98% of the world's adult population, using randomly selected samples. In most cases, these are nationally representative. Gallup typically surveys 1,000 individuals in each country, using a standard set of core questions that has been translated into the major languages of the respective country. In some regions, supplemental questions are asked in addition to core questions. Face-to-face interviews are approximately 1 hour, while telephone interviews are about 30 minutes. In many countries, the survey is conducted once per year, and fieldwork generally is completed in two to four weeks. Gallup is entirely responsible for the management, design, and control of the Gallup World Poll. Gallup is not associated with any political orientation, party, or advocacy group and does not accept partisan entities as clients.

Many of the World Poll questions are items that Gallup has used for years. The best questions have been retained for the core questionnaire and organized into indexes. Most items have a simple dichotomous ("yes or no") response set to minimize contamination of data because of cultural differences in response styles and to facilitate cross-cultural comparisons. Gallup measures key indicators such as Law and Order, Food and Shelter, Work, Personal Economy, Personal Health, Citizen Engagement, and Well-Being as well as questions about national institutions, corruption, youth development, community basics, diversity, optimism, communications, violence, religiosity, and numerous other topics. For many regions of the world, additional questions that are specific to that region or country are included in surveys.

The questionnaire is translated into the major languages of each country. The translation process starts with an English, French, or Spanish version, depending on the region. A translator who is proficient in the original and target languages translates the survey into the target language. A second translator reviews the language version against the original version and recommends refinements.

Gallup selects vendors based on experience in nationwide survey research studies and conducts in-depth training sessions with local field staff prior to the start of data collection. With some exceptions, all samples are probability based and nationally representative of the resident population aged 15 and older. The coverage area is the entire country including rural areas, and the sampling frame represents the entire civilian, non-institutionalized, aged 15 and older population of the entire country. Exceptions include areas where the safety of interviewing staff is threatened, scarcely populated islands in some countries, and areas that interviewers can reach only by foot, animal, or small boat.

Telephone surveys are used in countries where telephone coverage represents at least 80% of the population or is the customary survey methodology. In Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the developing world, including much of Latin America, the former Soviet Union countries, nearly all of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, an area frame design is used for face-to-face interviewing.

The typical World Poll survey includes at least 1,000 surveys of individuals. In some countries, oversamples are collected in major cities or areas of special interest. Additionally, in some large countries, such as China and Russia, sample sizes of at least 2,000 are collected.

In countries where face-to-face surveys are conducted, the first stage of sampling is the identification of PSUs (Primary Sampling Units), consisting of clusters of households. PSUs are stratified by population size and/or geography and clustering is achieved through one or more stages of sampling. Where population information is available, sample selection is based on probabilities proportional to population size, otherwise simple random sampling is used. Random route procedures are used to select sampled households. Unless an outright refusal occurs, interviewers make up to three attempts to survey the sampled household. To increase the probability of contact and completion, attempts are made at different times of the day, and where possible on different days. If an interview cannot be obtained at the initial sampled household, a simple substitution method is used. Respondents are randomly selected within the selected households.

In countries where telephone interviewing is employed, Random-Digit-Dial (RDD) or a nationally representative list of phone numbers is used. In select countries where cell phone penetration is high, a dual sampling frame is used. Selection of respondent at the number is made randomly. At least three attempts are made to reach a person in each household, spread over different days and times of day. Appointments for call-backs that fall within the survey data collection period are made.

Gallup subjects the data set to a rigorous quality assurance process before it is publicly released. Gallup's directors of survey research in each region of the world review the data for consistency and stability by interviewer and region. The data are centrally aggregated and cleaned. The data are then reviewed in detail for logical consistency and trends over time. Data weighting is used to ensure a nationally representative sample for each country. First, base sampling weights are constructed to account for oversamples and household size. Population statistics are used to weight the data by gender, age, and, where reliable data are available, education or socioeconomic status.

The Gallup World Poll core contains the following questions: In (COUNTRY), do you have confidence in each of the following, or not? How about the military? How about judicial

system and courts? How about national government? How about health care or medical systems? How about financial institutions or banks? How about religious organizations (churches, mosques, temples, etc.)? How about quality and integrity of the media? Response categories are: Yes and No, with volunteered responses of Don't know and Refused also recorded. Not all seven items are asked in all countries. Due to governmental restrictions, some questions about confidence in the national government or other institutions were not asked.

In 2005, Gallup gathered data in 28 countries, and the whole battery of confidence items was asked in 22 countries. The media item was included in all 28 of them. In 2006, Gallup gathered data in 92 countries. The confidence battery was included in 90 of them, with all seven items included in 77. The media item was used in 88. In 2007 Gallup gathered data in 106 countries, used at least one of the confidence measures in 104, and the media item in 102. In 2008 the Gallup World Poll was conducted in 121 countries, and at least some confidence measures were included in 113. The media item was included in 112. In 2009, Gallup conducted the World Poll in 117 countries and used the confidence battery in 113 of them. The media item was included in 111 countries. In most countries, Gallup conducted World Poll survey only one time during the year. In some countries, the surveys were fielded multiple times. For example, in 2008, the Gallup World Poll was fielded four times in Japan. In 2009, Gallup surveyed twice in Egypt and a number of other North African and Middle Eastern countries.

Also included in the Core questionnaire and asked in most of the countries each year was the following item: In your opinion, how many people in (COUNTRY), if any, are afraid to openly express their political views? Response categories were: Most are afraid, Many are afraid, Some are afraid, and Nobody is afraid. Volunteered responses of Don't know and Refused were recorded. Another core item was: In (COUNTRY), are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life? Response categories were: Satisfied and Dissatisfied. Volunteered responses of Don't know and Refused were recorded. These items were used in the analyses described below.

Analysis and Findings

The previous analysis of the relationship between press freedom and confidence in the press had used level of confidence as the criterion measure (English, 2007; Becker & Vlad, 2009a). To eliminate between-country variation in use of the confidence measures across institutions, confidence in the media was standardized for the analyses conducted here. In each country, the level of confidence, reflected in a Yes response to the confidence measures used in that country, was summed across the institutions for which measures were taken, and the level of confidence in the media at the country level was computed as a deviation score from that mean. In only one case—in 2008—were fewer than three institutions evaluated in a country. In that case, there were two. The modal number of institutions for every year except 2009 was seven. In 2009, the modal category was six; health care institutions were eliminated in many of the surveys that year. In those countries in which the confidence measures were used in more than one survey during the year, responses across the full year were summed, even when different numbers of confidence measures were used from one survey to another. In other words, confidence was measured across the full year in the case of multiple measurements.

The standardization of the measure of press confidence has an important conceptual outcome. Confidence in the press in this way is measured relative to the other institutions in

society. Consistent with the hypothesis, the criterion measure is not confidence in the press but confidence in the press relative to other institutions. A high score means that the press is seen more positively than other institutions. The simple prediction is that confidence in the press measured in this way will be positively correlated with societal-level press freedom. The more specific prediction is that press freedom will lead to lower levels of evaluation of the press in politically and socially free countries and to high levels of press confidence relative to other institutions in politically and socially constrained environments.

In the earlier analysis (English, 2007; Becker & Vlad, 2009a), only data from 2005 and 2006 had been used. The data for those two years were combined and compared with the Freedom House measures of press freedom for 2005 and for 2006. For the analyses for this paper, data for 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 were analyzed separately and the standardized confidence measures for each year were matched with the Freedom House measures for that year. The Freedom House data released in 2010, for example, which reflect the measures of press freedom in 2009, were matched with Gallup World Poll data for 2009.

The measures of fear of expressing political views and personal satisfaction with freedom to choose in one's life were used as measures of overall political and social freedom. The first measure is external, that is, the reference is to other people. The second reference is personal. These were used as controls in examining the relationship between media freedom and confidence in the media.

Chart 1 shows the zero-order relationship between press freedom and the standardized measure of confidence in the press for the 28 countries for which data were available in 2005. In keeping with the way Freedom House scores press freedom, a low score is an indicate of high levels of press freedom. Even with the standardized measure of press confidence, no relationship exists between press freedom and confidence in the press.

Charts 2 through 5 reflect this same analysis for years 2006 through 2009 respectively. The visual image is of a flat line, and this is reflected in the summary correlation coefficients. Consistent with the earlier analysis, there is no evidence of any relationship between press freedom and confidence in the press, even with the standardized measure of press confidence.

For charts 6 through 9, the data from 2007 have been sorted based on the measure of perceptions of fear on the part of others to express their political views. The 2007 data were selected for the analyses rather than 2005 and 2006 because at least 100 countries were available for analysis. The fear of expression measure was unrelated to the standardized measure of press freedom. Four roughly equal groups of countries were created based on the distribution of the responses to the item. For example, a country was classified as very low in fear (Chart 6) if fewer than 30% of those surveyed said many or most people in the country were afraid to express openly their political views. Among those countries with very low levels of fear (Chart 6), a moderate negative relationship exists between level of press freedom and confidence in the media relative to other institutions. In other words, those countries where press freedom is high are those in which the media are given little confidence relative to other institutions in society, and those countries where press freedom is low are those in which relatively high levels of press confidence are present. This same relationship, though at a more moderate level, also exists among those countries with slightly higher levels of fear of expression (Chart 7). In those countries with a high level of fear of expression (Chart 8), press freedom is positively related to

confidence in the media. Those countries within this set that have higher levels of press freedom are those with higher levels of confidence in the media. The same is true in the case of those countries with a very high level of fear of expression (Chart 9).

This same analysis was repeated for 2008 and is shown in Charts 10 through 13. Again, at low levels of fear of expression, press freedom is negatively associated with standardized confidence in the media. At high levels of fear of expression, press freedom is positively related to confidence in the media. The same analyses were repeated in 2009, and these are shown in Charts 14 through 17. Here, the low levels of fear of expression (Chart 15), shows the positive relationship present at the upper two levels of fear of expression. The anomalous finding is not explained by discrepancies in the countries included in the 2008 and 2009 sets. The analyses were rerun for only those countries included in both years, and the findings were unchanged. The 2009 surveys do differ from those in 2008 in two ways. First, health care was dropped from most of the 2009 surveys. Second, the economic crisis adversely affected the confidence reported in financial institutions and banks and in other institutions.

The measure of satisfaction with personal freedoms also was found to be uncorrelated with standardized confidence in the media. The samples of countries from 2007, 2008 and 2009 were partitioned into four groups based on this measure. The analysis of the relationship between press freedom and confidence in the media remained nearly zero despite the partition. The individual-level measure of societal and political repression did not unmask any relationship between press freedom and confidence in the media relative to confidence in other institutions.

Conclusions

The measures of press freedom widely used in the academic literature and by advocates for developmental assistance incorporate measures of journalistic performance. Professional evaluators are asked not only to assess whether the media are able to operate independently of government but also whether they actually do operate in service of the democratic goals of societies. Research has shown that these established systemic measures of media freedom are internally consistent, highly intercorrelated, and reflect known changes in media systems across time. Some research also has shown that these measures of media freedom based on the assessments of elites also are correlated with measures of public opinion. Using limited samples, researchers have shown that those countries ranked high in media freedom by elite evaluators are those in which the general population also reports the existence of media freedom. One of the anomalies of the earlier work has been the finding that confidence in the media on the part of the citizenry is empirically unrelated to press freedom.

The research reported here explains that anomalous finding by showing that differences in the social and political environments of countries had masked the relationship between press freedom and confidence in the media. In those countries in which repression of freedom of expression is low, free media are associated with low levels of confidence in the media relative to confidence in other institutions in society. When repression of freedom of expression is high, however, press freedom is associated with high levels of confidence in the media. In free societies, it seems, the media suffer from their critical stance relative to other institutions in society. In restricted societies, the media benefit from a more independent and critical stance.

The relationship is no doubt complex. In restrained societies, people may be fearful of making critical assessments, including of the media. The finding that a relationship exists

between press freedom and confidence in the media in those societies, however, suggests at least some meaningfulness to the answers given. A lack of meaningful assessment would be expected to work against any empirical relationship between the press freedom and confidence measures.

The relationships uncovered are not overly strong. Their consistency across the three years suggests the value of further examination of them. The single discrepancy in 2009 may well be the result of the economic turmoil and the changes in measurement rather than a real shift in the relationship across time.

The analyses reported provide further evidence of the validity of the measures of press freedom as well as of the value of exploring the relationship of media system characteristics with other characteristics of society, including public opinion.

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Chart 1: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2005

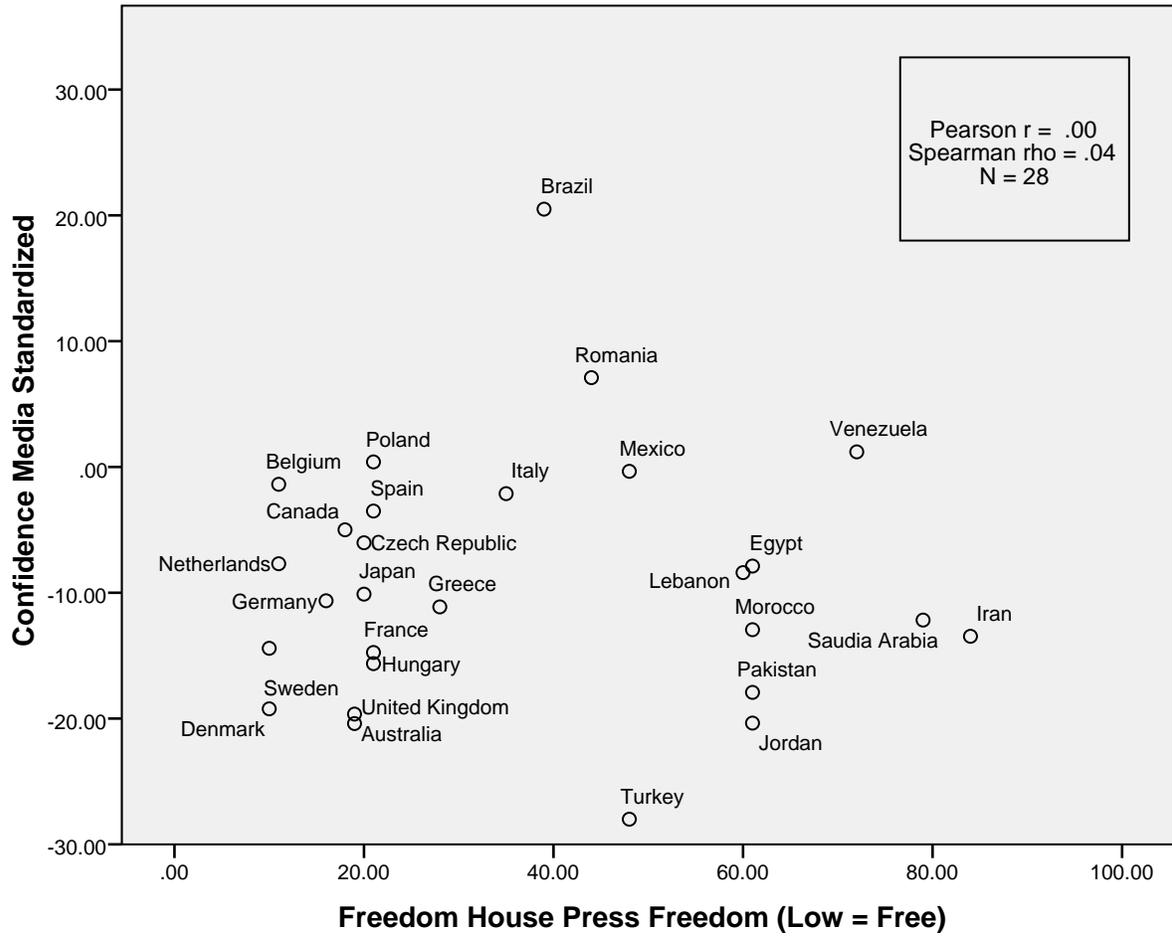


Chart 2: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2006

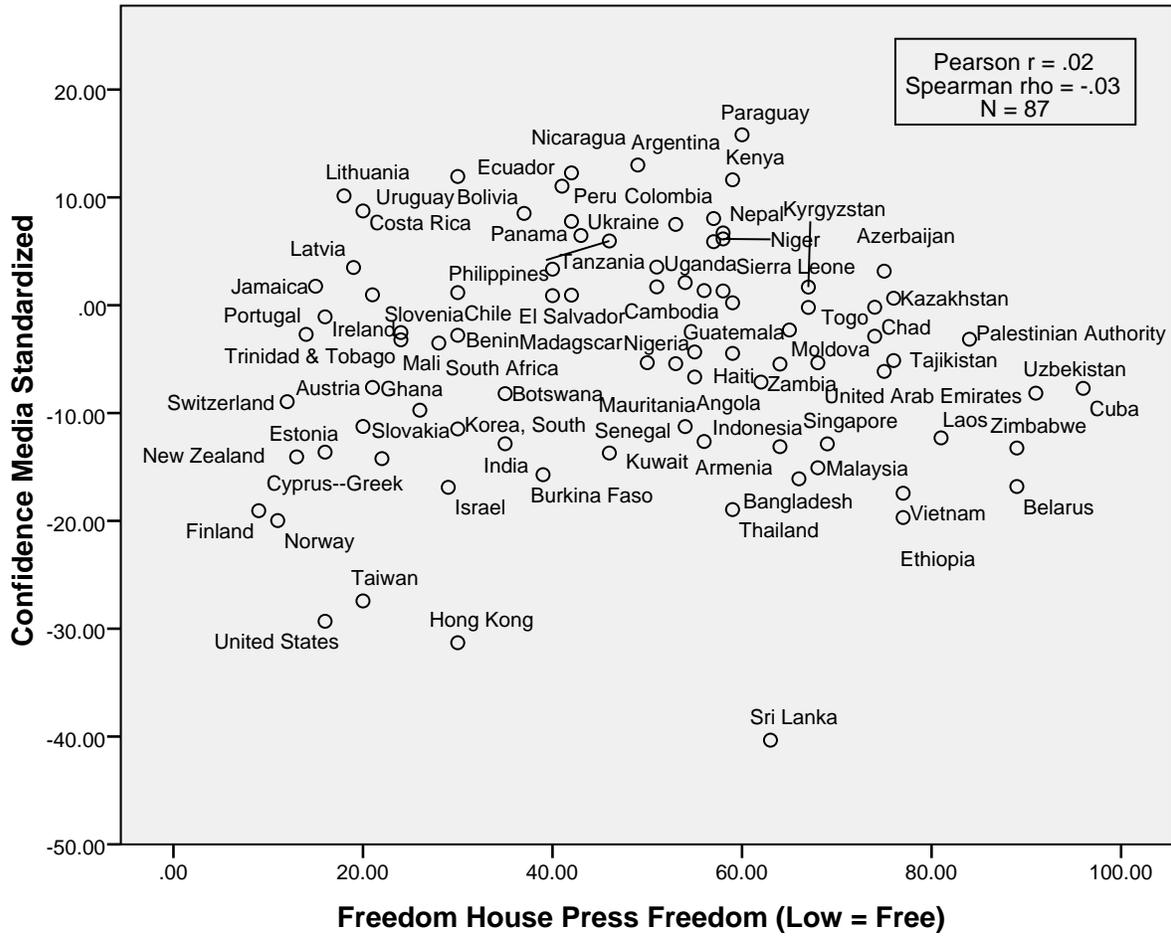


Chart 3: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2007

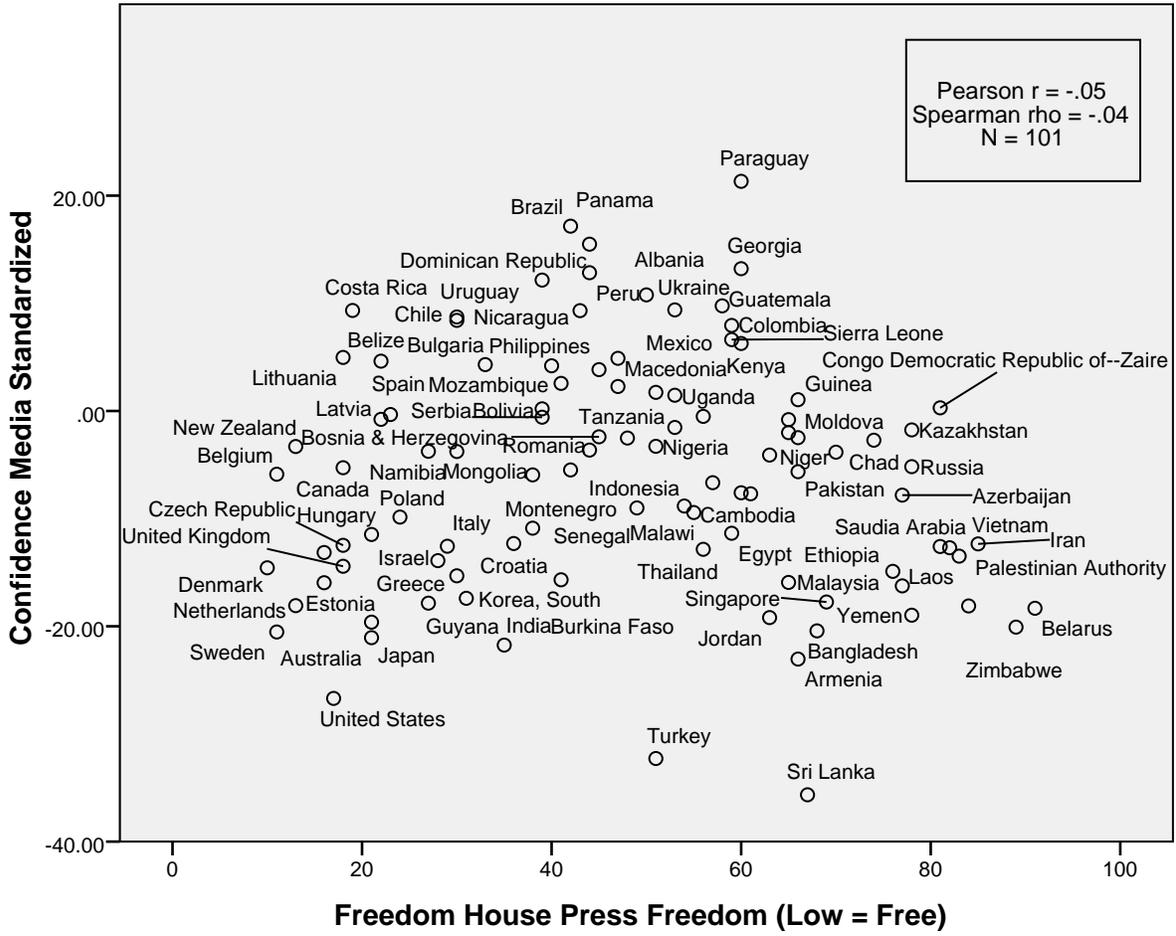


Chart 4: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2008

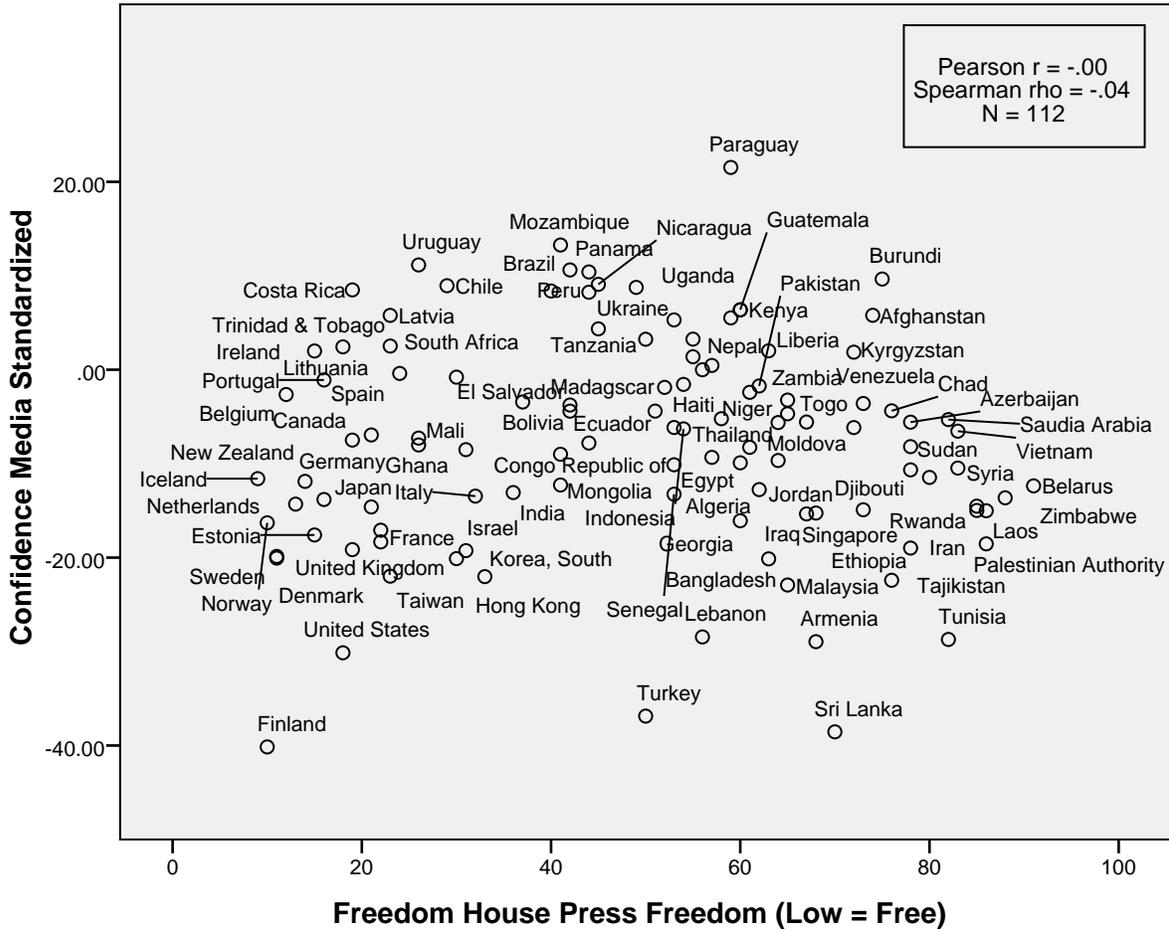


Chart 5: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2009

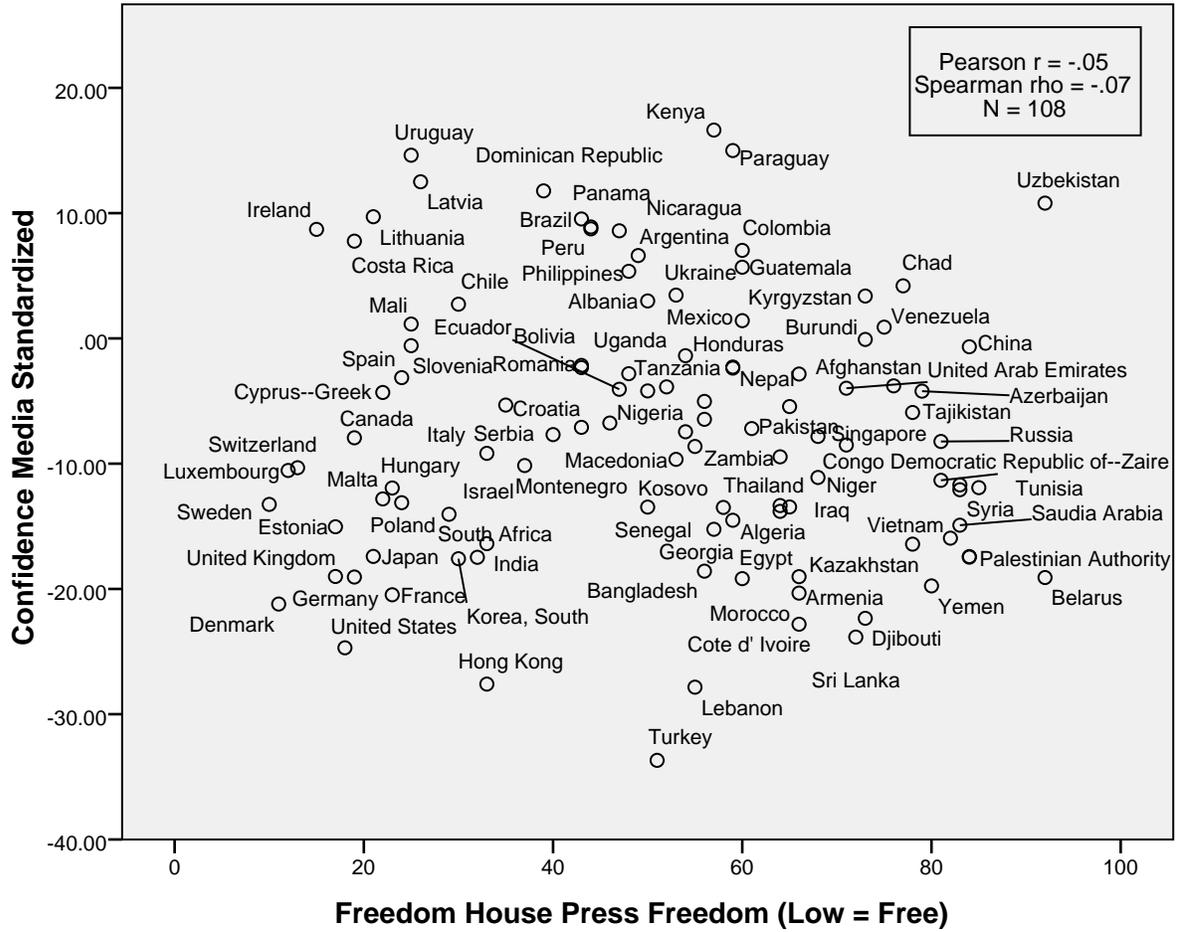


Chart 6: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2007 (Fear = Very Low)

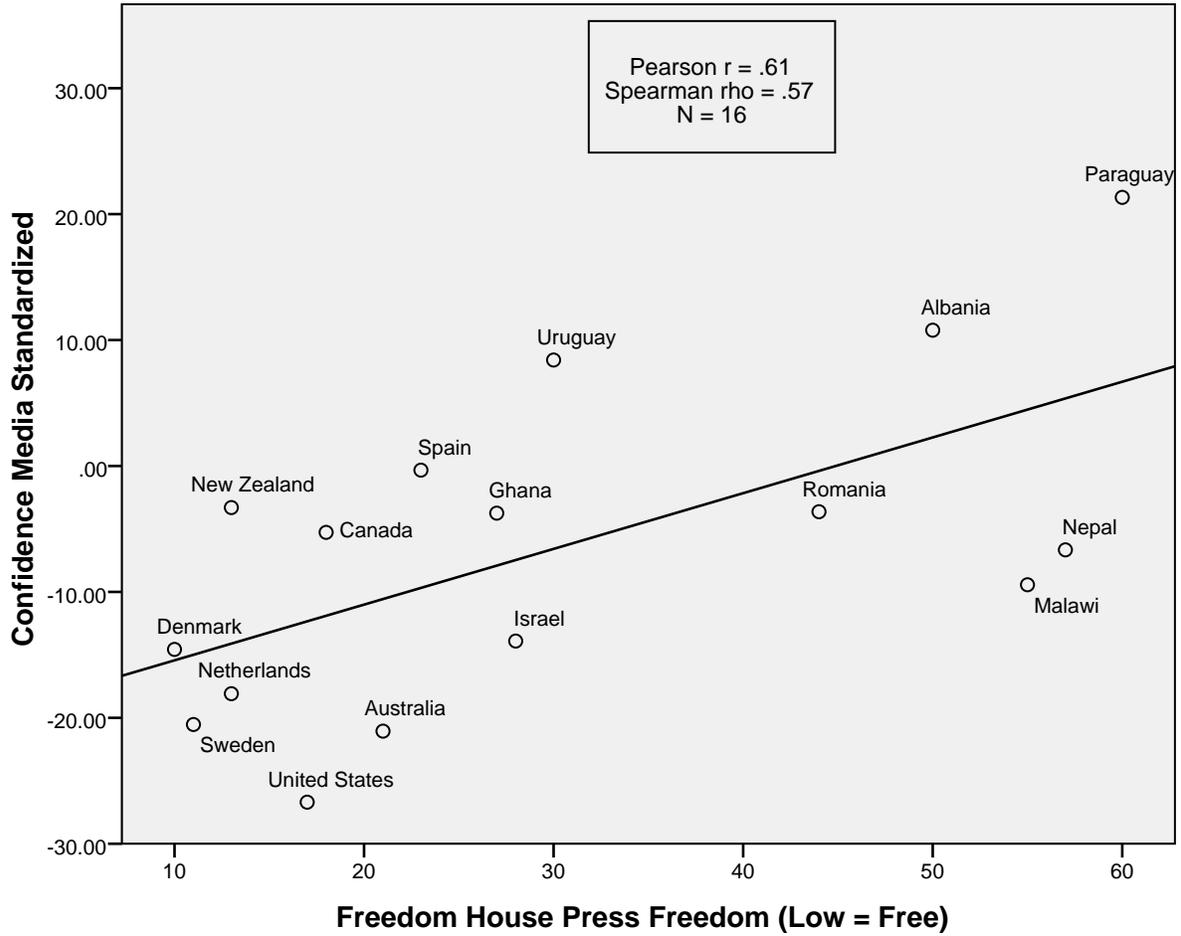


Chart 7: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2007 (Fear = Low)

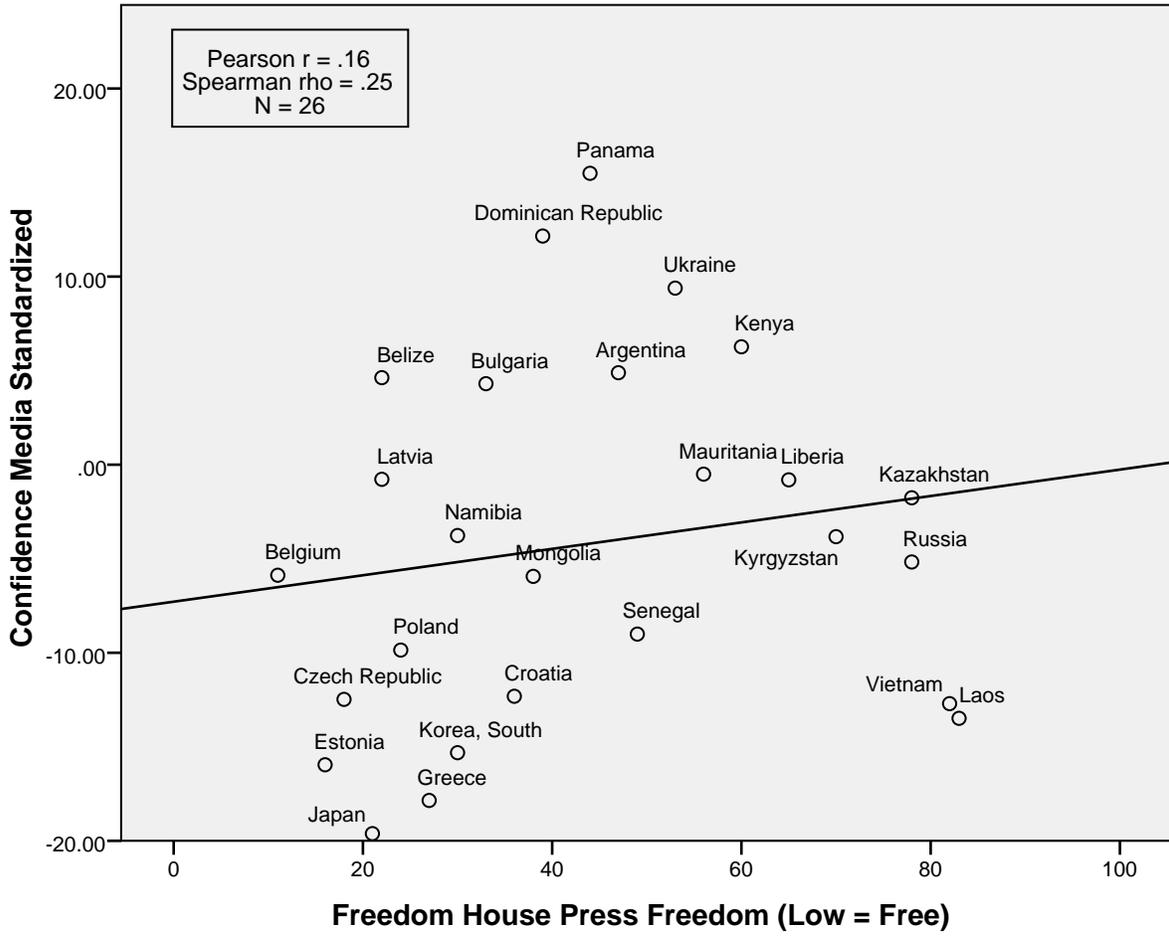


Chart 8: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2007 (Fear = High)

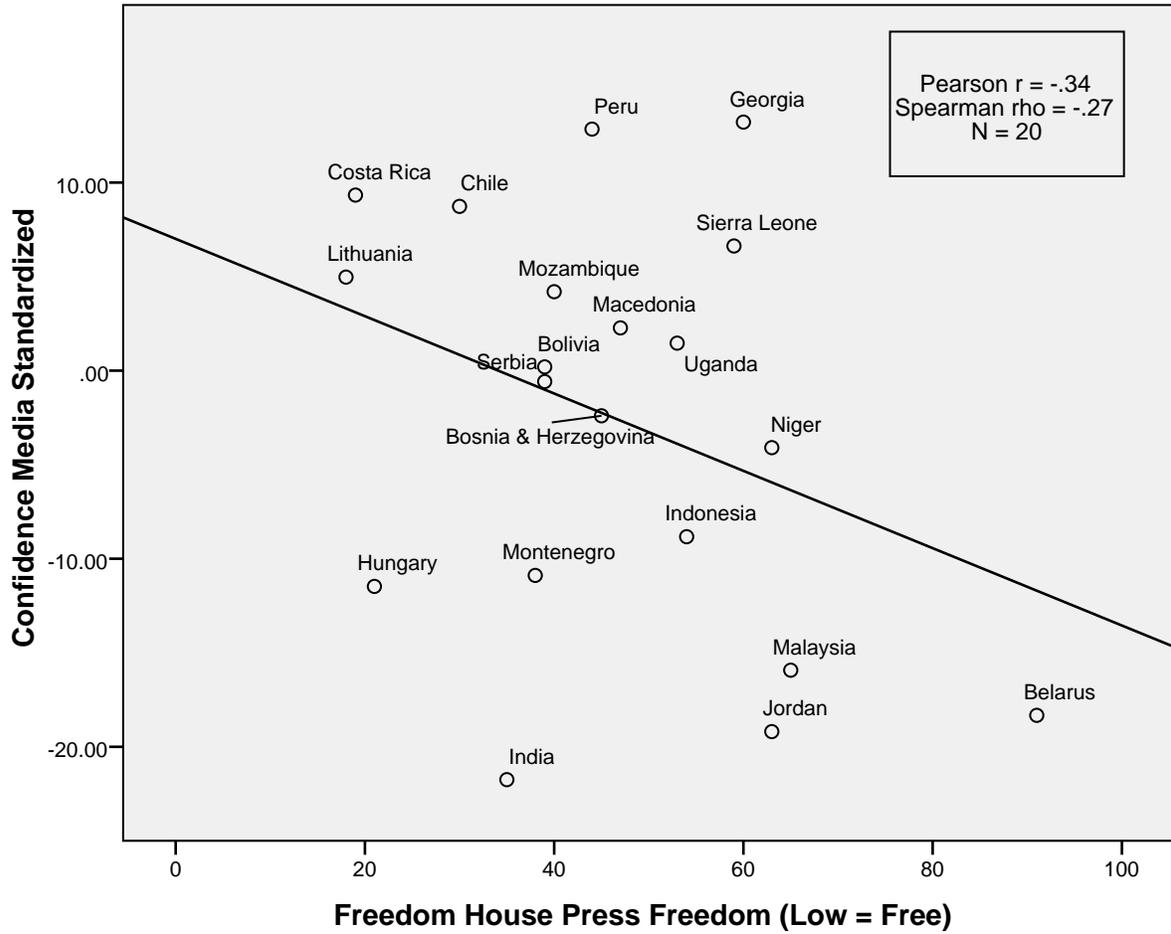


Chart 9: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2007 (Fear = Very High)

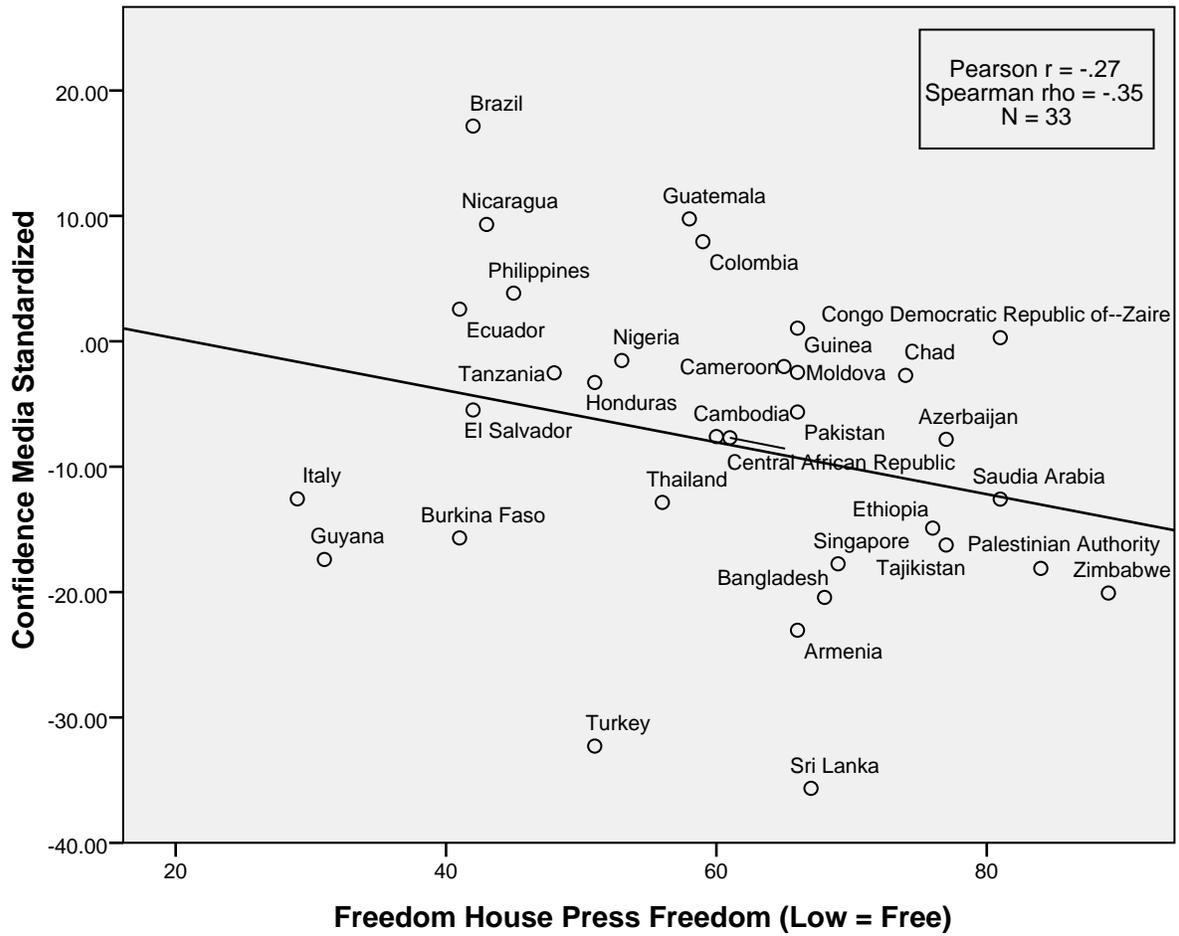


Chart 10: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2008 (Fear = Very Low)

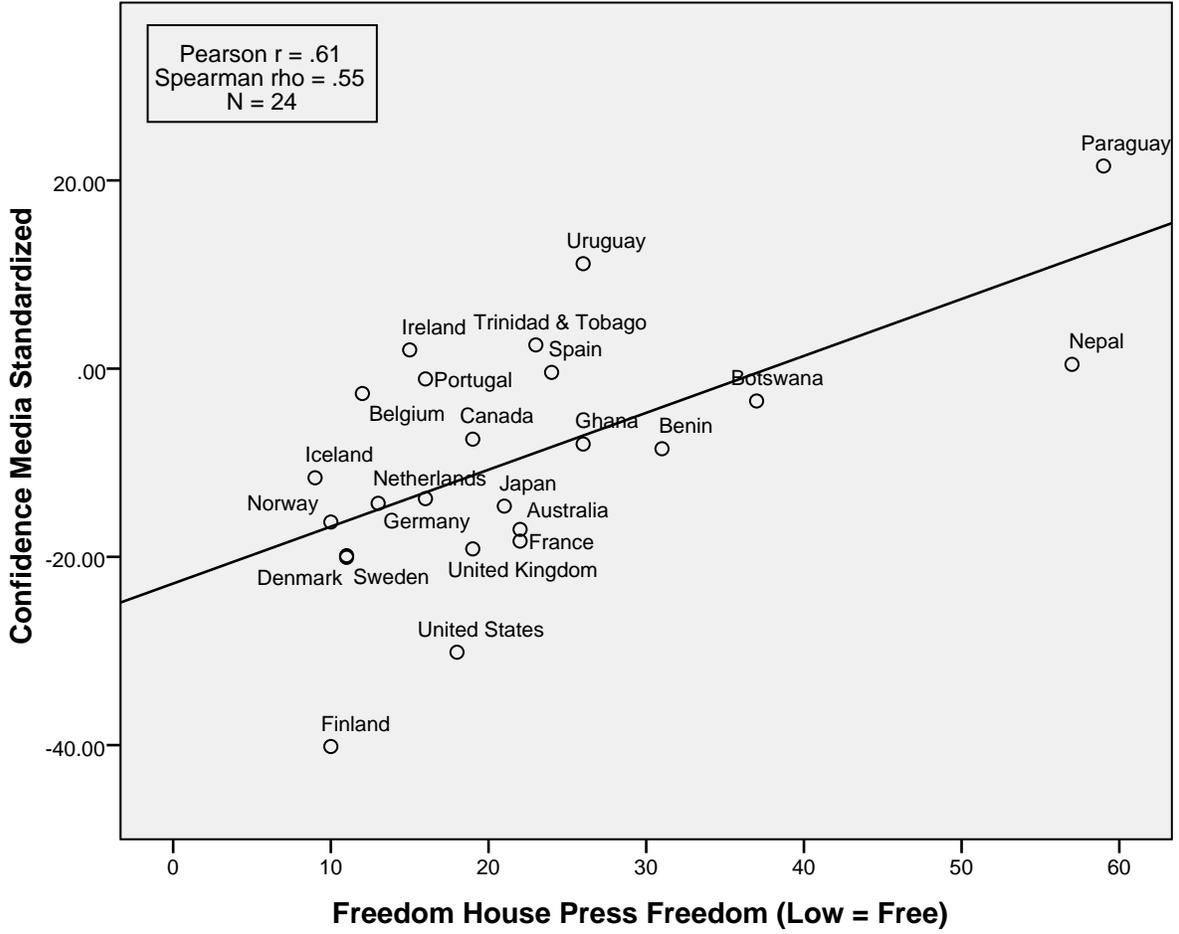


Chart 11: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom (Fear = Low)

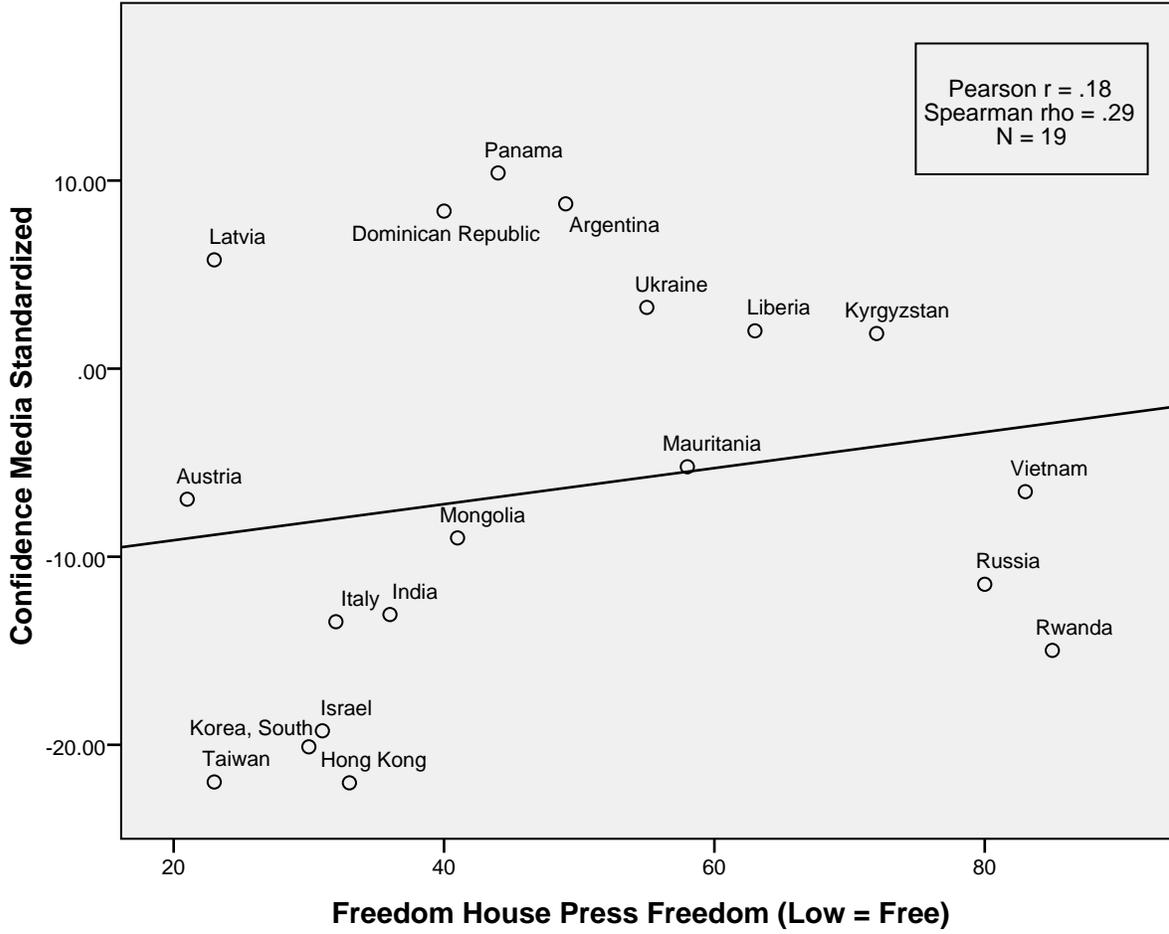


Chart 12: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2008 (Fear = High)

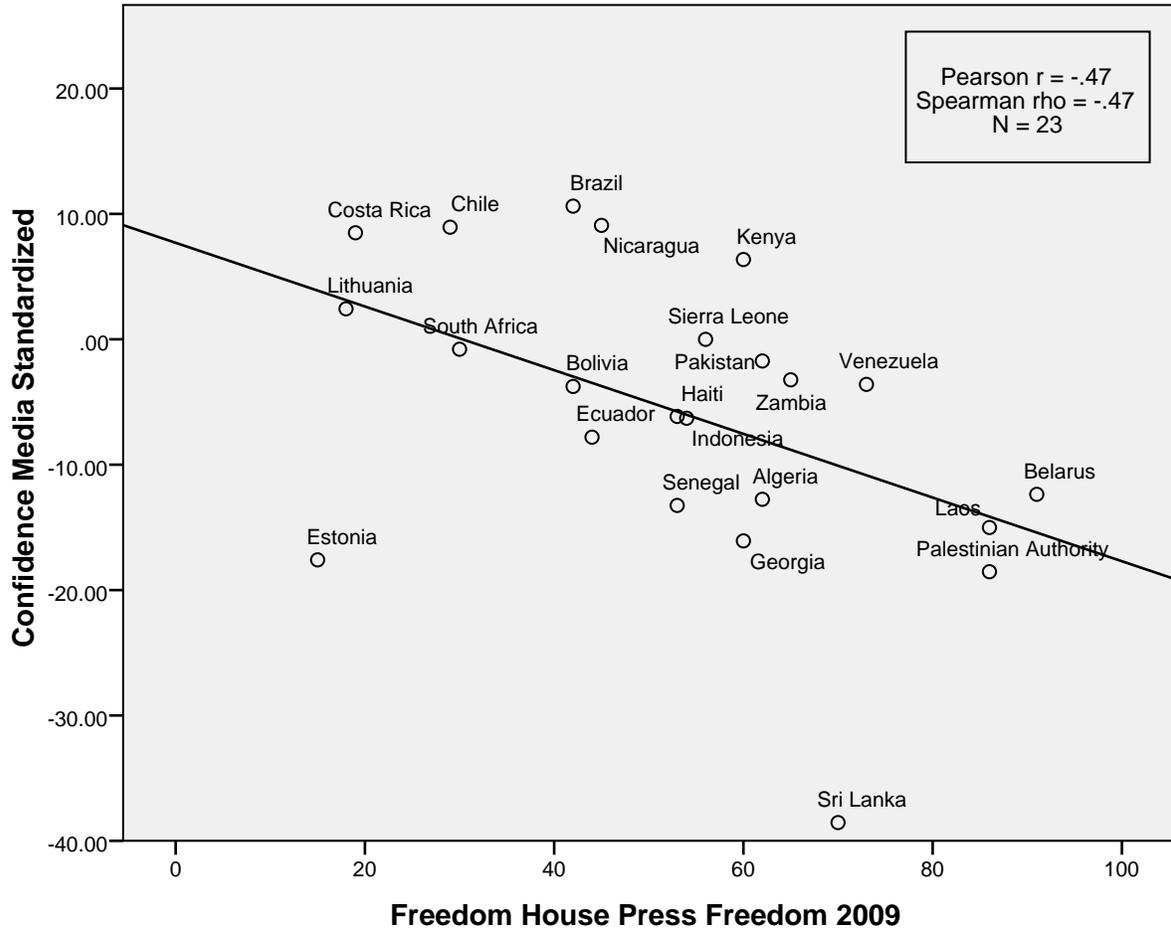


Chart 13: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2008 (Fear = Very High)

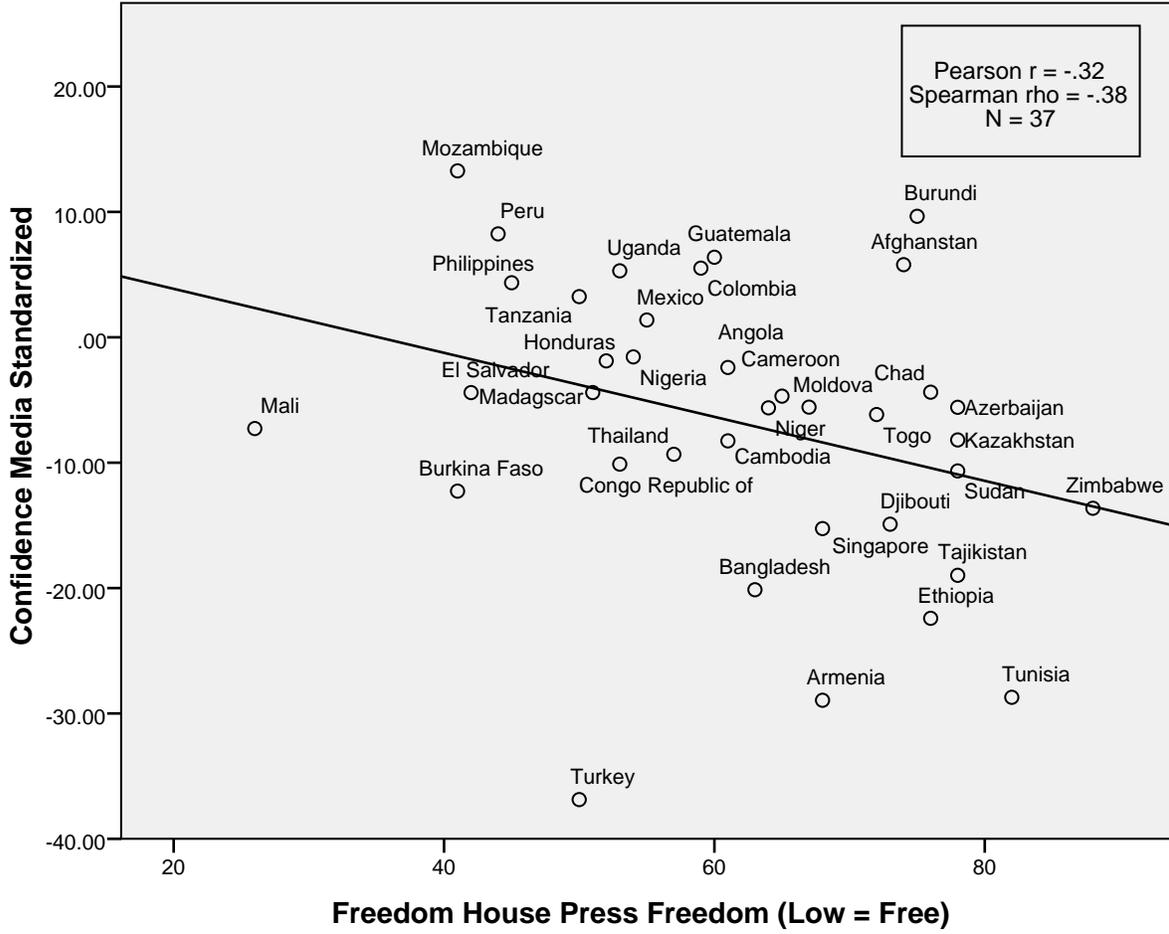


Chart 14: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2009 (Fear = Very Low)

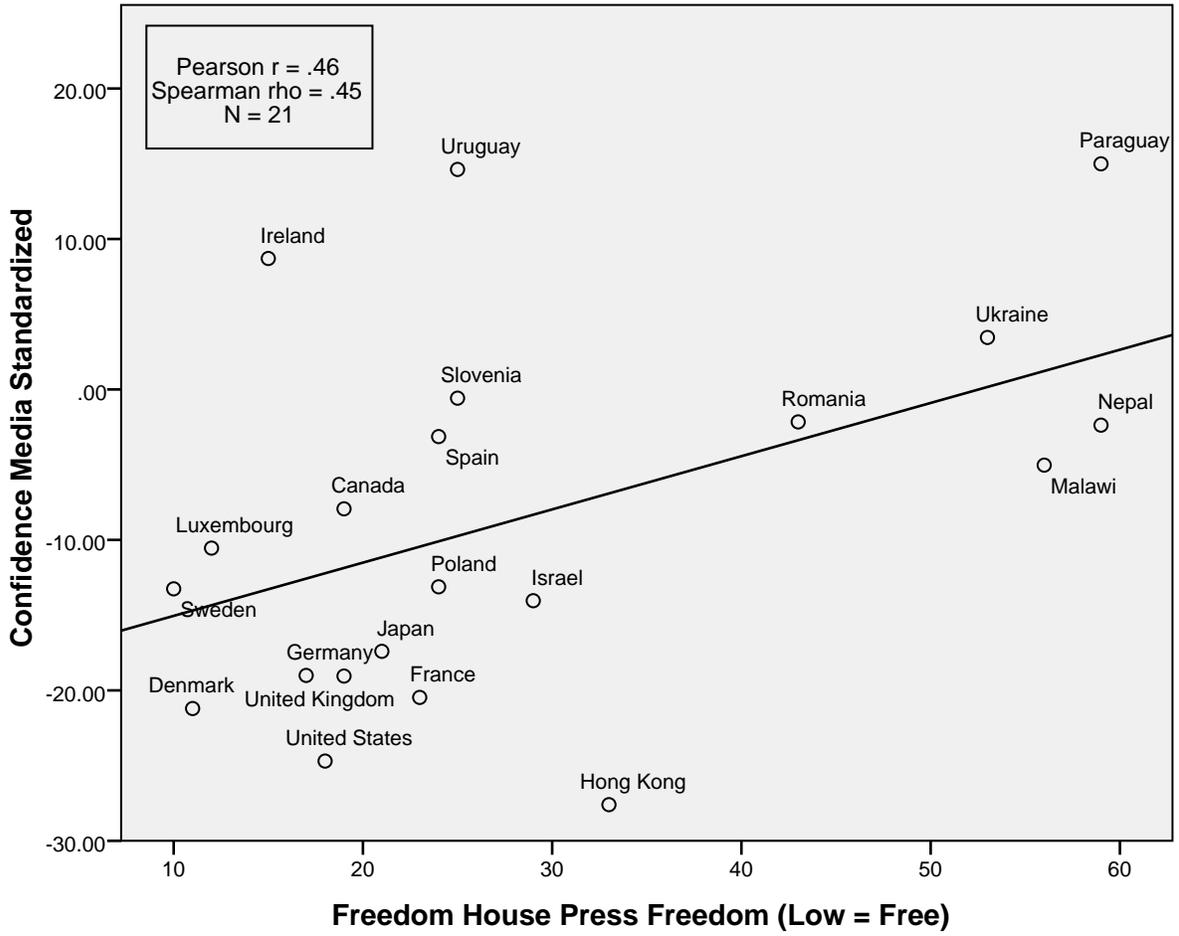


Chart 15: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2009 (Fear = Low)

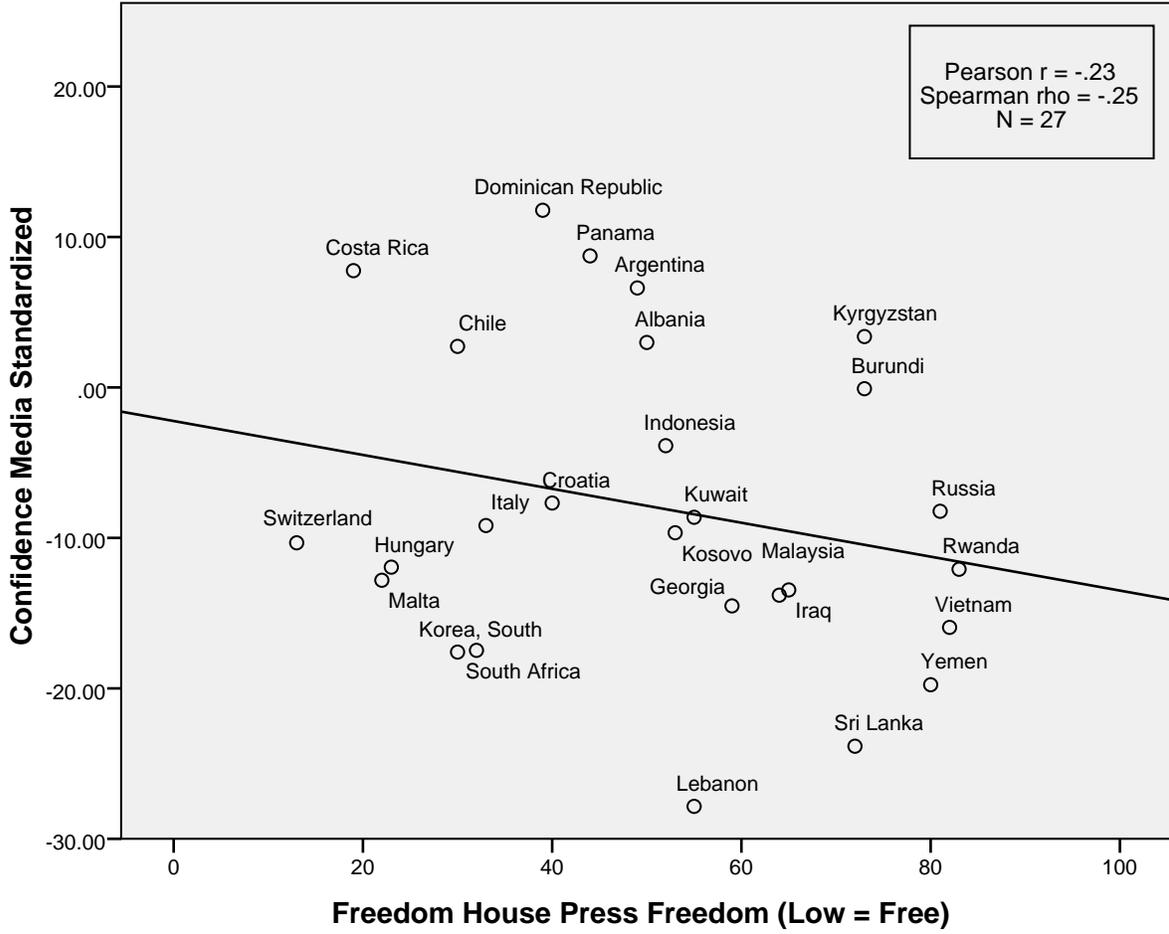


Chart 16: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2009 (Fear = High)

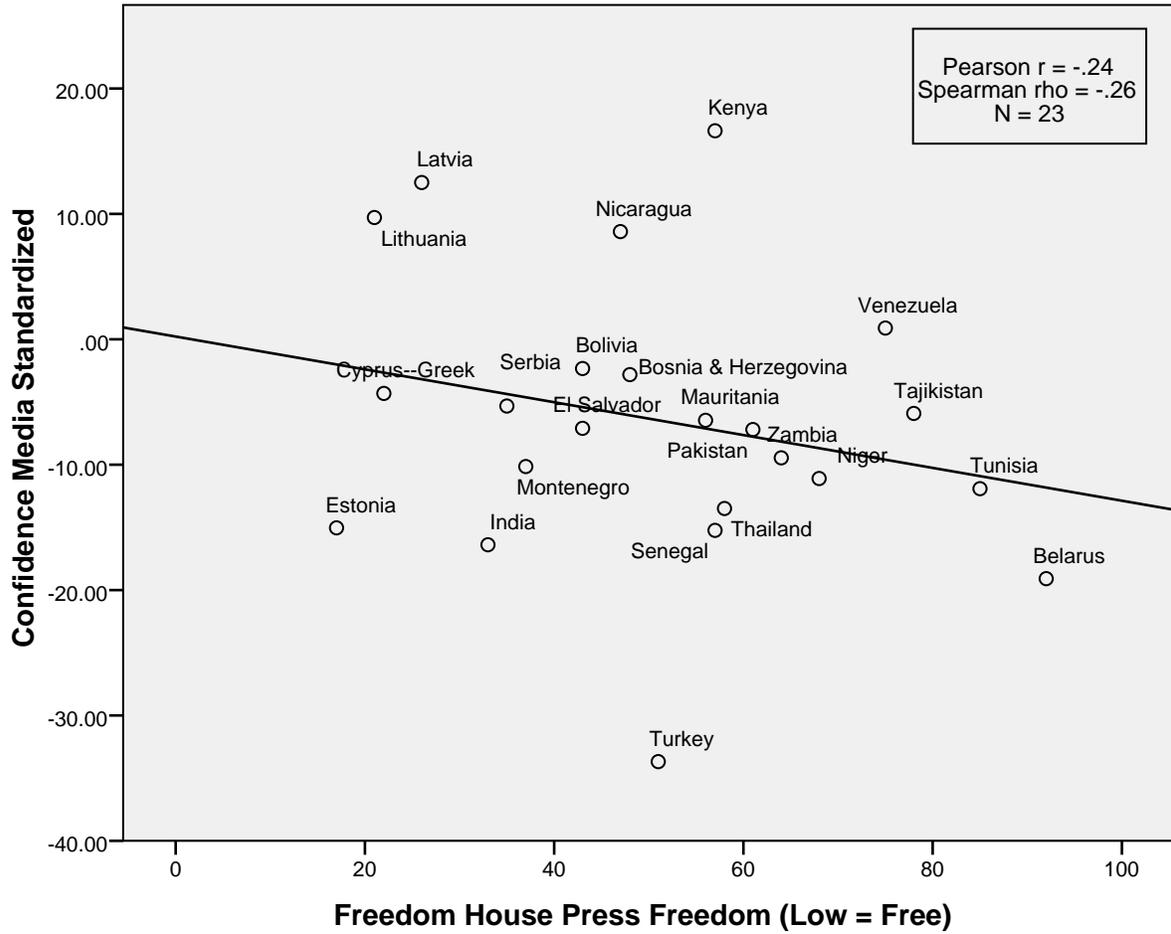


Chart 17: Confidence in Media and Press Freedom 2009 (Fear = Very High)

