

The Role of the Media in Democratization

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ABSTRACT

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A diverse and growing body of research and writing on the role of media in democratic development exists in the literatures of political science, mass communication, economics and sociology, as well as other fields. Unfortunately, little has been done to integrate this work. As a result, there is at present no consensus on the role the media play in the democratic process. This paper provides an integration of that literature.

This review indicates that the process of democratization does not always move in a single direction. Countries move toward democracy in starts and stops, with regression at least somewhat common. The literature indicates that there are four distinct phases that a country or territory goes through on the path to becoming a stable democracy. These four stages of societal development can be labeled pretransition, transition, consolidation and stable (or mature). The pretransition stage focuses on societal conditions under the old regime, while the transition stage is that historical moment when the previous regime no longer holds political power. A state becomes consolidated when the ideals of democracy are accepted and adhered to, and then is considered stable when democracy functions over a period of time.

This approach suggests that media tend to be most supportive of democracy in the early, often euphoric, period after the previous regime has fallen, when journalists as well as other citizens are enjoying new-found freedoms. As the transition process moves toward consolidation, the media as well as the public can become more cynical, particularly in the face of continued political wrangling and the financial pressures of a market economy.

The media in a stable democracy are considered the principal institutions from which members of the public can better understand their society. Ideally, the media contribute to the public sphere by providing citizens with information about their world, by fostering debate about various issues and by encouraging informed decisions about available courses of action. The media are also a site of contestation in which diverse positions are advanced, significant opinions are heard, interests and inner-workings are exposed, and input is received. These all contribute to public debate. The media are also expected to act as "watchdogs" on government and industry.

This paper summarizes and integrates the existing literature. It identifies consistencies and inconsistencies in the literatures and offers possible explanations of those inconsistencies. The outcome is a theoretical perspective from which hypotheses can be derived. These hypotheses can be used to reexamine historical cases as well as make predictions about the future.

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A frequent argument, offered particularly by those involved in media development projects, is that freedom of expression and of the press are essential for democracy. Without these basic freedoms, the argument goes, totalitarian and other undemocratic societies cannot become democratic.

In a recent technical publication, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID, 1999) argued that access to information is essential to the health of democracy for several reasons. First, this access “ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices” rather than act out of “ignorance or misinformation.” Second, the information “ensures that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them.” In addition, the rule of law is expected to be strengthened by independent media that keep a check on the judiciary. Finally, independent media contribute to transparent elections by giving candidates access and by reporting on the “relevant issues in a timely, objective manner.”

Such a view, which might be termed a media supremacist position, is open to question. Might it not be true that media freedom and other communication freedoms follow and are the consequences of democratic reform, rather than the cause of these reforms? In fact, some argue, media freedom should be viewed as an indicant of democratic reform, rather than an independent determinant of it. It also is possible that media freedom actually slows or even hinders democratization, since it can serve as the voice of antidemocratic forces as easily as the voice of civil society. Perhaps the media play different roles at different stages of democratic development. Or the media may play no role at all, with democracy emerging quite independent of press and other communication freedoms.

This paper treats as an empirical question the role of the media in the democratization process. It attempts to review some of the key literature addressing the question of media’s role in fostering democracy, and to draw conclusions from it. In so doing, it explicates the key concepts of democratization and of media freedom and makes some suggestions for their operationalization. Finally, it offers some suggestions for future work in this area.

Media and Democratization

The argument that the media play a role in democratization has been advanced not only by government officials, but also by many in political science and in communication science. Berman and Witzner (1997), for example, argue that the free access and exchange of information is indispensable to the notion of democracy. The very nature of democracy suggests that free and open communication, through a variety of channels, is necessary to foster critical practices found in democratic societies. According to this argument, the mass media in a stable democracy are the principal institutions from which members of the public can better understand their society. Ideally, the media contribute to the public sphere by providing citizens with information about their world, by fostering debate about various issues and by encouraging informed decisions to be made about available courses of action. The media

are also a site of contestation in which diverse positions are advanced, significant opinions are heard, interests and inner-workings are exposed, and input is received. These all contribute to public debate. The media are also expected to provide a monitoring function, commonly referred to as being “watchdogs,” on government, industry, and society (Curran, 1991).

Garnham (1992) states that it is “axiomatic that some version of communicative action lies at the heart of both the theory and practice of democracy.” Gunther and Mughan (2000) call mass media the “connective tissue of democracy.” O’Neil (1998) writes that without the freedom of communication mass media provide, the foundation of democratic rule is undermined. McQuail (1994) notes that “The conduct of democratic (or undemocratic) politics, nationally and internationally depends more and more on mass media.” And Ungar (1990) claims that “A free press is needed everywhere, no less in developing countries than in advanced industrial society.”

Linz (1975), in presenting what he considers to be components of a liberal democracy, cites, among other criteria, freedoms of association, information, and communication. These interconnected ideals, considered cornerstones of U.S. democracy, are, of course, enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. There also have been attempts to make free speech and a free press international human rights (see Voorhoof, 1998). The European Commission and Court of Human Rights has stated that “freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of democracy,” and that a free press “affords the public one of the means of discovering and forming an opinion of the ideas and attitudes of political leaders” (in Jakubowicz, 1998).

Consistent with this view, the United States government, as well as many other western governments, have viewed free and independent media as a useful component in helping to develop democratic regimes (Carothers, 1999).

Media and Society

Many of the studies on media and the democratic process take either the macro-level approach and look at media systems and how they effect politics, or take the micro-level approach to examine how political communication affects the individual, such as during elections (Mughan and Gunther, 2000). As might be expected from such varied approaches, there is disagreement on what role the mass media play in the democratization process. In part, this stems from a common disagreement among those who study the relationship between media and society. Thus, while it is generally recognized that free and open communication is essential to a democratic society, Jakubowicz (2002) acknowledges that “[t]he issue of 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 have yet to be resolved.” McQuail (1992) has no such reservations, offering the view that the media do indeed follow, rather than lead, in efforts to effect societies. According to McQuail, the power of the media to advance collective ends is latent and is exercised sporadically and selectively for two reasons: the goals of the media organization take primacy

over other social goals; and the media are generally instruments of social forces rather than primary social actors.

There is also lively debate as to the effects the media may actually have on members of society. Some argue that media have a negative effect on the public, others that media have a positive effect, and still others, a limited effect. And it is noted that politicians, public interest groups, industry lobbying groups, and other social actors influence media at least as much as media influence the different realms of society (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000).

Beyond the question of whether media lead or follow, or whether media can actually affect positive social change, is the question of whether media are inherently beneficial to the democratization process. In their study of Spain, Gunther, Montero, and Wert (2000) found evidence 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. Not all media practices, though, may be beneficial to democratic development. In the case of Nigeria, Ette (2000) argues that media can undermine democracy and states, "it is not even clear the press has a common understanding of how it should serve the cause of democracy."

In sum, the literature raises but leaves unanswered three important questions. First, what is media freedom and how can it be operationalized? Second, what, fundamentally, is democracy and how can it be measured? Finally, what empirical evidence exists that the media has impact on democratization?

Defining Media Freedom

As noted, in the view of some, media freedom is a component of, rather than conceptually distinct from, democracy. In *Nations In Transit 1999-2000* (2001), for example, Freedom House lists 12 criteria for gauging the status of democracy in a given country. Included among the twelve is an independent media. Additional indicators of democracy include measures of the political, legal, and economic systems as well as civil society, such as governance and public administration, level of corruption, privatization, rule of law, and economic liberalization, among others.

Such a view, however, is at odds with a "media supremacist" view, namely that media freedom is a necessary step toward democracy. In fact, much of the literature on media freedom assumes at least conceptual distinctiveness of media freedoms.

The normative model of a free press is one in which there is freedom from any government regulation and control that would suggest censorship or limits on the freedom to disseminate information, news, and opinion. In addition, media should have economic and political independence, access to channels for a plurality of voices, and provide a benefit to the audience (McQuail 2000). In the technical publication *The Role of Media in Democracy* (1999), USAID considers a media system free and independent if it moves "from one that is directed or even overtly controlled by government or private interests to one that is more open and has a degree of editorial independence that serves the public

interests.” In the service of democracy, a media system should “develop a range of diverse mediums and voices that are credible, and to create and strengthen a sector that promotes such outlets.” Thus, according to USAID, a free and independent media sector should have editorial independence, financial viability, a plurality of voices, and serve the public interest.

Rozumilowicz (2002), whose conceptual development of media freedom is perhaps most complete, contends the question of who has control is the critical consideration as to whether media are free and independent. 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” (p. 14).

Rozumilowicz sees media independence as the outcome of a process of media reform. The general assumption is that the media “should progress ever nearer to an ideal of freedom and independence and away from dependence and control” (p. 12). In her view, 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 the concept of democracy and the related process of democratization.”

Rozumilowicz sees the ideal media environment as one in which there are two media sectors, a market-led media sector and a nonmarket-sector. Within the market sector, advertisers are free to present their goods to target audiences, programmers can use fees provided by these advertisers to draw in audiences, and audiences are informed and entertained to the extent the market allows. The nonmarket-sector provides balance by ensuring that the needs of non-dominant groups are met. It also creates a forum in which a common discourse emerges and which allows people to function within the society.

For these two sectors to exist, there must be both legal and institutional support for them as well as social-cultural support. For example, the market sector can exist only if laws are in place protecting media from government interference. Audiences also must be protected via defamation laws from media abuse. Also needed are anti-trust legislation, ownership laws limiting concentration, licensing laws, and rules on advertising.

For the nonmarket-sector to exist, there must be legal and institutional support for the right to publish and the right of access. Citizens are guaranteed the right to information, and the various voices in society are guaranteed the right to communicate.

For Rozumilowicz, socio-cultural support for a free media comes from training for and professionalism among journalists, a general educational system that instills values of tolerance within society, and training for politicians on the workings of a free press in an open society.

Following from this conceptualization, Rozumilowicz outlines four stages of media reform. The first stage, labeled a **Pre-transition Stage**, lays the groundwork for subsequent change. During this

change, there is an opening of freeing of a previously constrained media system. The regime signals a greater willingness to tolerate criticism and expressions of alternative points of view.

The second stage is termed a **Primary Transition Stage**. During this stage, there is a systematic change within the formerly authoritarian regime. Statutes on access to information, defamation, ownership, and the like are passed. The culture of censorship is disrupted.

The next stage is called the **Secondary Stage**. During this period both politicians and journalists participate in training seminars to explain and clarify the new institutional and legal order. Networks of media professionals develop. Journalists receive training in new skills of investigative and responsible journalism.

The final stage is called the **Late or Mature Stage**. At this point, legal and institutional questions have been resolved. Educational opportunities for journalists are well established. Instruction to provide support for open communication is incorporated in primary and secondary schooling.

What is Democracy?

What constitutes a democratic system has been formulated as an ideal-type regime with the recognition that a state may be considered a consolidated or stable democracy complying closely, although not necessarily fully, with certain criteria. Linz (1975) has set forth a generally accepted set of criteria for considering a state democratic:

when it allows for the free formulation of political preferences, through the use of basic freedoms of association, information, and communication, for the purpose of free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by non-violent means their claim to rule,...without excluding any effective political office from that competition or prohibiting any members of the political community from expressing their preference.

Linz and Stepan have since added that to meet the criteria of a democratic regime, elected officials cannot be subject to the authority of unelected elites and certain policy areas cannot remain off-limits to elected officials (Gunther, Diamandouros, and Puhle, 1995).

Schmitter and Karl (1991) offer a different, though not necessarily contradictory, way of understanding what is democracy. The authors contend that democracy can best be understood in terms of concepts, procedures and principles. Among the concepts integral to democracy are rulers, the public realm, citizens, competition, and cooperation. Procedures are those norms that must be followed in a democracy and encompass rules, regulations, rights and laws. Principles are the underlying beliefs and behaviors that help make democracy work.

For Schmitter and Karl, modern democracy is “a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representative.” What is crucial, and in accordance with the democratic regime typology offered by Linz, is the central importance given to citizens acting in the public realm to choose, and thereby legitimate, political representation. This suggests that a key feature to a democratic

system is the ability of political elites to communicate in the public sphere in such a way as to gain legitimacy from civil society.

In the above formulation, the public sphere is where the state and its citizens come together, as opposed to citizens acting solely in the private realm, and where collective norms are agreed upon, with the state being granted legitimate powers of coercion. The distinctions between private/public, state/society, and collective/individual vary from state to state and make up much of political debate in the public realm. Schmitter and Karl go on to say that “Citizens are the most distinctive element in democracies.” The existence of citizens, with full rights for participation in the public realm, including freedom of speech, the right to information, to associate, to choose among competing political representatives in a timely way, etc., is ultimately what makes a regime democratic.

Rozumilowicz (2002) looked at 12 definitions of democracy and found two central features: competition among political actors is necessary to provide legitimate electoral choice and to hold elected officials accountable; and participation is necessary to ensure proper constituent representation. There is also general agreement that freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the freedom to organize all help to create a healthy political culture and more desirable political outcomes. The literature on democracy is vast. The above guidelines do provide a general starting point for understanding some of the central elements of the democratic equation.

Stages of Democratization

A review of the literature indicates that the process of democratization does not always move in a single direction. Countries move toward democracy in starts and stops, with regression at least somewhat common. The literature also indicates that there are four distinct stages that a country or territory goes through on the path to becoming a stable democracy. These four stages of societal development can be labeled pretransition, transition, consolidation and stable (or mature). The pretransition stage focuses on societal conditions under the old regime, while the transition stage is that historical moment when the previous regime no longer holds political power. A state becomes consolidated when the ideals of democracy are accepted and adhered to, and then is considered stable when democracy functions over a period of time (Linz, Stepan, and Gunther, 1995).

This classification of the stages of democratic development is based in large part on the stages suggested by the literature (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, 1986; Higley and Gunther, 1992; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Diamond, 1999). But there are alternative approaches. In considering 28 countries of East Central Europe in *Nations in Transit 1999-2000* (2001), Freedom House's democracy rankings classify states as *consolidated democracies*, *transitional governments*, and *consolidated autocracies*. But perhaps most commonly used by Freedom House is a typology it has developed based on several indications of political rights and civil liberties that ranks states as being *free*, *partly free*, or *not free* (*Freedom in the World Country Ratings*). No doubt there are other possible typologies for classifying

countries as to their perceived level of democratic development. The scheme below was selected because it seems most consistent with the bulk of the literature on the topic.

The Pretransition Stage

The regime-type from which a state has emerged in large part also determines what development needs to take place in the political and public realms to progress toward democratization. Bunce (1997) asserts that a country's unique historical situation has as much, or more, to do with its chances for a successful transition to democracy than the general political or institutional choices made. While acknowledging such choices do make a difference, she sees institutions as dependent variables, not independent variables, stating "the 'best' institutions depend heavily not on objective characteristics but, rather, on national context."

Writing on state transitions to democracy from authoritarian rule, Lowenthal (1986) observes that historical circumstances condition and shape the transition process. The nature of a transition is influenced by such factors as how the authoritarian regime ruled and maintained power and the way in which power was lost, by the nature and timing of liberalization, the status of existing elites, and the conditions of the existing financial and institutional structures. Linz and Stepan (1996), in considering key determinants in democratic transition and consolidation, treat the previous regime type as a macro-level variable. Using a prior regime typology of totalitarian, post-totalitarian, authoritarian, and sultanistic, the authors argue that the paths to democracy available for transition and the tasks that must be faced before consolidation of democracy vary according to the prior regime type.

The Transition Stage

As mentioned, the manner in which the transition phase is entered into can greatly affect opportunities for democratic consolidation. In addition, the political and social histories of a state or territory, including the nature of the previous regime, are strong determinants of the potential for a successful transition to democracy. For example, previous experience with democracy (as with the Czech Republic and Spain) is seen as beneficial, as are the more fully developed economies and civil societies that are more likely to be found in authoritarian regimes. In fact, the liberalization of economies and civil societies is often a major factor in helping to bring about the breakdown of a nondemocratic regime. States or territories undertaking transition from a totalitarian system with a restricted economy and civil society face the difficulty of simultaneity, of attempting to develop the political, economic and civic realms at the same time (Linz, Stepan, and Gunther, 1995).

The transition stage can be characterized as that historical moment when the previous regime, with its various coalitions and factions, no longer maintains political power; when the military is removed from the function of governing and is placed under civilian control; when political parties are formed and open, fairly contested elections are held; and when a constitution is drafted and new political institutions are established (Linz and Stepan, 1996).

The Consolidation Stage

As difficult as is the process of transition, the next stage, that of consolidation, may provide even more obstacles. While the institutions and other structures of democracy are put in place during the transition stage, whether the ideals of democracy are accepted and adhered to determines if a state can claim to be a consolidated, functioning, democracy. In consolidating a state to a democratic regime, several elements must be in place: The state (which includes political society, rule of law, and state bureaucracy), civil society and economic society. Of these, the most necessary of all is a strong, working state that is fully committed to the democratic process, and in doing so has gained the confidence of its citizens (Linz and Stepan 1996). As “democracy is a form of governance of a state,” according to Linz and Stepan, “no modern polity can become democratically consolidated unless it is first a state.” For a state to make the transition to democracy and, more importantly, to consolidate a lasting democracy, democracy must become “the only game in town” behaviorally, attitudinally, and constitutionally; or as Linz and Stepan point out, when democracy is deeply ingrained in society in “social, institutional and even psychological life.”

Similarly, Diamond (1999) sees three general processes that need to take place for consolidation. First is what he terms “deepening,” meaning the structures of democracy become more liberal, accountable, representative and accessible. Secondly, political behavior becomes routinized and predictable toward the common rules and procedures of democratic political competition and action. Finally, successive regimes must produce sufficient positive outcomes to build legitimacy for the democratic process.

The Role of Media in Democratization

In sum, there are four stages of sociopolitical development to consider when assessing media practice in the democratization process: the pretransition, transition, consolidation, and stable (or mature) stages. These stages are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they can be thought of as appearing on a continuum in the movement toward democratization. This is not meant to suggest that the process is linear. Interventions, ruptures and reversals are serious and constant threats to the democratization process.

Randall (1998) supports a “stage-ist” approach, suggesting that it is necessary to consider the role of the media under the previous regime, as that will impact the media’s rate of evolution toward independence and its ability to gain credibility with the public during the transition and consolidation phases. When a transition initially takes place, the media tend to be most supportive of democracy in the early, often euphoric, period after the previous regime has fallen, as journalists as well as other citizens are enjoying new found freedoms. But as the transition process moves toward consolidation, the media as well as the public can become more cynical, particularly in the face of continued political wrangling.

Downing (1996) sees media as pivotal in the struggle for power in all regimes, including nondemocratic regimes. Media of all types facilitate the struggle that emerges between political

movements and the authoritarian state in the process of regime change, and continues through the transition stage into the consolidation stage, with whatever regime emerges.

Pretransition Stage

As has been discussed, the previous regime type has a strong impact on the shape and form of a state's transition to democracy. Gunther and Mughan (2000) argue that most political elites, regardless of regime type, believe the media to be important in shaping the views of the public and have attempted to develop policies to suit their economic, social, and political purposes. Media regulation varies in scope and practice, with a strong determinant being the perceived role of the media in democratic and nondemocratic political systems. In contrast to some of the characteristics of a free and independent media found in democratic societies, as has already been discussed, the nondemocratic regime media model is one of strict government control to achieve objectives set by self-selected, unaccountable political elites who exercise unconstrained power over the media systems in their country.

In some authoritarian states the media had a certain autonomy, particularly when reporting on non-political matters. In a few authoritarian states the communications media even may have been privately owned, particularly in Latin America (Fox, 1998). In totalitarian regimes, media were mainly considered to be an organ of the state with the job of transmitting state propaganda. O'Neil (1997) portrays the media from the socialist era of Eastern Europe as a "transmission belt," its role being to transmit information from the Communist Party to the public, to control the presentation of information, and to suppress alternative information and criticism of the existing system. But despite some differences between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, dealings with the media are similar: strict censorship, repression of freedom for journalists, and tight controls on information to the public (Gunther and Mughan, 2000).

Despite the many limitations placed on media under nondemocratic regimes, Bennett (1998) sees two important roles the media can play in the pretransition stage: *witness role of the media* and the *reifying or confirming role* (emphasis in original). The witness role is the process of making public the transformations that are taking place in society, as the old regime starts to lose its hold on power. The reifying role of the media is to confirm and legitimate the changes taking place by providing a variety of images and information that coincide with one another, which in effect makes the shift in society seem "real." Once the old regime has fallen, the transition phase begins.

Mughan and Gunther (2000) argue that liberalization has been the principal form of deregulation in authoritarian regimes, and this liberalization of the media has played a role in the process of political change. As control of media becomes more relaxed, a diversity of political messages appear in the media, serving to undermine the legitimacy of nondemocratic regimes.

In a study of Spain, Gunther, Montero, and Wert, (2000) found that Spanish media were able to report on political events in other Western European countries without much restriction, and in doing so were able to provide to the public information about legitimate political alternatives to the authoritarian state. This

served to delegitimize the franquist regime and to resocialize the public toward a democratic alternative. Following the death of Franco in 1975, Spain began its transition to a democratic state. In the early stages of the transition, the media informed the public of strategies for political change proposed by the new government, and provided a channel for newly formed political organizations and trade unions to make demands on the state.

Interestingly, Gunther, Montero, and Wert also found that as media regulation was liberalized and the transition process began, the role of certain types of media changed. For example, under Franco, news magazines were an important source of alternative information because they were not as strictly controlled as other media. But as media regulation was relaxed, particularly on mainstream newspapers and radio, these outlets were able to incorporate a greater diversity of information into their news reports and therefore alternative viewpoints became more integrated into the daily flow of information, helping to normalize democratic behavior. Thus, as pluralism normalized and deepened among the public, it was authoritarianism that became untenable.

Transition Stage

The goal of the transition phase is to work toward a consolidated democracy. Bennett argues that the forces that help bring about the downfall of the old regime are not always prepared to work toward democratic consolidation. The old adage that it is easier to oppose than to rule may be applicable. Groups that came together to force social and political change often times come from weak or nonexistent civil societies. Once the previous regime collapses, what follows may look like a political free-for-all, and in some cases a political power grab. The media are quickly secured as an ally by various parties in an attempt to gain strength of voice and therefore support and legitimacy. New sources of media proliferate, while established sources many times have to remake themselves. Grievances and ethnic conflicts that were suppressed under the old regime surface. Audiences that do not have experience with such a cacophony of voices and opinion, and have no social context of political identification, beliefs or involvement within which to place various claims, may feel overwhelmed. Thus, nationalistic appeals become attractive (Bennett, 1998). In this environment, media are asked to educate the public, promote political and social cooperation, and present in a fair manner competing political messages. Bennett observes that under such conditions, “[w]ithout conscious efforts to engineer some fit between new communication forms and emerging social institutions, a free press can actually do more harm than good.” Bennett recommends that to aid in the transition to a consolidated democracy there needs to be the establishment of media policy, as well as support to solidify and institutionalize democratic practice.

Gunther, Montero, and Wert (2000) found that as the transition to democracy began to take hold in Spain, the media furthered the resocialization of the public to democratic processes through information on the basic values of democratic practices. The media aided in resocialization of the public by acknowledging the legitimacy of the new regime, by serving as the principal channels for partisan

cues, democratic values, political information and by normalizing tolerance for differing political views. Democracy became a realistic and attractive alternative to authoritarianism. The authors conclude that the principal function of the media during Spain's transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, which was consolidated by 1982, was to channel messages that originated among the political elite to the general public.

Integrating the Literatures on Media Reform and Democratization

Perhaps the most ambitious attempt to integrate the literature on the role of the media in democratization to date was undertaken by Price, Rozumilowicz and Verhulst (2002). In the introduction to the book, the editors write that it is their goal to examine "the impact of political transitions on media structures and the impact of media structures on political reform." Both variables, media structures and political reform, were conceptualized as having phases, as noted above in the discussion of the chapter in the book by Rozumilowicz (2002).

The rationale for a relationship between media reform and democratization is nicely articulated in the initial chapter by Rozumilowicz. Among the arguments are:

1. 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 the related process of democratization (p. 12).
2. Free and independent media buttress the societal objectives of democracy, a particular economic structure, greater cultural understanding and general human development.
3. Free and independent media allow individuals to find a public forum in which to express opinions, beliefs and viewpoints to their fellow citizens. Free and independent media inform, entertain and enrich the life through the profusion of others' ideas, opinions and visions (p13).
4. Free and independent media provide for an expression of options so meaningful decisions can be made (p. 13).
5. Free and independent media guarantee access to the less privileged in society, giving them voice (p. 13).

In sum, according to this argument, free and independent media are necessary for the functioning of democracy.

The editors employed a comparative perspective to test this general note. They included in the volume chapters about media reform and about democratization in countries as diverse as China, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jordan, Ukraine, Uganda, India, Poland and Uruguay. The goal was to allow the case studies to provide empirical evidence of the relationship between media reform and democratization. The effort, as the editors admit in the book's conclusions, is relatively successful in discussing media reform in the selected countries. It is much less successful in documenting the link between reform and political change.

One of the most informative chapters is by Price, who examines the efforts at media reform in post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina. Price says his case study investigates the post-conflict mode of change to democracy, which has been given little attention in the literature. What distinguishes this mode of change, he writes, is that the state is under the supervision of an international authority or an occupying state. The rate of change, the mode of change, and the role of the media are under the control of an authority outside the state. After World War II, Price notes, Germany and Japan were also in such a state. Price lists as a negative example Rwanda, where intervention did not take place. There, according to Price, Radio-Television Libre des Milles Collinaires excited Hutu to slaughter Tutsi and contributed to the genocide that took place.

Price notes a certain irony in the behavior of government authorities in these post-conflict interventions:

“While there is a wide-ranging debate about whether and how media reform helps engender political reform in the more standard transitions, similar doubts do not exist in the post-conflict context. It is virtually assumed that shaping media is a necessary part of controlling and building a future democratic state. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of the post-conflict media restructuring is contained in this policy. Control (and often censorship) is considered a prerequisite for a successful transition from war and authority to democracy and stability.” (p. 91)

Prior to and during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Price said, the residents were subjected to nationalistic broadcasts from Serbia and Croatia. Croatian television from Zagreb, for example, broadcast reports that Islamic fundamentalists were trying to create a state where Catholic Croats would be oppressed and subjugated. The broadcasts portrayed Muslims as death anti-Christians intent on depriving the Catholics of their religion and heritage.

NATO troops serving in the peacekeeping role in Bosnia-Herzegovina after the conflict seized broadcast transmitters to prevent the broadcast of inflammatory materials and used their control of the media to promote the NATO mission and the Dayton Peace Accords. Ultimately, the international community attempted to restructure the media along Western European and North American standards. To do this, the community established a commission to monitor the media and investigate complaints, license media operations, and impose sanctions and penalties as appropriate.

Media reform, in short, included media control quite inconsistent with the general principles of media freedom and independence. Yet the stated goal was democratization.

A Strategy for Resolving the Issues in the Literature

In summary, the literature suggests four different positions regarding the role of the media in democratization.

1. The media-supremist position, which holds that media freedom and independence produce democracy.

2. The democracy-supremist position, which holds that democratic reform determines and produces media freedom and independence.

3. The media-freedoms-are-an-element-of-democracy position, which argues that media freedoms are simply an element of democracy and, as such, have no causal force leading to democracy. This can be seen as a variant of the second position.

4. The null-effect position, which holds that there is no relationship between media freedom and democracy.

Two additional positions also present themselves, though they have not often been articulated.

5. A media-freedom-hinders-democracy argument.

6. A democratization-hinders-media-freedoms stance.

The question is, how one might distinguish among these positions empirically. The fourth position can be eliminated easily enough if, in fact, one can show that there is covariation between media reform and democratization.

The conceptualization outlined above actually makes this possible. Media freedom, as noted above, can be seen as varying (progressing) from pretransition, to primary transition, to secondary stage, to late or mature. Similarly, democracy can be seen as varying from pretransition, to transition, to consolidated, to mature democracy. If media freedoms and democratization are, in fact, linked, one should be able to determine covariation between them at a given point in time. That is to say, the cases should fall on the diagonal in the chart below.

This strategy also should distinguish between positions 1 and 2 versus positions 5 and 6. In other words, the nature of the relationship should be clear.

The order of effects, however, can only be determined through the accumulation of data across time, probably from case studies of the sort undertaken for the volume by Price, Rozumilowicz and Verhulst (2002).

Here again the negative cases of Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina become informative. Must media reform reach the final stages of freedom and independence, with an educated and well-trained journalistic workforce, before it should be unleashed on the emerging democracy? If such a mature form of media freedom develops, will it propel the society on to the next stage of democracy? Or must democracy reach an advanced stage before any form of media freedom can be allowed? Once allowed, will media freedom propel the society forward to the next level of democracy? The Rwanda and Bosnian examples are suggestive of such a position.

A more careful analysis of the cases unfolding today as well as continued examination of historical cases should help provide the clues.

		Media Reform			
		Pretransition	Primary Transition	Secondary Stage	Mature Stage
Democratization	Pretransition	X			
	Transition		X		
	Consolidation			X	
	Mature Democracy				X

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