


2015

Freedom of the Press Under Authoritarian Regimes

Adam Bourgault
Susquehanna University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.susqu.edu/supr>

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), and the [International Relations Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bourgault, Adam (2015) "Freedom of the Press Under Authoritarian Regimes," *Susquehanna University Political Review*: Vol. 6 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.susqu.edu/supr/vol6/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Susquehanna University Political Review by an authorized editor of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact sieczkiewicz@susqu.edu.

Freedom of the Press Under Authoritarian Regimes

Adam Bourgault, 2015

Freedom of the press is considered a fundamental cornerstone of democracy by many individuals, organizations, and states throughout the world. The famous science fiction author George Orwell said “Freedom of the Press, if it means anything at all, means the freedom to criticize and oppose (Quotes About Freedom of the Press).” Reporters Without Borders, an organization dedicated to preventing journalistic oppression worldwide, notes that “Freedom of information is the foundation of any democracy. Yet almost half of the world’s population is still denied it (Reporters Without Borders).” The American Bill of Rights guarantees citizens freedom of the press; some countries that also guarantee (and uphold) freedom of the press include Denmark, Finland, and the United Kingdom, among others. Looking at Freedom House’s rankings of country freedom, most countries that are considered democratic have a free press; most countries that are considered autocratic, or “not free,” have limited press freedom (Freedom House). This indicates a strong correlation between the freedom of the state and freedom of the press.

However, controlling the press is not always easy, and the success of censorship varies across various “authoritarian,” “partly free,” and “not free” countries. Why are some authoritarian or undemocratic states able to control their domestic press better than others? We theorize that the ability of an “undemocratic” state to control its press is based on the centralization and strength of its government, cultural values on privacy, citizen’s access to information technology, and the condition of private, professional journalism in the country. More specifically, we propose that in states with stronger, more centralized governments, cultures that value public interest over privacy, limited citizen access information to technology, and government-sanctioned journalism, the government and political bodies will have

greater control over the press. On the other hand, in states with weaker, less centralized governments, greater cultural emphasis on privacy, greater citizen access to information technology, and private, professional journalists, the government will have less control over the press.

AN EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Government Centralization

We argue that the centralization of government power enables undemocratic states to have stronger control over instruments of power in the country. These instruments include lawmaking capabilities and law enforcement organizations. The former allows a government to create overarching, national laws that limit press freedom, with less regional or local opposition. The latter allows the government to enforce these laws.

Cultural Values

We argue that cultural values play an important role in the ability of a government to control domestic freedom of the press because they create self-censorship among journalists. If a culture values privacy, journalists may be more likely to censor themselves, either willingly, or out of fear of retribution.

Citizen Access to Information Technology

We argue that citizens with greater access to information technology (which includes computers, laptops, tablets, and cellphones) are better able to access restricted information their government outlaws; additionally, citizens are able to quickly record, create and publish news using information technology like cellphones and applications like Twitter or Youtube. Because these Internet media outlets are very hard to monitor and regulate, greater access to information technology allows for more press freedom in a country.

Private, Professional Journalism

We argue that a private, professional journalistic community within a country is crucial in securing greater press freedom in said country. This community must be private, as government-controlled media is subject to bias and unreliability; two countries in the following pages use their public, government-owned press to promote their own regimes and distribute inaccurate information.

The press community must follow professional journalistic integrity. This means that journalists won't accept bribes, submit to government coercion or intimidation, and report on the ethical and civil violations of their national governments in an unbiased, informative way.

AN INTRODUCTION TO FOUR SELECTED COUNTRIES

In the following pages, we will explore four states with varying levels of press freedom. The four states include North Korea, China, Egypt, and Mexico. The choices were made based on Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, and Polity IV numbers, which can be viewed in Table 1.

North Korea was selected as one extreme of the press freedom spectrum; this is because North Korea ranks last under Freedom House's lowest Freedom of the Press Score and is second to last place (ahead of Eritrea) on Reporters Without Borders 2014 World Press Freedom Index. North Korea is considered "not free" by Freedom House and an autocracy by Polity IV (Polity IV Project). North Korea represents a state with extremely high control over its domestic press.

China was selected as a slightly more moderate example; China's Freedom of the Press Score is slightly better than North Korea's. China also places higher on the RWB's 2014 World Press Freedom Index. China represents a state with lower (but still quite high) control over the press within its borders.

Each of Egypt's scores, ranks, and statuses are higher than both North Korea and China's. Egypt was selected since it is the first of the four countries presented with a press freedom situation that Reporters Without Border ranks as "difficult," as opposed to "very serious," which is considered more free.

Finally, Mexico was selected as an example of a "partly free" state with greater (but still insufficient) press freedom. In this sense, it occupies the opposite extreme of North Korea, with far greater press freedom, although the country still lacks a truly democratic regime.

Now that the reasoning behind the selected countries has been explained, we will provide a brief background on each of the selected countries.

North Korea

North Korea holds an international reputation as one of the world's worst dictatorships. Controlled by the Kim family line since its creation after World War II, North Korea has been in the news in recent years for its hu-

man rights abuses, attempts at developing nuclear weapons, and the threat it poses to international stability (BBC Monitoring, North Korea). North Korea has an overwhelmingly homogenous Korean population which boasts a 100% literacy rate. The national language is Korean. The state encourages its citizens to be atheists, but some citizens still recognize Buddhism or Confucianism. There are very few tensions between citizens; most discontent is directed toward the government, although it must be veiled (The World Factbook).

Economically, North Korea is struggling due to its internal policy of self-reliance (called *juche*), which limits its international trade and diplomacy. As a result, North Korea has the lowest GDP of the four selected countries and one of the world's lowest GDP's. Despite its heavy reliance on industry, "industrial capital stock is nearly beyond repair as a result of years of underinvestment, shortages of spare parts, and poor maintenance (The World Factbook)." *See *Table 2*

North Korea is known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, although there are very few things about North Korea that are "democratic." As was mentioned earlier, North Korea is a communist, one party state, controlled primarily by the Kim line of succession. Currently, Kim Jong-Un leads the country as president and chief of state, heading the executive branch. The legislative branch, known as the Supreme People's Assembly, is unicameral, with members elected by popular vote. The judicial branch is called the Supreme Court, and its three judges are selected by members of the Supreme People's Assembly for 5-year terms (The World Factbook).

Although the president and legislators are elected by popular vote, voters are given a ballot of candidates who are approved by Korea's dominant party — the Korean Worker's Party, or KWP. Two smaller parties exist, but both are directly controlled by the KWP. The approved candidates are elected unopposed (The World Factbook). Kim Jong Un — and the Kim family — have maintained supremacy through the establishment of a "cult of personality," which portrays Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and to a lesser extent thus far, Kim Jung Un as "great heroes and leaders... almost into gods (Armstrong)." The joint use of propaganda, execution of dissidents, and rigged elections has allowed the Kim family to retain power almost entirely uncontested.

China

Another famed autocracy, China is also consistently in the news for government corruption, unethical human rights abuses, and recently for its crack-

down on Hong Kong protesters (BBC Monitoring, China). In comparison with North Korea, China is more heterogeneous, but it still has a largely homogenous population — the world's largest, at over 1.3 billion. 91.6% of citizens identify as Han Chinese, with numerous other small ethnic groups making up the remaining 8.4%. The official national language is Mandarin Chinese. The majority — 52.2% — of people are religiously unaffiliated, but Buddhist, Confucianist, and Christian groups exist in the country, among other small religious groups (The World Factbook). Although there are social divisions in China based on economic divisions between rural and urban, political independence (Hong Kong being a primary example), and unfair government treatment (Pierson), many of China's tensions are international, with countries like Taiwan, India, and the United States (The World Factbook).

China's economy is far better than North Korea's, with the world's 3rd highest GDP. Despite its high GDP, China's GDP per capita is extremely low at \$9,800, especially when compared with the United States and the European Union's respective GDPs per capita of \$52,800 and \$34,900. Because of China's far greater size and population, this disparity illustrates that China's wealth is spread out among more people and concentrated in the hands of wealthy individuals and corporations. China's labor force breakdown highlights a fairly even economic split between sectors (The World Factbook).

*See Table 2

The communist state, known as the People's Republic of China, is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), with several other small parties "ultimately controlled by the CCP." President Xi Jinping is the chief of state, although he is elected by the National People's Congress (NPC), which serves as the unicameral legislative branch. The head of government is the Premier Li Keqiang, who is appointed by the president and approved by the NPC. At the top of the judicial branch is the Supreme People's Court, with judges appointed by the NPC. The court has little influence in determining the constitutionality of laws (The World Factbook).

Elections are similar to North Korea's, in that only CCP candidates and CCP affiliated or approved candidates can be nominated and elected. China differs from North Korea in that it does not have a dictator figurehead, but is instead controlled solely by the Chinese Communist Party. A BBC News profile describes how the Chinese government works to retain power:

"Under Communist rule since 1949, China has moved away from the Maoist radicalism that led to millions of deaths in the 1950s

and 1960s, but the party has kept a tight grip on state and society, saying the suppression of dissent is justified by the need for stability. The authorities still crack down on any signs of opposition and send outspoken dissidents to labour camps (BBC Monitoring, China).”

Combining these methods with limited, single-party elections has allowed the Chinese Communist Part to maintain its strong grip on China.

Egypt

Egypt, like China, is a country with a long and varied history. Taken over as a British protectorate in 1914, a series of military coups led to the declaration of an Egyptian republic at the end of 1952. Involved in many Middle Eastern conflicts over the following decades, Egypt experienced a great deal of internal discord in the last three years following the overthrow of President Mubarak during the Arab Spring in 2011. Since then, in 2011 the military rule gave way to the short-lived presidency of Mohammed Morsi, who was also ousted by disgruntled citizens with military support. The army chief Abdul Fattah al-Sisi won the presidency last year, although the control of power is still tenuous in Egypt (BBC Monitoring, Egypt).

As the largest Arab country in the world (BBC Monitoring, Egypt), Egypt has nearly 87 million people, with 99.6% identifying as Egyptian. Arabic is the official Egyptian language, although many educated citizens speak English and French. There are not many divisions along ethnic or lingual lines, but religion does cause some tensions in the country. 90% of Egyptians identify as Sunni Muslim, and 10% identify under several Christian sects, most notably Coptic Orthodox. These two groups have experienced conflicts throughout Egypt’s history, especially with the recent outbreaks of Muslim extremism in the Middle East, some of which has targeted Egypt’s Christian minority (The World Factbook, BBC Monitoring, Egypt).

Egypt’s economy is concentrated along the Nile River (BBC Monitoring, Egypt). Its national GDP is 28th highest in the world, but once again masks a relatively low GDP per capita. Egypt’s GDP growth rates are positive but low. Egypt’s highest economic sector is services, is due in part to a high level of tourism. Industry and agriculture trail behind services. This country’s economic situation is not expected to improve soon, as “rapid population growth and the limited amount of arable land are straining the country’s resources and economy, and continuing political turmoil has paralysed government efforts to address the problems,” according to a BBC

News profile. *See Table 2

The government which oversees The Arab Republic of Egypt — Egypt's official name — has been in turmoil in the last few years with government structures in a state of flux. Currently, the executive branch has a president — the aforementioned army chief Fattah al-Sisi —, and a prime minister, Ibrahim Mehlab. The legislative branch, which used to be bicameral, was dissolved last year, turned into the unicameral House of Representatives. The judicial branch has two major national courts, the Court of Cassation, which oversees legal cases, and the Supreme Constitutional Court, which reviews the constitutionality of laws (The World Factbook).

There has not been a firmly established electoral system for several years in Egypt. Fattah al-Sisi won the presidential election in May of 2014 with 96.6% of the vote, leading many to question the legitimacy of the election. The legislative elections have yet to be held, but are projected for 2015, although whether these elections will be majoritarian, proportional, or mixed list has yet to be decided (The World Factbook). Egypt's leaders have largely been reliant on the support of the military for retaining power. Those leaders who have lost military support have lost their position shortly thereafter (BBC Monitoring, Egypt).

Mexico

Mexico has been in the news for its continuing struggles at maintaining a monopoly on the use of force within its borders — a defining characteristic of any successful state — with “one of the highest rates of kidnappings in the world,” and 47,500 deaths from drug related violence since 2006 (BBC Monitoring, Mexico). In addition to dealing with drug cartels, the Mexican government also struggles to address the rights of indigenous Mexican groups (BBC Monitoring, Mexico). The government has also been accused of severe human rights violations, including the disappearance of over 200 people (The World Factbook).

In addition to these indigenous people, who account for around 30% of Mexico's total population, 60% of people identify as mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish), and 10% identify as white or other. Spanish is Mexico's official language, and 92.7% of people speak it, with the remainder speaking several different indigenous languages. Roman Catholics make up 82.7% of the population, while several minority Christian sects make up the other 13.3% (The World Factbook).

The Mexican economy, despite a sharp decline in 2008, has recovered, and is currently the 2nd largest Latin American economy (BBC Monitoring, Mexico), and the world's 11th largest. Mexico's GDP per capita is the highest of the four selected nations. Mexico's economy has a very small agriculture sector, and services make up the majority of the economy (The World Factbook). *See Table 2

Mexico, known as the United Mexican States, is a federal republic, with a bicameral legislative branch, split into the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, an executive branch with a president and a cabinet, and a judicial branch with 12 justices divided into "civil, criminal, administrative, and labor panels." The system is based in large part off of the United States government (The World Factbook). For 70 years, "politics were dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. But elections in 1997 saw a resurgent opposition break what was in effect a one-party system behind a democratic facade (BBC Monitoring)." The opposition group, the National Action Party (PAN), maintained control until 2012, when the PRI regained the presidency with candidate Enrique Pena Nieto, Mexico's current president (The World Factbook). "Promising it would not return to its authoritarian ways," the Institutional Revolutionary Party has governed for the last two years, waging an increased offensive against cartels (BBC Monitoring).

Mexico's elections are similar to the USA's, although politicians cannot be reelected once they serve a term. Despite similarities to America's electoral system, there is corruption and unfair elections in Mexico, which hinder the prevalence of democracy there. In a news article for The Guardian, Mark Weisbrot interviewed a member of the Mexican political watchdog group, Civic Alliance, about the 2006 Mexico election. The member, named Eduardo Huchim, said, "It was neither a clean nor fair election. This was bribery on a vast scale. It was perhaps the biggest operation of vote-buying and coercion in the country's history (Weisbrot)." In addition to vote-buying, Mexican elections have also suffered from the PRI's longtime media monopoly over Mexican television (BBC Monitoring, Mexico). This has led many to question the true nature of democracy in Mexico.

COMPARING NORTH KOREA, CHINA, EGYPT, AND MEXICO

Each country has a long and varied history. Both North Korea and China have a long history of many dynasties, some of which were very long lasting. The Goryeo dynasty, for which Korea got its name, lasted well over 500 years, making it one of the world's longest running dynasties. These lengthy empires may have familiarized North Koreans and Chinese citizens with the

rule of single, all-powerful rulers or groups, creating cultures that are more accepting of these leadership styles. Egypt also has a long history of omnipotent pharaohs. However, these empires dissolved far earlier than their Asian equivalents: Egypt has been conquered many times after it was first taken over by the Assyrians in 669 BC (BBC Monitoring, Egypt). This could have familiarized the Egyptian people with patterns of violent overthrow, which still continue today. Finally, Mexico's history is somewhat different. A long series of indigenous cultures (including the Mayan and Aztec) gave way to Spanish conquest in 1519, which eventually led to an independent Mexican republic. This initial republic turned into a dictatorship, which was overthrown, and a second republic was established. This republic has lasted until the present day, but has faced many abuses of power, and until recently, it was characterized as "a one-party system behind a democratic facade (BBC Monitoring, Mexico)." This may have familiarized Mexican citizens with democratic institutions that are abused by those in power.

Economically, North Korea lags far behind the other three countries, in that it has a very low GDP and GDP per capita. This contrasts with China, in that China has a very high GDP, but a very uneven distribution of wealth. Egypt is similar to China in this respect, although it has both lower GDP and GDP per capita. Finally, Mexico has the best GDP and GDP per capita ratio of the four countries. Both North Korea and China are communist states, which contribute to the centralization of power within the countries, a centralization which cannot be challenged if communist ideals are to be achieved. Egypt and Mexico have far more open economic models, which allow both countries to engage in international trade and diplomacy more freely. In terms of the sector breakdown, North Korea relies mainly on industry, China has a fairly even three-way split, and Egypt and Mexico both have service driven economies. *See Table 2

Socially, each country has a largely homogenous ethnic population. North Korea and China have large areligious populations, whereas Egypt and Mexico each have religious majorities, namely Sunni Muslim and Roman Catholic, respectively.

Centralization of Power

Although North Korea, China, and Egypt all label themselves as "republics," it is Mexico that actually comes the closest to meeting the guidelines of an actual republic. North Korea is, in reality, a "communist state" and a "one-man dictatorship (The World Factbook)," with power concentrated in the hands of Kim Jong-Un and the Korean Workers Party. North Korea, in

effect, has the most centralized government of the four selected countries, and one of the most centralized governments worldwide. China is not far behind, as a communist state where power is held by the ruling party, the Chinese Communist Party, instead of in the hands of one person. This means that power is also highly centralized, although it is spread throughout a party instead of an individual. Egypt is still struggling to lay the foundations of democracy, and the military has a great deal of power. The level of influence of various parties and the citizens themselves is still up in the air. Mexico has many of the important underpinnings of democracy, like an established electoral system and political pluralism, but still suffers from corruption. Mexico does have the least centralized government (at least at the moment), with 31 administrative divisions, three major political parties, and four minor parties, meaning that power is less centralized (The World Factbook).

Elections in North Korea give citizens almost no options, and the options they do have are pre-approved. Selected candidates are almost guaranteed victory. Elections in China give citizens more options, but all candidates are still members of the CCP and are expected to uphold CCP ideals. Egypt's elections are still in flux, and some have argued that the specter of military force threatens the reliability of election results (The World Factbook). Mexico's election results have also been unreliable, with bribery and media abuses allowing certain parties and candidates to obtain advantages at the polls.

Cultural Values on Privacy and Control

Both North Korea and China have a shared history with two institutions which have likely had a significant influence on their cultural values concerning privacy and control — Confucianism, and the Mandate of Heaven.

Confucianist values emphasize the importance of *hsiao* and *te*. *Hsiao* is filial piety, or reverence to one's parents. This reverence should also be extrapolated to "family, friends, society, and mankind (The Main Concepts of Confucianism)." This reverence means that the individual should defer to the wisdom or power of their elder or superior; this draws a parallel between the reverence of citizens to the strength of the Kim Jong-un in North Korea and the CCP in China. *Te* is:

"Power by which men are ruled; the power of moral example (the whole art of government consists in the art of being honest). 1.

The patterns of prestige are used in the service of governance of the

country. 2. Government is good if it can maintain (1) economic sufficiency, (2) military sufficiency, and (3) confidence of the people (The Main Concepts of Confucianism).”

This encourages North Koreans and Chinese citizens to support their ideological rulers on the premise that they try to establish economic and military strength. It is debatable whether or not the North Korean or Chinese governments maintain the confidence of their people; many surveys of citizens are considered unreliable, as citizens conceal their true opinions for fear of reprisals.

Both North Korea and China also have a history of leaders justifying their rule with the Mandate of Heaven. “Whereas Medieval Europeans legitimized their ruling authority by the divine right of kings, Confucian societies used a similar concept called the Mandate of Heaven. The Mandate of Heaven indicated divine approval of a king’s right to rule (The Mandate of Heaven).” Especially in North Korea, this sentiment is still relevant, as the Kim line has worked to establish a “cult of personality” that equates the family with gods. Although China may have moved away from this practice, there is still a great reverence for Mao Zedong, the founder of the People’s Republic of China. His picture adorns currency, buildings, and cultural landmarks, and he is, in many ways, deified.

Both of these institutions encourage the individual to put the collective interest ahead of their own. Putting faith in a competent ruler is important, to the point where individual rights to privacy are not as critical as they are in the West. There is a theory of Asian Values, which says: “Asians tend to value community... Asians appreciate order and harmony, they value... hard work, respect for leaders and family loyalty (DeBary).” In this respect, both North Korean and Chinese citizens give control to their leaders in the name of social order, including their right to freely practice journalism, which can promote social disorder.

Egypt and Mexico, on the other hand, have far more convoluted histories that lack this cultural emphasis on social unity. This can be seen in both countries tumultuous histories, where regimes rose and fell quickly. Although both countries have a history of various institutions, including Islam in Egypt and Roman Catholicism in Mexico, these are primarily religious institutions instead of ideological institutions. Both of these religions stress reference to elders, but these values, it could be argued, are less a part of a collective cultural consciousness.

Access To Information Technology

Access to technology — specifically information technology — allows individuals greater access to news media. When citizens have free access to the Internet, governments struggle to limit what these citizens can see. According to a Freedom House report on Internet freedom, “the internet is a crucial medium through which people can express themselves and share ideas and has become an increasingly important tool through which democracy and human rights activists mobilize (Freedom House).” We look at each country’s access to information technology through three pieces of data: computer access per 100 people, mobile cell phone subscriptions per 100 people, and Internet users per 100 people.

According to a United Nations report from 2006 (the most recent available), there is no data on North Korea’s computer access, although many reports guess that it is low. China falls in the 12.55-25.36 per 100 people percentile. Egypt, interestingly, falls below China in percentile group. Mexico has the highest computer penetration (MDG Gap Task Force). *See Table 3

In terms of mobile phone subscriptions, North Korea is once again the lowest. China has the second highest number, at 89. Egypt has the most cell subscriptions of all with 122 subscriptions per 100 people, indicating that some people have multiple subscriptions. Mexico has the second lowest (Mobile Cellular Subscriptions). This data set is interesting, in that it indicates that Egyptians consider cell phone access very important. A fact to support this is that one can see the use of mobile phones as very important to the Arab Spring rebellions. *See Figure 1 & Table 3

Finally, we look at Internet access per 100 people. North Korea has 0 Internet users per 100 people. The only people allowed to use the Internet in North Korea are approved, high-level government officials, who can only use Korea’s Intranet system (Freedom House). China once again comes in second. Egypt is once again the highest. Mexico has 43.5 Internet users per 100 people. Although China has a high number of Internet users, it’s important to recognize that China intensely censors the Internet that its citizens have access to. Firewalls, bandwidth throttling, and thousands of individuals are employed to remove content that slanders the CCP. Neither Egypt nor Mexico filters Internet content (Freedom House). *See Figure 1 & Table 3

Private, Professional Journalism

The profession of journalism is also important to democracy. In countries where private, professional, unbiased journalism exists, journalists can freely report on government wrong doing, thereby creating social unrest or directing discontent toward specific areas of government.

In North Korea, there is no true, professional journalism profession. “All domestic journalists are members of the ruling party, and all media outlets serve as mouthpieces for the regime. State-owned outlets dominate the media landscape,” according to Freedom House. Because of this, North Korean journalists censor themselves and write articles that praise the regime. Television and radio stations are controlled by the state and therefore air propaganda. Although outside reporters have attempted to establish free journalistic enterprises in North Korea, these operations are under-cover and are not accessible by the majority of North Koreans (Freedom House).

In China, the press is more established and more free but is still lacking in many areas. Although the constitution guarantees freedom of speech — journalists are severely limited in reality. “The CCP maintains direct control over news coverage through its Central Propaganda Department (CPD) and corresponding branches at lower administrative levels that determine the boundaries of permissible reporting (Freedom House).” These agencies limit what journalists can report on, and even who can report, as journalists need to obtain a government permit to begin reporting.

“Only the misbehaviors of local officials, local governmental work, and rich individuals are criticized and reported; the political system, the central leadership, the ruling Party and high-ranking officials are left untouched. Such investigative journalistic work is thought to help the ruling Party regain its legitimacy, instead of challenging its authoritarian rule (Tong).”

Articles that criticize the government are removed, and journalists are punished, fined, or imprisoned. Clearly, this gives the Chinese government a great deal of control over journalists, although this control is less extensive than North Korea's.

Egypt's press situation has been constantly changing in the last few years, so it's hard to determine if private, professional, unbiased journalism exists in the country. Since Mubarak's downfall, many state run media outlets have been privatized, and private media outlets have gained greater popu-

larity. The Internet is not censored, so journalists can freely report online. Although there is less direct government censorship than in North Korea or China, journalists in Egypt often self-censor, trying not to anger groups that fall on the various sides of Egypt's highly polarized political landscape. After the overthrow of Mubarak and Morsi's regimes, the military cracked down on media sources that had supported these regimes (Freedom House). One example was this summer, after Fattah al-Sisi's election, with the arrest and jailing of three al-Jazeera correspondents after they were accused of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood (BBC Monitoring, Egypt).

Finally, Mexico's press is far freer than the aforementioned countries. Freedom of expression is established in the constitution. Reporters are free to report what they want, without direct government censorship. The PRI controlled the primary media outlets for many years, but this control has been broken up since the PAN victory in the 1997 election. However, Televisa is the nation's largest television provider, and still controls 70% of the nation's market. The government is currently working to split up this monopoly (Freedom House). Private, professional journalism does exist in Mexico, but the threat of violence toward journalists has limited reporters for many years. Mexico, in fact, has the second highest number of murdered journalists in the world, with many other reporters being kidnapped, facing property damage, and threats of violence. This violence is committed, in large part, with total impunity. In this respect, Mexican journalism is hindered, not by the government itself (at least directly), but by private parties, like cartels, or by singular politicians looking to send a message (Knoll). **See Figure 2*

CONCLUSIONS

As we can see, there are a plethora of factors that affect how much control a government has over the press within its borders. North Korea, which has the lowest press freedom scores, also exhibits a very strong central government, cultural ideologies that promote public interest over privacy, limited citizen access to information technology, and state domination over the media.

China is very similar to North Korea, in that it shares similar cultural ideologies and highly centralized government power. Journalism in China is also restrained by the government. However, citizens in China have greater access to information technology. Despite government firewalls, censorship, and the threat of punishment, citizens are still able to obtain information that is not government approved with tools like Tor that allow them

to access restricted websites (Long). Possibly because of this, China scores slightly higher than North Korea in press freedom.

Egypt differs from both North Korea and China in several important ways; the government's power is less centralized, as it is still not fully established. Egypt also lacks longstanding cultural ideologies that inhibit individual rights to privacy in the name of public interest and social order. Although computer access is somewhat average, citizens have above average access to cell phones, and mobile devices and social media's prominent role in the Arab Spring have certainly limited the government's ability to control the media. Professional press institutions exist, although their ability to report freely is limited by government threats of jail sentences, and outside groups threatening (and sometimes harming) journalists. These variables probably contribute to Egypt's higher press freedom scores.

Mexico falls on the far end of the spectrum, with the highest press freedom scores. Mexico has a weaker central government, cultural values of privacy, open access to technology (although computer and cell ownership numbers are low, citizens have open access to these resources) and private, professional journalism. However, most surprisingly, Mexico has the highest number of journalists killed or harmed of all four countries. This is most probably attributable to the impunity with which perpetrators can harm journalists, and the lack of adequate protections in place to protect journalists. *See *Figure 2*

What can we conclude? It seems straightforward that the strength and centralization of power in the government is directly related to the ability of said government to control the press. As we move through the four selected countries, press freedom rises as government power wanes.

Cultural values concerning public interest and social order are of arguable importance. The countries where these values are present (North Korea and China) both have a number of variables that limit the freedom of the press; these values could merely be responsible for societal acceptance of government control, rather than a cause of the control itself. That being said, the two countries that place greater social value on privacy (Egypt and Mexico) have higher press freedom. There are undoubtedly parallels here.

Access to information technology is one area where our theory falters. Although North Korea exhibits low technological access and low press freedom, the other three countries have levels of technological access that are fairly even in most areas, despite their differing press freedom scores. One

thing we can learn from this is that while access to information technology is important, the ability to access uncensored information is more important. This is reflected in the press freedom scores of the four countries.

There was also a close relation between level of press freedom and the existence of private professional press. In the countries lacking private press (North Korea and China), press freedom scores are low. In the countries with private press (Egypt and Mexico), press freedom scores were higher. However, both Egypt and Mexico's press freedom scores are still low compared to the rest of the world. This is probably because of the high rates of violence and legal prosecution toward journalists in both countries.

In conclusion, our theory was supported in that the ability of an "undemocratic" state to control its press was related to the centralization and strength of its government, cultural values on privacy, and the condition of private, professional journalism in the country. However, the idea that press freedom is tied to citizen's access to information technology was refuted, because China's information technology access levels are relatively high, despite its low press freedom levels. An additional piece of information which we learned could be tied to the theory is that there is a relationship between levels of violence toward the press and press freedom in states with weaker central government, cultural values on privacy, and private press.

WORKS CITED

- Armstrong, Charles K. "Some Historical Perspective." PBS. PBS, 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- BBC Monitoring. "China Profile." BBC News. British Broadcasting Corporation, 2 Oct. 2014. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.
- BBC Monitoring. "Egypt Profile." BBC News. British Broadcasting Corporation, 11 Nov. 2014. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.
- BBC Monitoring. "Mexico Profile." BBC News. British Broadcasting Corporation, 28 Nov. 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- BBC Monitoring. "North Korea Country Profile." BBC News. British Broadcasting Corporation, 14 Oct. 2014. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.
- DeBary, WM T. "Asian Values and Human Rights." Google Books. Harvard College, 1998. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- Freedom House. Freedom House, n.d. Web. 6 Dec. 2014.
- "Internet Users (per 100 People)." Internet Users (per 100 People). The World Bank, 2013. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.
- Knoll, Andalucía. "Mexico Is a Killing Ground for Journalists | VICE News." VICE News RSS. The VICE Channels, 29 Apr. 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- Long, Tara. "What Is The Dark Web?" YouTube. Discovery News, 12 Nov. 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- "The Main Concepts of Confucianism." The Main Concepts of Confucianism. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- "The Mandate of Heaven - CHOSON ARCHIVES." The Mandate of Heaven - CHOSON ARCHIVES. The Korea Society, n.d. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.
- MDG Gap Task Force. "The Global Partnership for Development: Making Rhetoric a Reality M." United Nations. United Nations, 2012. Web. 5 Dec. 2014.

“Mobile Cellular Subscriptions (per 100 People).” Mobile Cellular Subscriptions (per 100 People). The World Bank, 2013. Web. 5 Dec. 2014.

Pierson, David. “In China, Social Divisions Are Written in a Little Red Booklet.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, 12 Dec. 2012. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.

“Polity IV Project: Home Page.” Polity IV Project: Home Page. Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research, 5 June 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.

“Quotes About Freedom Of The Press.” (8 Quotes). Goodreads, n.d. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.

“Reporters Without Borders.” Reporters Without Borders. Reporters Without Borders, 10 Mar. 2014. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.

Tong, Jingrong. “Investigative Journalism in China.” Google Books. ContinuumBooks, 2011. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.

Weisbrot, Mark. “Irregularities Reveal Mexico’s Election Far from Fair.” Theguardian. The Guardian, 9 July 2012. Web. 5 Dec. 2014.

“The World Factbook.” Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency, 15 Aug. 2014. Web. 05 Dec. 2014.

Xu, Beina. “Media Censorship in China.” Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, 25 Sept. 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.

“1083 Journalists Killed since 1992.” Journalists Killed since 1992. Committee To Protect Journalists, 16 Oct. 2014. Web. 07 Dec. 2014.

APPENDIX

Table 1

Country (Most Democratic-Least Democratic)	Freedom House Score (0-100)	Freedom House Rank (1-197)	Freedom House Status	RWB Freedom Index Score (0-100)	RWB Freedom Index Rank (1-180)	RWB Freedom Index Status	Polity IV Status
North Korea	97	197	"Not free"	81.96	179	"Very serious situation"	Autocracy
China	84	183	"Not free"	72.91	175	"Very serious situation"	Autocracy
Egypt	68	155	"Not free"	51.89	159	"Difficult situation"	Closed anocracy
Mexico	61	132	"Partly free"	45.04	152	"Difficult situation"	Democracy

Table 2

Country	GDP	GDP World Rank	GDP Growth Rate	GDP per Capita	Agriculture Percentage	Industry Percentage	Services Percentage
North Korea	\$40 billion	167th	1.8%	\$1,800	23.4%	47.2%	29.4%
China	\$13.39 trillion	3rd	7%	\$9,800	33.6%	30.3%	36.1%
Egypt	\$551.4 billion	28th	1.8%	\$6,600	14.5%	37.5%	48%
Mexico	\$1.845 trillion	11th	1.2%	\$15,600	3.6%	36.6%	59.8%

Table 3

Country	Computer Access (per 100 people)	Mobile Cell Phone (per 100 people)	Internet Access (per 100 people)
North Korea	No data	10	0
China	12.55-25.36	89	45.8
Egypt	4.54-12.55	122	49.6
Mexico	25.36-49.76	86	43.5

Figure 1

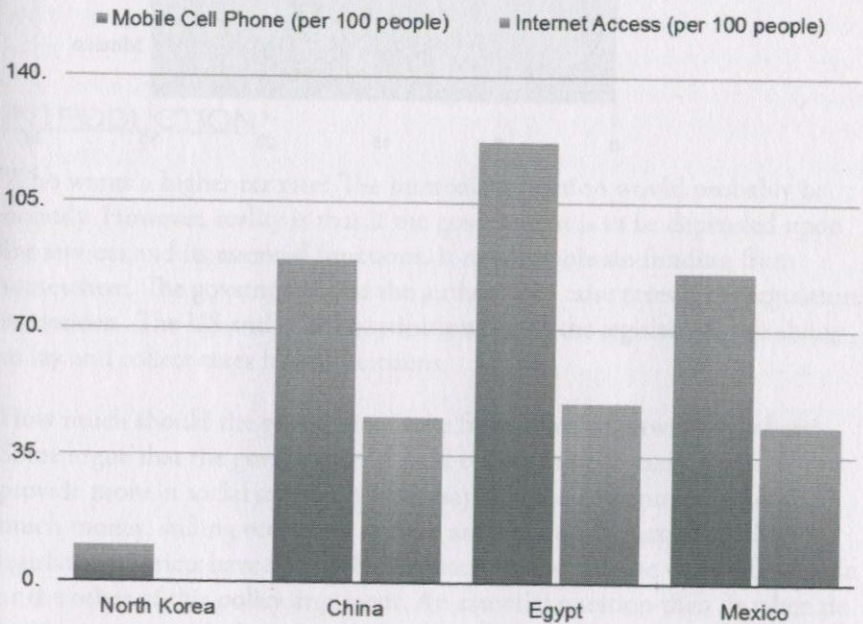
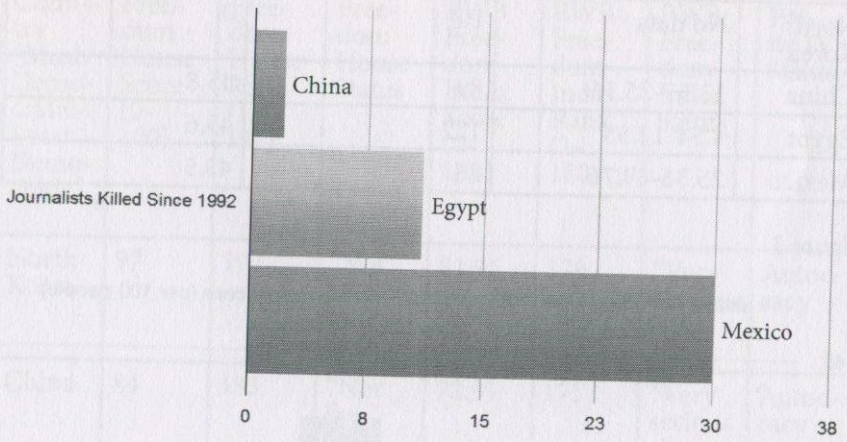


Figure 2

Data pulled from CPJ site "1083 Journalists Killed since 1992."



Country	Area	Population (Billion)	GDP (Billion)	GDP per Capita	Life Expectancy (Years)	Human Development Index
North Korea	East Asia	25.0	1.0	\$1,800	75.4%	0.724
China	East Asia	1.37	7.5	\$5,500	73.5%	0.719
Egypt	North Africa	81.4	1.0	\$1,200	72.3%	0.681
Mexico	North America	112.5	1.2	\$13,800	76.4%	0.804