

Press freedom and development

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Press freedom is, I believe, an important condition indeed an integral component of development, and I shall use the term that I have been given to discuss why that is a plausible view.

But let me, first, begin with a word of caution. The press is not always an easy object to love. It is not, of course, hard to see why authoritarian rulers have reasons mostly terrible reasons to hate the free press, and that is perhaps a part of the glory of the press. But frustration with the press is by no means confined only to dictators and potentates. There is the issue of invasion of privacy which can ruin some lives, but no less importantly there is also the more common problem of being misreported. Indeed, when we are wrongly reported in a newspaper, as happens from time to time, it can be extremely upsetting, since the false attributions typically communicate a lot faster and much more prominently than any subsequent corrections can. I have had the experience, for example, of saying that the world civilizations are not in conflict with each other, and being reported in a prominent newspaper that I believed that the world civilizations are in tremendous conflict. It was not, I have to confess, much of a consolation to be told that the diligent reporter had only missed one word "not." If we tear our hair in frustration, it is mainly because we cannot find suitably accessible journalists to tear their hair in comforting abandon.

There is also a more serious reason indeed a different type of reason for us to be upset with the media. Given the power of the press, it is easy for us to see how they can do a good deal of good to the society. When that task is neglected (or worse), it can indeed be very disconcerting. We have occasion enough to be disappointed at the unfulfilled promise of the free media and the corresponding loss of a potential benefit. This is a serious enough issue, and I shall come back to reasons:

(1) the **intrinsic importance** of freedom of speech and public communication which are inescapably linked with the freedom of the press;

(2) the **informational role** of a free press in disseminating knowledge and allowing critical scrutiny;

(3) the **protective function** of press freedom in giving voice to the neglected and the disadvantaged, and thus providing greater human security; and

(4) the **constructive contribution** of free public discussion in the formation of values and in the emergence of shared public standards that are central to social justice.

Let me briefly discuss each in turn.

The Intrinsic Importance of Freedom

I have argued elsewhere (particularly in my book *Development as Freedom*) that the assessment of development cannot be divorced from the lives that people can lead and the real freedoms that they actually enjoy. Development cannot be judged merely by the accumulation of inanimate objects of use, such as a rise of the gross national product (GNP) or technological progress. For responsible human beings, the focus must ultimately be on whether they have the freedom to do what they have reason to value. This makes freedom the crucial end of development, and

given that basic recognition, it is easy to see that freedom of speech and communication must be among the constitutive components of development.

Freedom of speech, in this perspective, does not have to be justified by its indirect effects, but can be seen to be part and parcel of what we value and have reason to value. It must, therefore, figure directly in any accounting of development. The absence of a free press and the suppression of people's ability to speak to and communicate with each other directly impoverishes human freedom and impairs development, even if the authoritarian country that imposes this suppression happens to have a high GNP per head or have accumulated a large mass of physical wealth.

The Informational Role of the Press

I turn now to the informational function of the press a part of its instrumental role. This function relates not only to specialized reporting (for example, on scientific advances or on cultural innovations), but also to keeping people generally informed on what is going on where. Furthermore, investigative journalism can also unearth information that would have otherwise gone unnoticed or even unknown. All this is so obvious that I hardly need elaborate on them.

I shall presently discuss the protective function of press freedom in giving people a hearing and a voice. But in the context of the present discussion of the informational role of a free press, let me comment that rapid dissemination of information can also make a contribution to protection and security. Consider, for example, the Chinese famine of 1958-61, in which between 23 and 30 million people died. Despite the fact that the Chinese government was quite committed to eliminating hunger in the country, it did not substantially revise its disastrous policies (associated with the ill-advised "Great Leap Forward") during the three famine years. This was possible because of the lack of a political opposition and absence of an independent critique from the media (on which more presently), but the Chinese government itself did not see the need to change its policies partly because it did not have enough information on the event to which the Great Leap Forward had failed. Because of the absence of an uncensored press and other modes of public communication, the local officials across China were under the impression that while they themselves had failed, the other regions had done well. This gave incentive to each local unit collectives or communes in various formations to concoct their agricultural data to pretend that they too were doing well enough. The totality of these reported numbers vastly inflated the Chinese government's own estimate of the total amount of food grains that the country had. Indeed, it led the Chinese central authorities, at the peak of the famine, to the mistaken belief that they had 100

million more metric tons of grain than they actually had.

The information that is lost as a result of censorship of the press by an authoritarian government can devastatingly mislead that government itself. I do not wish to make the press more swollen headed than it already is, by invoking William Cowper and saying that the press, like God, "moves in a mysterious way! His wonders to perform." But whether or not the press is swollen headed, it is certainly true that censorship of the press cannot only keep the citizens in the dark, it can also starve the government itself of vitally important information.

Confrontation and Security

I turn now to the confrontational role of the press in giving the government the political incentive to respond to the needs of the people. The rulers have the incentive to listen to what people want if they have to face their criticism and seek their support in elections. It is, thus, not astonishing at all that no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press. The Chinese famine of 1958-61 could decimate people tens of millions over three years without leading to a rapid policy revision not just because the government had wrong information (itself

already killed millions, ended.

The protective role of the press needs recognition and emphasis. When things are routinely good and smooth, the sheltering role of a free press and the related democratic freedoms are typically not desperately missed. But they come into their own when things get fouled up, for one reason or another. The recent problems of East and South-East Asia bring out, among many other things, the penalty of limitations on democratic freedom, of which press freedom is a part. Indeed, when the financial crisis in this region (from 1997 onwards) led to a general economic recession, the protective power of democratic freedoms not unlike that which prevents famines was badly missed in some countries in the region. Those who were newly dispossessed often did not have the voice they needed. The victims in, say, Indonesia or South Korea the unemployed or those newly made economically redundant may or may not have taken very great interest in democratic freedoms when things had been going up and together for all. But when things came tumbling down and divided they fell (as people standardly do in any large economic decline), the lack of democratic institutions including a free press tended to keep their voices muffled and ineffective. Not surprisingly, civil and democratic rights, including a free press, became part of the

many things that we might have good reason to value if they were feasible such as complete immunity from illnesses of all kinds, or even immortality. But we do not indeed cannot see them as needs, precisely because we believe them to be infeasible. Our conception of needs relates not only to the comprehension of the nature and extent of deprivations, but also to our appreciation of what can or cannot be done about them. These evaluations and understandings can be strongly influenced by the freedom and vigour of public discussion. A free press can be a great ally of the process of development through, among other connections, its constructive role in value formation.

Uses of Press Freedom

Before I end, let me come back to the postponed questions on limitations of practice that can make the press less effective and sometimes even less than benign in its social functioning. A criticism that is often made is that the newspapers may be far from neutral in their presentation. This need not, in itself, be a fatal flaw, so long as different newspapers present disparate points of view, and between them, give voice to many distinct perspectives that call for attention.

The problem, however, arises from the fact that given a systematic bias in the press, this may not actually happen. In this context, the private ownership of newspapers has often been seen, with reason, to be a source of concern, and there have also been suspicions, which too can be reasonable, about the selective influence of advertisers. Hanne Swaffer, a British journalist, said in frustration, a quarter century ago: "Freedom of the press in Britain means freedom to print such of the proprietor's prejudices as the advertisers don't object to." That judgment is probably too cynical and unjustifiably harsh, but there are problems here, to which we must pay attention for better use of press freedom.

There is, in fact, no easy way of escaping the power of newspapers ownership. Newspaper establishments involve property, and it is hard to see that we can have arrangements through which newspaper owners own only that property and no other. In dealing with this issue, public ownership may not help either, since that would give the ruling government a special power that would, to a great extent, defeat the purpose of the freedom of the press.

It is useful in this context to invoke the idea of what John Kenneth Galbraith has called "countervailing powers." What is needed is not so much to obliterate any particular power, but to confront one power with another. In the present context, this would be an argument not only for the multiplicity of private ownership from different parts of the business world, but also for supplementing them with cooperative ownership as well as with ownership by independent bodies and statutory boards. The presence of other media, other than

newspapers, including radio, television, the internet, can also greatly help coverage and diversity. We have to rely, to a great extent, on the countervailing power of competition and confrontation to overcome the problem of bias.

There is also the different issue of the importance of journalistic ethics and commitment which was briefly flagged earlier. This is not just a matter of the honesty and objectivity of journalism (though they too can be importantly involved), but also one of initiative, imagination and special motivation which would be needed to break lesser grounds. For example, even though it is very easy to be forceful on very visible deprivations such as a famine or severe unemployment the importance of bringing less obvious adversities (such as non-extreme hunger or defective schooling arrangements) can also be very great. For example, while press freedom, along with other democratic freedoms, has certainly helped independent India to avoid major famines altogether in its entire half a century of existence (in contrast with what standardly happened in the British Raj), nevertheless less striking but also important deprivations (such as endemic under-nourishment, or persistent illiteracy, or inadequate health care) have not received the attention they deserve from the Indian press.

To overcome this what is needed is not only a fuller practice of journalistic initiative and enterprise, but also the development of dedicated pressure groups that focus forcefully on particular deprivations. This, too, in a broad sense, involves the invoking of countervailing powers to broaden the overall reach of the architecture of social institutions and activist alliances. There are examples of some success in a number of fields. For example, women's organizations and feminist groups in India have been able in recent years to give greater visibility and prominence to specific aspects of gender disparity, and have made a major contribution towards advancing public awareness and debate.

A Concluding Remark

So I conclude where I began. It is extremely important to see the critical importance of the freedom of the press in the process of development, but it is also necessary to seek ways and means of expanding its reach and securing its effective functioning. Press freedom does have several distinct and independently significant roles, including (1) its intrinsic importance as a constitutive part of development, (2) its informational function in broadening understanding across the society, (3) its protective role in reducing human insecurity and in preventing serious deprivations, and (4) its constructive contribution in the interactive and informed formation of values.

However, none of these functions is mechanical or automatic. There is need for commitment, but also for an adequately broad institutional structure with ample countervailing powers to secure range and impartiality. Press freedom deserves our strongest support, but the press has obligations as well as entitlements. Indeed, the freedom of the press defines both a right and a duty, and we have good reason to stand up for both.

Reproduced from the author's address at the General Assembly of the International Press Institute, 27-29 January, 2001, in New Delhi.

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connected, as I have just argued, with press censorship), but also because people were kept in the dark about the crises and the mortality, and since no newspaper was allowed to criticise the government.

A similar story can be seen in other major famines, whether we consider the Soviet famines of the 1930s, or the Cambodian famines of the 1970s, or the famines under African military dictatorships in the last three decades, or in Sudan or North Korea in the very recent past, not to mention the famines under colonial rule. Indeed, the Bengal famine of 1943, which I witnessed as a child, was made viable not only by a lack of democracy, but also by severe restrictions on the local press on reporting and criticism. The disaster received attention only after Ian Stephens, the courageous editor of *The Statesman* of Calcutta (then British owned) decided to break ranks by publishing graphic accounts and stinging editorials on October 14 and 16, 1943. This was immediately followed on October 18 by a "mea culpa" letter on the size of the death toll by the Governor of Bengal to the Secretary of State for India in London, followed by further confessions of "culpitas" in the subsequent days, followed by heated Parliamentary discussions in Westminster, and followed ultimately by the beginning at last of public relief arrangements the following month, when the famine, which had

demands on which the recent agitations and rebellions have focused, and there has already been remarkable progress in political and civil rights in several countries in East and South-East Asia (including, of course, South Korea and Indonesia).

Constructive Role and Value Formation

I turn now to the fourth reason for the centrality of press freedom, along with other democratic and civil rights. Informed and unregulated formation of our values requires openness of communication and arguments, and the freedom of the press cannot but be crucial to this process. Indeed, value formation is an interactive process, and the press has a major role in making these interactions possible. As new standards emerge (for example the norm of smaller families and less frequent child bearing), it is public discussion as well as proximate emulation that spread the new norms across a region and ultimately between regions.

Even the very concept of what is to count as a "basic need" tends to be dependent on public discussion on what is important, and no less importantly, on what is feasible. Human beings suffer from miseries and deprivations of various kinds some more amenable to alleviation than others. The totality of the human predicament would be an impossible basis for a practical discussion of our "basic needs." Indeed, there are

the British journalist, said in frustration, a quarter century ago: "Freedom of the press in Britain means freedom to print such of the proprietor's prejudices as the advertisers don't object to." That judgment is probably too cynical and unjustifiably harsh, but there are problems here, to which we must pay attention for better use of press freedom.

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Euro becomes the second most important currency

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HUSSAIN

THE dream of introducing a single currency for European countries has become a reality. Euro is in circulation from 1st January last year in 11 out of 15 member countries of the European Union. The Great Britain, Denmark and Norway, however, did not join in this single currency formula.

For the traveller within the 11 countries one currency will serve his/her purpose without entailing any hassle or loss. In the recent past a traveller, if he/she carried, for example, 3000 Deutsche Marks he/she was required to change the currency at every station that entailed commission charge each time. From now on a traveller would not be required to change Euro in those EU member-countries. Euro thus brought in a new era in the existing economic system.

It may be recalled that the question of the introducing one currency in Europe arose in 1960's when academic discussion began to bring the economic power of different countries in line with one another before introducing the single currency concept. After a decade of debates and discussions it was agreed in principle to have both political and economic union side by side.

The process of integration took a concrete shape (European Union) after the signing of the treaty of

Maastricht, which came into force on 1st November 1993. Actually it was signed on 11 December, 1992. Further steps were initiated by partner countries of Europe to achieve an economic and monetary union to be safeguarded by political union. The second Maastricht Summit of European Heads of State and Government, which was held on 16-17 June 1997, concentrated on economic and monetary union, the expansion of the European Union eastwards and a reform of

single market in the world.

For the introduction of single currency, fundamentally different approaches was adopted. Instead of harmonizing economic performance, member states were required to meet fixed minimum economic pre-conditions. It was conceived as convergence criteria.

In Madrid in 1989 the Heads of State and Government had issued instructions for an economic and monetary Union to be set up within the community. The Heads of State

Meanwhile, Gulf Cooperation Council at its recent summit decided to go for a single currency. As it stands Euro has been making its presence felt in the markets.

European Union itself including introduction of Euro, a single currency on 1st January 1999.

The expansion of membership of EU began with the negotiations with Scandinavian countries and Austria in the beginning of 1993. Ultimately Sweden, Finland and Austria became members of the European Union on 1st July 1995, but the Norwegians decided through a referendum on 28 November 1994 against membership.

Therefore, the European Union consisted of 15 members. The EU and five member-countries of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) established the European Economic Area (EAA) the largest

and Government in the meeting were steadfast in their determination to realise the concept of one single currency, the Euro, replacing the existing currencies of different European countries. Following months of extensive discussions between the governments of 15 European countries and the European Commission the Maastricht treaty, named after the Dutch town, was signed for introduction of the single currency. The former Chancellor of Germany Kohl and the President of France Chirac remained behind the scene for introducing the single currency despite opposition from some quarters including the Deutch Bank.

What are the convergence criteria? The first criterion relates to the rate of inflation countries will be admitted in the Euro zone provided they can produce evidence that these countries have successfully controlled inflation. The average rate of inflation must not have exceeded by more than 1.5 per cent points. If three European countries could show an average inflation rate of two per cent, these countries would be considered not to have an inflation rate higher than 3.5 per cent. They would be admitted in that case.

Sound financial policy constitutes the second criterion. After lengthy debates it was finally decided that the budget deficit should not exceed 3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and that government debt should not exceed 60 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Thirdly, there should be a sound monetary policy, apart from the price and financial policies. According to this criterion, one should be a member of the European Monetary System for at least two years before joining the "Euro Club" in order to demonstrate that the country has been pursuing sound monetary policy and that its currency must not have been devalued. Long term interest rates for capital investment may not deviate very far from the average trend existing in the best performing

member states.

Fourthly, each member state must guarantee that its Central Bank is independent and it provides no loans to finance the government budget.

The reason behind introduction of single currency is that business companies will reap benefit as a result of the elimination of currency risk. Tourists will also enjoy travelling in Euro zone because of the disappearance of foreign exchange costs. Henceforth, exporting companies will cease to calculate the cost of products in another currency or hedge against foreign exchange risk. Conversions into other currency, invoices in different currencies etc are the things of the past. Major exporting companies have completed the process of switching over the accounting system to Euro to deal with external trade. According to one estimate by the European Commission, considerably more than 40 billion Deutsche Marks could be accrued by export companies of Germany alone, which represents 0.5 per cent of EU's GDP.

With the introduction of Euro major changes are likely to effect not only in commodity markets but also in capital markets.

Today 50 per cent of the world trade is transacted in dollars. 15 per cent trade is transacted in German Deutsche Marks, while 5 per cent in Japanese yen. A stable Euro stands a very good chance of creating a new monetary centre of gravity in the heart of Europe in particular as predicted by Dr Ralf Zeppernick, Deputy Head of Department at German Federal Chancellery in Bonn in January 1998. I would like to quote here what former Chancellor of Germany Helmut Kohl had to say in 1997, "The Euro will help to unite the peoples of the European Union all the more closely and inseparably in an order based on peace and freedom." Another significant development is likely to emerge to the effect that Euro may act as a stabilizing factor on world currency markets and in particular on the dollar and the yen which has already been reflected in the recent money market. According to AFP early last month, Euro was worth 0.9497 to a dollar. In the international market Euro has already created an impact. As a result Britain, which did not join Euro zone to retain independent character of pound-sterling, is thinking aloud to join it now.

Pro-Euro campaigners in Britain which included trade unions of Britain close to governing Labour Party, and former exchequer of the opposition Conservative Party, Kenneth Clarke, think that Euro zone countries are forging ahead in economic growth outstripping Britain. The Labour Party is in favour of joining Euro zone while Conservative would like to monitor the performance of Euro for a period of five years before considering

joining the Euro club.

Meanwhile, a group of six Gulf Cooperation Council at its recent summit decided to go for a single currency. As it stands Euro has been making its presence felt in the markets.

As I recall both the Federal Chancellor Kohl and the British Prime Minister Tony Blair came publicly out against the fear, which is obviously still widespread in Asia,

about a fortification Europe after the introduction of the common European currency. Both of them spoke after the Summit of ASEM (European and Asian Countries) in London in April 1998. The introduction of the Euro has obviously left a deep impression in Asia.



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HOW TO DEFEND AGAINST A HIP FRACTURE

Besides the pain and hardship a hip fracture can cause, it often also restricts how well you get around. Both men and women have a greater risk of hip fracture after age 65, although women's risk is almost double that of men's, in fact, one out of every six women over age 65 breaks a hip. Although more hip fracture studies have been done on women than men, many of the safety suggestions researchers make are the same for both men and women. So, if a hip fracture is one hazard you'd just as soon avoid, here's how to keep your hips happy and safe:

If you take any long-acting benzodiazepines (such as Valium), talk with your doctor about stopping the drug completely or switching to a safer alternative. Anticonvulsant drugs used to control seizures may also caused problems.

Walk of exercise. Women who walk regularly have a 30 per cent lower risk of hip fracture than women who don't. Walking longer distances (more than just a few blocks) helps lower your risk of hip fractures even more. And, men, what's good for the goose is good for the gander, so slip on those sneakers and get started.

Maintain a normal weight for your height. Women who've lost a lot of weight since age 25 seem to have a higher hip fracture risk. A healthy weight is also important for men.

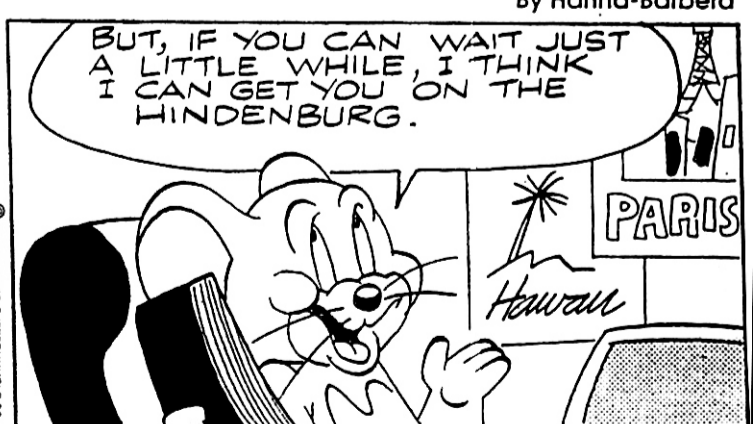
Have any vision problems, such as cataracts, glaucoma, or diabetic retinopathy (a disorder of the retina caused by diabetes), treated by your eye doctor.

Tomorrow: Before the doctor comes

TOM & JERRY



By Hanna-Barbera



James Bond



FEELING BETTER?



I'M PERFECTLY ABLE TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF. YOU KNOW!

