



Governmental threats for Media Freedom: Comparative Study of Asian Countries

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ABSTRACT

In Asian Countries media freedom is a controversial issue, on one side right to information and freedom of expression is provided on other side media regulations and Press laws are ready to curb the media freedom. In China the party and government are attempting to act as a media watch dog in fast changing world of open communication. Advertisements of India Shining, spiritualistic image making of political leaders are very common practice over Indian media. Pakistani military government uses a range of legal and constitutional powers to curb press freedom. The protesters urged the government to remove what they said was a curb on media freedom. “BBC News Show the condition of press in Nepal where after royal highjack. Media structure of Malaysia was changed since independence in 1957, official control over the media has gradually tightened through ownership of media by political parties and connected business individuals. The military also banned all electronic media in Indonesia from broadcasting the rallies. The media and the public managed to get news from international radio broadcast gathering at the Indonesia Democratic Party (PDI) at Jakarta. The majority of Cambodian media are not completely independent relying on source of funding from powerful people, including political parties politicians and rich. In Cambodia the term media is as widely used and understood as the term “press” there is press law in Cambodia but no media law.

Keywords: Media, Governance, control, democracy

1. Introduction

Alex de Tocqueville was perhaps the first major political thinker to analyze what was at that time a new and developing phenomenon - the emergence of the press as a powerful instrument of democracy. Media control to democracy is an old and well-known idea. The news media fulfils their 'Fourth estate' of democracy. Media encourage self-government by exposing people to different ideas, increasing people's capacity to exercise citizenship and judgment as well as scrutinizing the power. Theoretically media is essential to ensure that all voters possess adequate and equal information above the choices confronting them. Most government information systems have their origins in colonial information machinery, which passed down government directives and decisions to the people. Media effect on government was very high from past. The concept of media freedom is a cantankerous. It has raised several ideological volatile questions concerning how much freedom is enough. The structural concern about the media's role in democracy comes into variants. The first is the idea that journalist and editorial teams themselves are

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biased because they are self interested, ill-trained, inexperienced or are just under so impressive that they do not have the time to get things right. secondly, the media itself has been playing a major role in the promotion of good governance its watch dog role is well established in democratic polity. The new paradigm suggest that the media and civil society work closely together to strengthen process and structures of good governance in society on contrary

In most of countries governmental media has been continuously used by them for publishing policies and achievement of government. They work in the interest of governance and corporate power which have close associations. Several East Asian countries have scored among the lowest in the world in a recent global media freedom survey, while the United States was ranked just 22nd after mostly northern European countries and New Zealand. "An independent media either does not exist or journalists are persecuted and censored on a daily basis." (Reporters Without Borders, Paris). "Such freedom is threatened most in East Asia and the Middle East," the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said in a statement announcing its third worldwide index of press freedom. "In these countries, an independent media either does not exist or journalists are persecuted and censored on a daily basis. Freedom of information and the safety of journalists are not guaranteed there."

In Stalinist North Korea where the media are regarded as no more than a propaganda tool in hands of the ruling party came in bottom of the 167 countries and territories surveyed. Burma, which is ruled by a secretive military junta which took power in spite of democratic elections, was 165th in the index, with China at 162nd place, Vietnam 161st, and Laos 153rd, the survey found. Asia has different cultures different media settings & different way of operation but there is one similarity and that is governmental (miss) use of media by politicians and their associates.

Russia

According to the survey evidence television is the medium of choice in contemporary Russia as it is in other industrial nation. The two main state channels Russian public TV (ORT) on channel 1 and Russian radio and TV On channel 2 are most widely watched alternating a daily audience of 84 & 71 % responses of all respondents. Due to media publicity Putin himself had received a disproportionate share of coverage on state TV at the election of new Duma. Media in Russia enjoy more confidence than any other social institution more than the armed forces, the churches, political parties or the government.

Apart from the basic provision about freedom of speech and information, which are contained in the constitution as well as in federal legislation, there are particular responsibilities upon the media during the election campaign. These are set out in 1997 statute, modified in 1999 on basic guarantees of electoral rights and in laws on election to the Duma and to the presidency adopted in the June and December 1999 due to media publicity of ORT Duma contest become easier for Putin to get victory. There were few signs in March 2000 that state television had systematically been used to support the Putin's candidature and to discredit his opponent.

China

The peoples Republic of China (P.R.C.) is the world's most populous nation with one billion people and largest democratic country but there is heavy imposition of restriction on media in china, people are still afraid to criticize the government openly. The party and government are attempting to act as a media watch dog in fast changing world of open communication. But in Taiwan the freedom of speech has increased to unparallel level since 1987.

The communist party has liberalized the economy without liberalizing the political system. Government censors information and news, and the internet with its open access to global information and very different perspective on issues such as very different perspective on issues such as human right is seen by party

heads as [a] double edged system. Chinese leaders have recently called on the media to help expose corruption in the ruling Communist Party and among government officials, and to work harder to reflect the reality of the lives of ordinary people. But reporters are caught between top-down directives from Party propaganda bureaus and the vested interests of local corrupt officials and criminal organizations. China has spent large sums on setting up an Internet police force, which monitor the nation's 87 million Web users for "undesirable" content, either pornography or other vice sites, or political discussions and articles critical of the Communist Party's authoritarian rule. It is particularly sensitive to anti-Beijing sentiment in the Himalayan region of Tibet, where images of the exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama are banned, and in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, where members of the Muslim Uyghur minority have been jailed for reporting on pro-independence activities. Three radio hosts who were critical of Beijing have resigned from the same talk show in recent months, saying they were physically attacked and intimidated. The feisty and popular show, *Teacup in a Storm*, was permanently taken off the air in early October by the territory's Commercial Radio station.

Across the border in the Chinese province of Guangdong, where the Cantonese dialect is also widely used, three editors of the cutting-edge *Southern Metropolitan Daily* newspaper have been detained on corruption charges after the paper printed stories that embarrassed local party bosses. Two were imprisoned and one has been removed from his post. Authorities at China's prestigious Beijing University have effectively dismissed top media studies Professor Jiao Guobiao after he penned a blistering attack on the ruling party's propaganda machine, which tightly controls the news industry. China has invested billions of Yuan in a nationwide Internet surveillance system, and manages to block Web sites it considers sensitive from most of its netizens. Last summer, the authorities also closed a highly popular on-line bulletin board based out of the Beida campus, Yitahutu, causing outrage among staff and students alike.

India

This is a fundamental principal long established that the freedom of speech and of the press which is secured by the constitution does not confer on absolute right to seek or publish without responsibility ever one may choose. In India media is always misused by political parties for the purpose of misrepresentation many politicians particularly in south India Where they have started private channel either on their name or on their relatives. Jaya TV, Surya TV etc. are good examples. Advertisements of India Shining, spiritualistic image making of political leaders are very common practice over Indian media.

There are at least three major media traditions in modern India – that of a diverse, pluralistic and relatively independent press; of the manipulated-misused, state-controlled radio and television; and that of many autonomous, small media outfits of various subaltern groups and their organizations. These traditions are so diverse, their histories, functions and roles in society and politics so divergent, and the rules of the game pertaining to them so radically different that any attempt to speak in a generalized way of the 'media' in India today and locating it in 'democracy' appears far-fetched.

The face of Indian media has been fast changing with the growth of the Internet, the phenomenal rise of satellite and cable networks, the continuing growth of regional press, despite various challenges and the blurring of lines between news and entertainment. But there is a sort of 'crises in the present media due to processes of commercialization, mercerization and commoditization. This has led some to present a pessimistic view of the media, to emphasize the ascendancy of 'infotainment' over 'serious' reportage and analysis of politics. It is also often remarked that the quality of 'serious' political journalism is steadily declining, with a dilution in its substantive political content to the detriment of the democratic process. An opposite view asserts not that there is too little serious politics in the media, but too much. This is seen as a kind of information overload that bores audiences and diminishes public interest. Still others have argued that media is an elitist bourgeois construct, reflecting essentially bourgeois interests and values and conditions of existence and can thus never serve the genuine interests of the people as a whole. Despite its

democratic façade, it is said that the media remains exclusive, and people as a whole feel no real involvement in a process which appears to give them power but in reality does not.

There was also a fresh context, shaped by the rising politics of communal mobilization. A significant study by Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television: Religious Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Indian Public* (Cambridge University Press) shows how at one level the national television created a single visual regime, right across the country, for the first time. At another level, the Congress party wanted to seize this advantage. However, by playing the Hindu card, it was the Hindu Right that succeeded in changing the terms of political debate, entering into an era of authoritarian populism, more suited to the brave new world of economic liberalization.

Pakistan

In May 2003 Adnan Rehmat & Aslam Khan Says “Police prevented journalists from covering a protest by opposition legislators near the Punjab provincial legislature in Lahore. The next day the journalists boycotted proceedings of the Punjab Assembly, which was called off after ministers Chaudhry Iqbal and Raja Basharat expressed regret over the incident and promised action against the police officers responsible”. No moment has been dull this past year for the media in Pakistan, the gains and losses being dramatic in equal measures. Even as space for media grew by leaps and bounds largely in the broadcast realm so did attacks and intimidation, both in the print and electronic sectors, shrinking media freedoms for its practitioners. The paradox of a larger media canvas but fewer colors is a reflection of the ideological battle in Pakistan between conservative Islamist parties and the government agenda of enlightened moderation on the one side and the constant tug of war for freedom of expression and access to information between the media and civil society and the government on the other. President General Pervez Musharraf promulgated four press-related ordinances in the dying days of his military regime in October 2002. Their nature realized the fears of the journalistic community that they would exert a significant chilling effect on freedom of expression in Pakistan. Three of the four – the Press Council Ordinance, Registration Ordinance and Defamation Ordinance – not only restrict freedom of expression also but undermined the process of democratic transition by not leaving them to the new parliament to take care of.

This exercise was a classical example of how media laws in Pakistan have always been drafted and enacted, oriented towards serving the interests of the Establishment and not empowering the citizens – promulgated as ordinances, mostly by unelected regimes. In the 55-year history of Pakistan only one press-related law was ever put before a parliament, debated, drafted, approved and enacted. And how good that was! The government uses a range of legal and constitutional powers to curb press freedom. The country's law on blasphemy has been used against journalists. Nevertheless, Pakistan's print media are among the most outspoken in South Asia.

Nepal

“The legislation bans criticism of the king and bars private stations from broadcasting political news and reporting the Maoist insurgency. The protesters urged the government to remove what they said was a curb on media freedom. The legislation comes eight months after King Gyanendra seized direct control of the government. An estimated 500 journalists took part in the demonstration in the capital, Katmandu. Hundreds of professionals such as doctors, engineers, professors, lawyers and writers joined them. Protests have taken place outside of Katmandu too. “BBC News Show the condition of press in Nepal where after royal highjack media structure was changed.

Singapore

In Singapore however the right to know is not inalienable right granted by the government. The government does not subscribe to the liberal model of the press. Government of Singapore tries to impress on its population as early as 1982, the Singapore govt. focused an effort to promote Confucianism as a

moral and cultural foundation of the Singapore society. These ethics were being incorporated into the practice of journalism in by the country. Goh Chok Tong the then prime minister of Singapore calls it as "constructive journalism" that operates with in the bound of common responsibility to pressure the political, social and economic stability of society. Within the Confucian approach to journalism the press considers the government as a good government not a "necessary evil".

Malaysia

The Asian media can exploit the new information and communication technology to reveal and share information about democracy and human right violation. The experience of the Internet in Malaysia provides a prime example of this. Since the imprisonment of former deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Freedom of expression has been severely curtailed by the present Malaysian government and press strictly prohibited.

According to the propaganda model developed by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, the media tends to serve the interest of state and corporate power, which is closely interlinked, framing their reporting. Since independence in 1957, official control over the media has gradually tightened. Media freedom has been restricted in three ways.

1. Through restrictive laws
2. Through ownership of media by political parties and connected business individuals
3. Through self censorship which is exercised by editors and journalist themselves.

Indonesia

In June 1998 Indonesia media personnel were asked by the military not to give coverage to the pro democratic demonstration-taking place in the country. The military also banned all electronic media in Indonesia from broadcasting the rallies. How ever the government censorship did stop information from circulating both inside and outside the country. The media and the public managed to get news from international radio broadcast gathering at the Indonesia Democratic Party (PDI) at Jakarta. Here is unique experience, protestors of media gathering at Indonesia Democratic Party (PDI) headquarters in central Jakarta distributed printout of "Indonesian-L" mailing list. They also faxed the news reports to their provincial offices and plastered the uncensored reports on the wall.

Cambodia

The majority of Cambodian media are not completely independent relying on source of funding from powerful people, including political parties politicians and rich. The rich and civil society groups in Cambodian today do not work in unity, they cannot speak with one voice to the government. There are at least six journalist associations there is little strong collaboration between them.

In Cambodia the term media is as widely used and understood as the term "press" there is press law in Cambodia but no media law.

2. Concluding Remarks

Original meaning of the term democracy is a form of government where the right to political decision is exercised directly by the whole body of citizen acting under the procedure of majority of rule. The second most usual meaning is that they choose form of government where the citizen exercises the same but through representative through the process of free election this is known as representative democracy. Media is the only way of communication between government and public. Media control over government is not a new phenomenon. Governments always make attempt to regulate them by necessary or unnecessary laws and regulations. This is common feature of every government of world. Government of various Asian countries controls their media. Due to media effect in Russia Putin was able to win Duma election. In China there is heavy imposition of restriction over media. Unlikely in India right to information is given to

public but there is scientific take over of government over Indian media publicity of good face of achievement is very common feature. Media law is always molded, drafted and enacted in accordance to military government in Pakistan. Singapore govt. focused an effort to promote Confucianism as a moral and cultural foundation of the Singapore society. These ethics were being incorporated into the practice of journalism in by the country. In Cambodia freedom of Expression was curtailed by the government from imprisonment of former deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. Indonesian media is also under full control of army and governmental forces; they regulate the media in there own way.

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