

JMC365

Press concepts/theories

What to remember first of all:

1. 1. All media operate within some kinds of governmental/societal/economic constraints. It's not whether the government controls the press, but the nature and the extent of the control.
1. 2. All press systems reflect the values of the political and economic systems within which they operate.

With your papers, you will see how each of these plays out in a particular country. What are the governmental/societal/economic constraints? What are the political and economic systems in this country?

Five theories/concepts of the press.

These are normative theories, meaning how things should operate. In the real world, press systems may not fit perfectly. And we say press, but we mean all news media.

The theories operate on a sort of continuum from the most regulation to the least. Again, most press systems will fit somewhere on the continuum.

Authoritarian

- Press under the direct/implied control of the state
- The press can't be used to challenge, criticize or undermine the state
- Truth and information are a monopoly of those in authority.
 - Diversity is wasteful
 - Dissent is a nuisance and subversive
- The press is permitted to gather and publish news, but it

must function for the good of the state.

- Prior restraint

Countries where this is practiced:

Indonesia

Singapore

Malaysia

Communist (Very similar to Authoritarian)

From Lenin: “Freedom of the press of a bourgeois society consists of freedom of the rich to systematically, unceasingly and daily in millions of copies to deceive, corrupt and fool the exploited and oppressed masses of the people – the poor.”

- Press is an integral part of the party
- Planned, controlled by the government
- One-party press has monopoly on news.
- News defined by positive information that furthers the goals of the party
- It's disappeared from most places.

Countries where it's practiced:

North Korea

China

Cuba

Vietnam

Developmental

- More like authoritarian, but limited
- Based on the idea that communication is essential for nation-building
- Idea grew out of post-World War II world when colonies in Africa, Asia, South America gained their independence.
- All instruments of mass communication are mobilized by the central government for nation building.
- Media should support authority, not challenge it
- Information is the property of the state

- Individual rights of expression come in second to the massive problems many of these countries face: Poverty, disease, illiteracy, and ethnicity
- The concept is that these countries will gain a freer press when some of the problems are solved.

This concept/theory applies to many countries. As we discussed in class, the idea is that the countries are moving to a more free press once the major problems are under control. Countries may be closer to Authoritarian or closer to Western and still be developmental.

Western:

- Press relatively free of arbitrary government controls
- Freedom of the press: The right to report, comment on and criticize government
- Free and independent press found only in a dozen or so countries

Characteristics that these countries share: (Think about these characteristics in terms of globalization)

- System of law that protects individual liberties
- High levels of per capita income, education and literacy
- Constitutional parliamentary democracy
- Legitimate political opposition
- Sufficient capital and private enterprise
- Tradition of independent journalism

Revolutionary:

- Usually begins as underground press, a way to overthrow the government
- Illegal and subversive
- Short-term: Once the revolution is over, you have to figure out something else.

Freedom of the press as essential grew out of Enlightenment, writings of John Milton, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Thomas Jefferson

The idea: The marketplace of ideas from which the public can choose what it wishes to read and believe. You assume truth will emerge after a public debate. Citizens will make the right choices if there are enough voices and government keeps out.

What it means:

First Amendment says Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of the press.

Generally, it's freedom from prior restraint by government.

You can print things, but you are held accountable by libel laws.

Problems:

Economic and corporate interference

Freedom to report news also means freedom to gather news. That can be harder

The decreasing number of independent voices

Complaints about our system:

Commercialist, sensationalistic, concentration of ownership, triviality, emphasis on entertainment.