Chapter 8

Limits on press freedom and regime support

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In late-September 2007, thousands of monks and civilians took to the streets of Rangoon in a week-long uprising against the Burmese government. In response, the military junta shut down the Internet, arrested or intimidated Burmese journalists, and severed mobile and landline phone links to the outside world. A Japanese video journalist from AFP news was shot dead. Cameras and video cell phones were confiscated by soldiers. The official Division for Press Scrutiny and Registration pressured local editors to publish stories claiming that the unrest was organized by 'saboteurs'. In the immediate aftermath of these events, thousands of monks were said to have been arrested, but after the media clampdown no images of these events were published in the domestic and international news.[1] Even in less turbulent times, critical coverage of the Burmese junta is restricted in domestic news media, silencing negative stories about the military leadership. Citizens are punished for listening to overseas radio broadcasts. Nor are these isolated instances of state control of the airwaves, as discussed in chapter 14.[2] Although Burma is an extreme case, regularly ranking near the bottom of worldwide annual assessments of press freedom produced by *Reporters sans frontiéres* and *Freedom House*, human rights observers report that many other states routinely deploy techniques designed to suppress independent journalism, manipulate and slant news selectively in their favor, and limit critical coverage of the regime.

The fact that autocracies seek to control the main channels of mass communications is well documented. What is not clear to whether states with restrictive media environments succeed in manipulating public opinion and thereby strengthening their domestic support. The cumulative result of years, or even decades, of tight media control in restrictive and isolated societies such as Burma and North Korea is usually assumed to have a powerful impact on citizens, especially the effect of state propaganda during war-time.[3] But the regime's efforts to influence public opinion may fail, if people learn to mistrust news coverage so that they discount the information that the media disseminate. These issues have been debated ever since the earliest work by Lasswell (1927), the rise of mass advertizing, the development of scientific notions of public opinion, and the experimental studies monitoring the effects of propaganda by the allies during and after the Second World War.[4]

Part I reviews the literature in this debate, develops a theoretical framework, and outlines the core propositions to be investigated. Part II develops a comparative framework to examine the empirical

evidence for testing these propositions. Part III analyzes cross-national survey evidence, comparing regime support at the macro-level in restrictive and non-restrictive societies and then at the micro-level among the news audience living within each type of media environments. Empirical evidence is derived from a unique data base, the 5th wave of the World Values Survey (WVS-5), with fieldwork conducted in more than forty nations in 2005-6.[5] 'Regime support' is understood as a multidimensional concept which is measured at three levels: (1) confidence in core regime institutions such as the government, civil service, parties, and courts; (2) more diffuse nationalistic attitudes; and (3) ideological attitudes towards democracy and military rule: we hypothesize that in authoritarian societies, restrictions on the media are designed to produce greater support for authoritarian rule and less support for democratization.

The results of the comparison at macro-level presented in Part III reveals that *confidence in government was indeed higher in societies with restricted media environments*, such as Iran, China and Viet Nam, than in countries such as Sweden and France. This pattern certainly suggests that state control of the media has strong effects, but it cannot be viewed as conclusive proof, since various other factors could conceivably be generating this pattern. The results of the micro-level analysis give strong additional support to the interpretation that state control of the media has strong effects, however. We find that, in states with restricted media environments, those who are most often exposed to the news media show significantly stronger confidence in government and support for authoritarian rule, than those who do not regularly use TV or radio news, newspapers, or the Internet for information. These patterns proved robust in multivariate models examining a range of measures of regime support, even with a battery of prior social controls. The TV and radio audience were also more negative towards democratic values than non-users in restricted media environments. By contrast, in pluralistic media environments, news consumers were more positive towards democratic values than non-users. These findings lead us to conclude that state restrictions over news broadcasting can often achieve their intended effects, as many commentators have long feared. The final section interprets these results, counters some potential criticisms, and reflects upon the broader implications of the findings.

Theoretical framework

The study starts from the premise that autocracies with restrictive media environments aim to suppress dissent and to provide positive messages about the regime, rallying support for the authorities, as well as generating more diffuse feelings of patriotism and spreading ideological values favorable to the regime. If state control succeeds in its objectives, we would expect regular exposure to the news

media in this environment to generate confidence in the authorities, to encourage negative attitudes towards democratic values, and to reinforce nationalism. The direct effects of this process should be strongest among regular consumers of radio and television news-- the sector of the mass media where the state usually exercises the greatest control. We would not expect to find similar effects in pluralistic media environments, where competition among different media outlets and sources provides mixed messages about the regime. And we would expect these effects to be weaker or absent in media sectors such as newspapers and Internet where the state generally has less direct control over ownership and content.

The idea that states use restrictions on the free press to suppress dissent and to mobilize support is widely accepted. Liberal philosophers and human rights advocates have traditionally mounted a strong defense of an unfettered and independent press, as embodied in the fundamental freedoms of expression, information, thought, speech and conscience. These principles are widely recognized as human rights in all major conventions endorsed by political leaders, including the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."* Rights to freedom of the press are widely recognized as essential in procedural definitions of representative democracy. For example Dahl emphasized that citizens cannot make meaningful choices in contested elections without access to alternative sources of information.[6] The prevention of corruption and abuse of power by public officials also requires transparency, so that the public can evaluate the outcome of government actions and hold elected representatives to account. [7]

Techniques of suppression

Despite the acknowledged importance of these universal rights, a substantial literature has documented how states regularly subvert freedom of expression and seek to control the independent media.[8] The use of techniques to repress and manipulate information has also been documented by human rights observers, including regular reports issued by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the World Press Freedom Committee, and Reporters sans Frontiéres. In the most extreme cases, methods used by autocratic states include overt official censorship; state monopoly of radio and television channels, or severely-limited competition

through oligopolies in commercial ownership; legal restrictions on freedom of expression and publication (such as stringent libel laws and restrictive official secrets acts); the use of outright violence, imprisonment, and intimidation against journalists and broadcasters; and the techniques of propaganda to spread state ideologies. Freedom of expression can also be restricted by less draconian factors, including requirements for registration or licenses for journalists or newspapers; broadcasting regulations as well as laws governing broadcasting contents; concentration of ownership; and a legal framework governing official secrecy or freedom of information, intellectual property, libel, and taxation.

In North Korea, for example, one of the most rigid state controlled and inaccessible societies, television and radio news broadcasts are dominated by flattering reports of the activities of the leader, Kim Jong-Il, along with patriotic stories emphasizing national unity.[9] Citizens caught listening to foreign radio broadcasts face serious punishment, foreign broadcasts are blocked, and individual radios are sealed so that they can only receive official stations. In Malaysia, as a less extreme example, human rights observers report that the state has manipulated the media to stifle internal dissent and forced journalists employed by the international press to modify or suppress news stories unflattering to the regime.[10] Elsewhere governments in Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, and Saudi Arabia, among others, place serious restrictions on press freedom to criticize government rulers through official regulations, legal restrictions and state censorship.[11] It remains more difficult for governments to censor online communications, but nevertheless in China and Cuba, state-controlled monopolies provide the only Internet service and thereby filter both access and content.[12] Media freedom and human rights organizations have documented numerous cases of media professionals who are killed or injured in the course of their work each year. In Colombia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zimbabwe and Egypt, for example, the International Federation of Journalists reports that many journalists, broadcasters and editors have experienced intimidation or harassment, while journalists in many parts of the world face the daily threat of personal danger from wars or imprisonment by the security services.[13] Mickiewicz has demonstrated the degree of pro-government bias and the lack of partisan balance in patterns of news broadcasts in Russia during Presidential and Duma elections.[14] Others have documented the impact of official state censorship and propaganda on what is covered by different media outlets in China and the impact of deregulation and liberalization of the newspaper market.[15] The impact of state control may be particularly strong in culturally-isolated autocracies with state broadcasting monopolies and the least permeable national borders, such as North Korea, China, and Burma, with more limited effects in societies where the public has access to alternative broadcasts, as in Communist East Germany.[16]

The impact on processes of democratization

Many scholars have also described the positive contribution of media liberalization and independent journalism in the transition and consolidation of democracy. Research has examined this process in post-Communist Europe, as well as in Africa.[17] These studies suggest that the initial transition from autocracy liberalizes ownership and control of the media, loosens the dead hand of official censorship, and weakens state control of information. The public is thereby exposed to a wider variety of cultural products and ideas through access to multiple alternative newspapers, radio and TV channels, as well as new communication technologies such as the Internet and mobile telephones. Once media liberalization has commenced, this process is widely believed to reinforce processes of democratic consolidation and good governance; watch-dog journalism can highlight government corruption and malfeasance, alternative news outlets can provide a forum for multiple voices in public debate, and reporters can encourage officials to be more responsive towards social needs and concerns. [18]

The impact of restrictive practices on mass attitudes

In short, practices and techniques that restrict the independent media and limit freedom of expression are well documented, as is the way that a free press contributes towards the process of democratization. Yet far less systematic cross-national research has examined the impact of restrictions of press freedom upon public opinion, especially comparing the effects of different types of media environment on mass attitudes. State control of information aims to suppress potential support for opposition movements, and to bolster the popularity of the regime, trust and confidence in political institutions, and feelings of national pride and identity, as well as shaping broader ideological beliefs. Despite the importance of this issue, the effects of such practices on citizens' attitudes and values have not been clearly and systematically demonstrated. One reason is the difficulty of conducting reliable survey research in autocracies which regularly impose serious limits on freedom of speech, particularly in getting access to, and asking questions about, politically sensitive issues such as confidence in government or trust in the authorities. This context may also encourage a climate of self-censorship; survey respondents may believe that it would be dangerous to provide critical evaluations of those in power, raising difficulties in how best to interpret their replies, an issue to which we will return in the conclusion. Meanwhile, even when these difficulties are overcome, cross-national surveys need to gauge both regime support as well as systematic patterns of media use.

The case studies that are available also warn that the effects of the media environment may not be as straightforward as often assumed by over-simple 'stimulus-response' models of state hegemonic

control over the gullible public, and considerable caution is needed when extrapolating directly from the type of coverage presented in the news media to the distribution of public opinion and attitudes. For example, a 10-nation comparison by Gunther and Mughan concluded that the ability of autocracies to shape political attitudes and values remains limited.[19] The authors highlight detailed cases of strong state control of the media, for example in Chile under Pinochet and in Spain under Franco. Yet in both cases, surveys conducted shortly after these regimes ended suggested widespread public support for democracy and a rejection of the authoritarian past. Rather than a direct impact, the study cautions that the effect of state control of the media on the public is often complex and contingent upon many factors, such as the presence of media technologies, the nature of political institutions, and the characteristics of citizens.

States also seek to disseminate more positive images and messages through propaganda, especially in wartime, but early studies also emphasized the limits of these techniques. Classic experimental studies conducted during World War II found that US military training films, *Why we Fight*, were relatively ineffective in altering soldier's attitudes and behavior.[20] The research conducted in this era generated a consensus that attempts at using radio and films alone for political persuasion tended not to convert attitudes or to change behavior, at least in the short-term. Indeed, a wide range of literature during the height of the Cold War era emphasized the limited direct effects of the mass media for short-term persuasion in contrast to the primacy of primary ties and face-to-face communication.[21] In this perspective, autocracies seek to strengthen regime support through positive images presented in state propaganda but such techniques are likely to fail. Moreover the early 'direct effects' model of the role of media propaganda has come under sustained challenge from cognitive theories in education and social psychology, derived originally from the work of Jean Piaget, which emphasize constructivist accounts of learning.[22] When applied to the role of the mass media, in this perspective recipients of media messages play an active role when processing information and extracting meaning from information; for example, state propaganda may prove highly ineffective if citizens suspect the reliability of the source and thereby discount pro-government messages. People may learn to discount media messages in a restrictive media environment, if they are aware of censorship or partisan bias in the news and they do not trust the source.

In addition, the news media is only one factor shaping confidence in authorities, and it may not be the most important driver. Ever since Easton, a range of explanations for the underlying causes of system support have been offered in the literature.[23] Theories of socialization usually emphasize the

influence of the family, school and local community as the key agencies that shape children and adolescents during their formative years, more than the role of the mass media in adult life. Moreover, modernization theories focus upon a glacial erosion of support for many traditional sources of political authority, including representative government, and established, hierarchical institutions such as the army, police and church, leading towards more elite-challenging behavior among the young and well-educated in post-industrial societies.[24] Instrumental accounts deriving from political economy focus on the performance of the government, especially pocket-book evaluations of the competence of leaders in managing the economy and delivering basic public services.[25] By contrast, institutional explanations focus upon the role of intermediary structures linking citizens and the state, such as parties and voluntary associations, as well as the way that the outcome of elections shape attitudes towards political authorities.[26] The assumption that state control of the news media has a simple and direct effect on confidence in government is challenged by a range of alternative sociological, developmental, economic, and institutional accounts in the literature.

For all these reasons, the impact of state control of the news media on patterns of regime support deserves to be carefully reexamined in the light of empirical evidence. To reiterate the core propositions, if state control of the media achieves its intended effects, then this study predicts that certain patterns of regime support will be evident among the general public. In particular, if state control works, the study predicts that:

H#1: *The publics of countries with restricted media environments will prove more supportive of their society's regime, than the publics of societies with pluralistic media environment.*

Yet many factors could conceivably cause this macro-level pattern. To provide additional supporting evidence that exposure to the state controlled news media *per se* contributed to these effects, we will carry out six additional tests of this hypothesis *within* given countries. Comparison of users and non-users of the news media within each type of media environment, with prior controls, provides a critical test. Since regime support is understood as a multidimensional concept, it needs to be disaggregated. Accordingly the study predicts that, within countries having restrictive media environments:

H#1.1 N*ews users will display greater confidence in regime institutions than non-users;*

H1.2: *News users will express more negative attitudes towards democratic values than non-users*;

H#1.3 N*ews users will have stronger feelings of nationalism than non-users.*

Any direct effects from this process are also expected to vary by media sector, depending upon the degree of state control. In particular, we predict that the effects of exposure to the broadcast media will be strongest, since this is the sector where the state has the greatest potential control over ownership and content. The effects of newspapers are likely to be weaker, since it is generally more difficult for officials to limit information flows due to the relatively large number of printed outlets, and the diversity of information contained in these sources. Finally, techniques of censorship can also be applied to new digital technologies. [27] Nevertheless the Internet tends to be the channel where autocraticies are least able to control the content from beyond their borders, so it may provide dissidents and opposition movements with the easiest access to alternative information. Accordingly the study predicts that, within restricted environments:

> H2.1: *The effects of exposure on regime support will be stronger among regular consumers of radio and television news than among non-users*.

> H2.2. *The effects of exposure on regime support will be weaker among regular users of newspapers and the Internet than among non-users*.

> H2.3. *The effects of exposure on regime support will be negative among regular users of the Internet as compared with non-users*.

For each of these hypotheses, as an additional control, similar models can be compared in pluralistic media environments, although the theoretical framework outlined above does not make any clear predictions about the strength or direction of any media effects in this context. If the 'media malaise' thesis holds, then exposure to the news media (especially television news) will generate more negative regime support. If however the alternative 'virtuous circle' thesis holds, then exposure to the news media will generate more positive orientations towards the regime. [28]

Classifying macro-level media environments

Monitoring regime support

Evidence of attitudes and values in many different societies is available in the 5th wave of the World Values Survey (WVS-5) which covers a wide range of countries from all major cultural regions, as well as democratic and autocratic regimes which vary in their levels of press freedom, with China, Viet Nam, and Russia having the most restrictive policies. The World Values Surveys is a global investigation of socio-cultural and political change. This project has carried out representative national surveys of the basic values and beliefs of the publics in more than 90 independent countries, containing over 88% of

the world's population and covering all six inhabited continents. It builds on the European Values Surveys, first carried out in 22 countries in 1981. A second wave of surveys, in 41 countries, was completed in 1990-1991. The third wave was carried out in 55 nations in 1995-1996. The fourth wave, with 59 nation-states, took place in 1999-2001. The fifth wave is now being completed in 2005-7.[29]

The WVS survey includes some of the most affluent market economies in the world, such as the U.S., Japan and Switzerland, with per capita annual incomes as high as $40,000; together with middle-level industrializing countries including Taiwan, Brazil, and Turkey, as well as poorer agrarian societies, exemplified by Uganda, Nigeria, and Viet Nam, with per capita annual incomes of $300 or less. Some smaller nations have populations below one million, such as Malta, Luxembourg and Iceland, while at the other extreme almost one billion people live in India and over one billion live in China. The survey contains older democracies such as Australia, India and the Netherlands, newer democracies including El Salvador, Estonia and Taiwan, and autocracies such as China, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and Egypt. The transition process also varies markedly: some nations have experienced a rapid consolidation of democracy during the 1990s; today the Czech Republic, Latvia and Argentina currently rank as high on political rights and civil liberties as Belgium, the United States, and the Netherlands, which have a long tradition of democracy.[30] The survey also includes some of the first systematic data on public opinion in many Muslim states, including Arab countries such as Jordan, Iran, Egypt, and Morocco, as well as in Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The most comprehensive coverage comes from Western Europe, North America and Scandinavia, where public opinion surveys have the longest tradition, but countries are included from all world regions, including Sub Saharan Africa. Since the battery of items monitoring media use was only included in the 5th wave, this study draws primarily on the latest survey, covering more than forty societies, although others items such as confidence in governing institutions were included in earlier waves and can be compared across a wider range of states.

Classifying media environments

As a first step towards examining the empirical evidence, how can the media environment, and thus the degree of state intervention and control of the news media, be classified and compared across diverse societies and types of regimes? The '*media environment*' is understood in this study to cover all the major features determining the relationship between the state and the news media in any society. This includes issues of ownership, regulation, and control; the legal framework governing freedom of expression and information (such as penalties for press offences); patterns of intimidation and violations

of press freedom affecting journalists and the mass media (such as cases of imprisonment and harassment of reporters); and the nature of state intervention in the media (such as state monopolies of broadcasting or the use of official censorship).

Both categorical typologies and continuous measures of media freedom can be employed to compare media environments. The standard theoretical typology of macro-level media systems was established in the mid-twentieth century by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's classic *Four Theories of the Press*.[31] Following their work, two ideal types of media systems have commonly been identified and compared in advanced industrial societies: the more market-oriented commercial broadcasting industry which developed in the United States and throughout much of Latin America is often contrasted with the public service model of broadcasting traditionally dominating contemporary Western Europe and Scandinavia. A growing number of countries have evolved towards a mixed system, such as that used in Britain, which combines both forms of broadcasting.[32] Moreover the simple distinction between market-oriented and state-oriented media systems, as well as between commercial and public-service broadcasting, hides important differences within each category.

Following in the footsteps of Siebert et al, recent cross-national research by Hallin and Mancini proposed a revised classification of the structure of media systems found in advanced industrialized societies.[33] The authors distinguished how far countries differ in the development of media markets (especially for newspapers); the strength of linkages between parties and the media; the degree of journalistic professionalism; and the nature of state intervention in the media system. Based on these criteria, among Western countries, the typology identified an Anglo-American (liberal) model (found, for example, in USA, Canada, Britain), a Mediterranean (polarized pluralism) model (e.g. in Italy, Spain, and France), and a Democratic-Pluralist model (e.g. Austria, Norway, and the Netherlands).

These classifications have been challenged. For example, in many regards the British dual commercial-public service media system may have more in common with the North European model than with the American television market. Moreover, as numerous observers have noted, the traditional distinction between commercial and public service television has been diluted today, with convergence caused by the deregulation, commercialization and proliferation of channels now available in European societies, as well as the spread of global media conglomerates which have also affected the American market.[34] A broader comparison which goes beyond post-industrial societies is required to understand the issues at the heart of this study. This also needs to include the remaining state-controlled media systems within contemporary autocracies, such as China and Viet Nam, as well as examining whether

journalists play a distinctive function in newer democracies and in developing societies.[35] Typologies are important tools but unfortunately there is no consensus in political communications about the most appropriate conceptualization and categorizations of contemporary media systems. It is difficult to develop clear-cut rules from the Hallin and Mancini typology which could be used to classify types of media environments worldwide with any degree of reliability and consistency.

An alternative approach to comparison has classified rights to freedom of expression contained in written constitutions, or whether countries have passed Freedom of Information laws.[36] These measures are an important step toward an open society but they were not used in this study, because what determines the actual degree of press freedom is the *implementation* of such rights or legislation. The Kyrgyz republic, Russia and Colombia have Freedom of Information laws, for example, while Uzbekistan's constitution nominally guarantees freedom of speech and the press, but this does not mean that journalists are safe in these countries or that such regulations have proved effective in promoting partisan balance in the news, freedom of expression, or transparency in government. Moreover freedom of information is only one aspect of the media environments, and, while often closely related to freedom of speech and freedom of the press, these are not equivalent concepts.

Given these reflections, we prefer to use indices of press freedom derived from expert judgments. This study classified countries based on the Worldwide Press Freedom Index (WPF), which is produced annually by Reporters sans frontiéres (Reporters without Borders).[37] The Worldwide Press Freedom Index is constructed to reflect the degree of freedom journalists and news organizations enjoy in each country, and the efforts made by the state to respect and ensure respect for this freedom. The organization compiled a questionnaire with 52 criteria used for assessing the state of press freedom in each country every year. It includes every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of issues, searches and harassment). It registers the degree of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for such violations. It also takes account of the legal situation affecting the news media (such as penalties for press offences, the existence of a state monopoly in certain areas and the existence of a regulatory body), the behavior of the authorities towards the state-owned news media and the foreign press, and the main obstacles to the free flow of information on the Internet. The Worldwide Press Freedom Index reflects not only abuses attributable to the state, but also those by armed militias, clandestine organizations, or pressure groups that can pose a real threat to press freedom. The survey questionnaire was sent to partner organizations of Reporters sans Frontiéres, including fourteen freedom of

expression groups in five continents and to the organization's 130 correspondents around the world, as well as to journalists, researchers, jurists and human rights activists. A 100-point country-score was estimated for each country under comparison. Based on the 2005 score, the 168 countries under comparison by WPF were then ranked. The scale was standardized around the mean (Z-scores) and reversed in direction for ease of interpretation, so that a higher ranking represents an estimate of greater press freedom.

As always, it is important to check whether the index is reliable and unbiased. To do so, the WPF index was compared with the results of Freedom House's annual index of Press Freedom.[38] The latter measured how much diversity of news content was influenced by the structure of the news industry, by legal and administrative decisions, the degree of political influence or control, the economic influences exerted by the government or private entrepreneurs, and actual incidents violating press autonomy, including censorship, harassment and physical threats to journalists. The assessment of press freedom by Freedom House distinguishes between the broadcast and print media, and the resulting ratings are expressed as a 100-point scale for each country under comparison. As with the WPF index, the Freedom House index was also reversed and standardized around the mean.

[Figure 8.1 about here]

To test for reliability, both indices were compared in the 44 nation-states under comparison in the 5th wave of the World Values Survey. The results, illustrated in the scatter plot presented in Figure 8.1, shows a strong correlation across both these measures, (R=.869, sig .001, Cubic R^2=.77, sig .001). There are a few outliers, such as Mexico and Taiwan, where the estimates produced by the two organizations differ slightly. Although the two indices differ in their construction, data sources, and conceptualization; they produce similar estimates, which increases our confidence in their reliability.[39] Many countries scoring highly on press freedom by both these indicators are highly developed nations, such as the Netherlands and Sweden, which is consistent with the well-established linkage between wealth and democracy. But other countries with high press freedom are less affluent, such as Mali and Trinidad and Tobago, Taiwan, Ghana and Poland, as well as Burkina Fasa and Uruguay. The countries ranked as having the most restrictive media environments by both organizations include China, Viet Nam, and Iraq, with Ethiopia, Colombia, and Russia classified as less extreme outliers. The countries included in the 5th wave of the WVS are skewed towards the more pluralistic media environments, but there are enough restrictive cases to permit comparative analysis, giving special attention to the outliers.

On this basis, the Worldwide Press Freedom Index was used to gauge the degree of press freedom in the nation-states contained in the 5th wave of the World Values Survey. For ease of analysis, the index was dichotomized to facilitate comparison of attitudes and values found among the publics living in two types of societies: *pluralistic media environments,* which are characterized by relatively high levels of press freedom, versus *restricted media environments* with relatively low levels of press freedom. The cases clustered around the cut-off points are ones where judgment has to be exercised and alternative divisions at a higher or lower point could alter the classification, for example for India, Indonesia, and Zambia. Using this dichotomy allows public opinion to be compared when the survey data is aggregated in both types of media environments, reducing any 'noise' caused by minor differences in the estimates of press freedom, for example, between Uruguay and Bulgaria or between Russia and Colombia. The ten most restrictive media environments are cases where both indices were in broad agreement.

The impact of media environments on regime support

This classification of societies allows comparison of public opinion within each type of media environment. If states with restrictive media environments are effective in shaping attitudes and values, the publics living in these societies should be more positive towards the regime. One of the standard ways to evaluate this issue concerns trust and confidence in political institutions. Studies have compared attitudes towards the governments, parliaments, the courts and police, the state bureaucracy, political parties, and the armed forces, as well as confidence in the press and television. [40]These studies seek to measure generalized support for given institutions -- that is approval of the performance of the Presidency rather than support for Vladimir Putin or George W. Bush, and support for parties rather than particular party leaders -- although in practice people do not always distinguish clearly between the office and incumbents. Using this approach, confidence in government was measured in the World Values Survey as follows: *"I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all? …The government in your nation's capital."* The comparison of attitudes can be compared among all the countries included in the 4th (1999-2000) and 5th (2005-6) waves of the WVS.

[Figure 8.2 about here]

The results of the macro-level comparisons illustrated in Figure 8.2 confirm that *confidence in government was indeed higher among the publics living under restricted media environments, compared*

with those living in pluralistic media environments, as predicted by the first hypothesis (H#1). This striking pattern was most evident with the public expressing the greatest confidence in government in the People's Republic of China and Viet Nam, both Communist one-party states where the techniques of censorship and propaganda are stringently enforced, and in Iran, which practices widespread censorship by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It was even clear with relatively high levels of confidence in government expressed in Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, which can arguably be classified as dysfunctional states. Indeed, in 2005-6 it is striking that confidence in government was far higher in Iraq, despite all the problems which the state has experienced in providing basic public services and utilities, reducing violence, and maintaining order, than in Sweden, by most standards one of the world's best-functioning societies. This is not an isolated case; less confidence in government was expressed by publics living in many advanced industrialized societies and stable democracies, such as the French, British and Germans, than in many autocracies. This pattern is also consistent with other studies which have documented the phenomenon of 'critical citizens' and eroding confidence in government found in many affluent post-industrial societies.[41]

This initial finding certainly suggests that restrictive media environments, which limit negative news about the regime, can sometimes manipulate public opinion and generate popular support for those in authority, as predicted. At the same time, we need considerable caution in interpreting these results. The simple correlations found at macro-level do not provide conclusive proof that restricted media environments boost popular support for the regime. One can readily think of alternative explanations. For example, performance-based accounts in political economy could emphasize surging levels of prosperity which are transforming urban China and Vietnam. Developmental explanations might focus on long-term processes of value change and rising levels of education that are making the younger generation of citizens within post-industrial societies more critical of those in authority.

To test the impact of state control of the media more conclusively, we will carry out micro-level analyses within each society. In particular, we will examine the impact of exposed to given sources of news information within each country, comparing the attitudes of those who are regularly exposed to given types of media with the attitudes of those who are not. We expect to find the strongest effects linked with exposure to television and radio news, since it is the sector that is most open to state control. The public's access to radio and television news, newspapers, and the Internet varies substantially in countries around the world.[42] The media environment determines how far citizens in developing societies have easy access to the news media, and the extent of information gaps which vary by income,

education, literacy, age and gender.[43] To assess news consumption patterns, the 2005-6 World Values Survey asked the following question: *"People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information."* The news media sources included daily newspaper, news broadcast on radio or television, and the Internet/Email. These news media sources can be combined to examine the proportion of respondents in each country who reported no regular use of any of the news media (television or radio news, daily newspapers, or the Internet). Other sources which were monitored in the WVS survey included books, printed magazines, and in-depth reports on radio or TV, but these were not analyzed because only small numbers of respondents reported that they used them regularly.

[Figure 8.3 about here]

The results shown in Figure 8.3 demonstrate the striking contrasts in media exposure in the societies under comparison: over one third of the population had no access to the news media in some of the poorest developing societies, such as Rwanda, Burkina Faso, and India, while about one quarter reported having no access in Zambia, Mali, and China. By contrast, in most postindustrial societies, news access was virtually ubiquitous; thus in Sweden, Australia and Japan, almost everyone reported regularly accessing information from at least one of these news media. The attitudes and values of the groups who report regular exposure to television and radio news can be compared with those who are not so exposed. Although news might also have a diffuse effect through inter-personal communications, (the 'water-cooler' effect), when people discuss events and stories that they saw on television, heard on the radio, or read in newspapers with friends and family, the groups who regularly used the news media are more likely to be directly influenced by the media.

As Easton argued, political support reflects several different dimensions.[44] 'Regime support' is understood here as a multidimensional concept which can be measured at three distinct levels: (1) confidence and trust in the government and in core regime institutions such as the civil service, political parties, and courts; (2) more general ideological attitudes towards the principles of democracy and military rule; and (3) more diffuse attitudes of national pride and identity. Factor analysis was used to examine the dimensions of regime support and the results in Table 1 confirmed three separate components representing support for regime institutions, for regime principles and for national community. These items were summed to create scales as the three dependent variables for analysis. The multivariate models also need to control for the standard social and demographic variables which

could influence both patterns of access to the news media and also attitudes towards the regime. Hence the models in this study include controls for gender and age (as men and the older population are often more regular consumers of news), as well as for education and household income (which are closely associated with literacy in developing societies and which have the strongest effects upon use of newspapers and the Internet). The models also monitored the effects of political interest, since this could also plausibly shape news media habits and also levels of regime support. Appendix A lists all variables and coding procedures.

[Table 8.1 about here]

The OLS regression models in Tables 8.2-8.4 show the outcome of the analysis, and the main findings are summarized in Table 8.5. The results indicate that the television and radio news audience living in restricted media environments expressed significantly more regime support than non-users, even after applying prior controls for the social characteristics of the audience. Moreover this holds true for a broad range of indicators; similar patterns are found for confidence in regime institutions, attitudes toward democratic values and principles, and support for the national community.

As Table 8.2 demonstrates, within restricted media environments, confidence in regime institutions is significantly higher among users of television and radio news, even after controlling for a variety of other variables that might plausibly shape confidence in the regime. Use of daily newspapers is also significantly related to greater confidence in the regime, although with weaker effects than broadcasting. By contrast, use of the Internet is significantly linked with *less* confidence in regime institutions. In pluralistic media environments, use of television/radio news and newspapers was not significantly related to institutional confidence, and use of the Internet is also negatively associated with confidence.

If political propaganda achieves its objectives, then in restricted media environments the news media could also be expected to shape broader attitudes and values towards the core principles and ideologies underpinning each type of regime. These values were summarized in a 12-point scale measuring negative attitudes towards strong leadership without the need for elections and military rule, and positive approval of democracy as an ideal political system. The results in Table 3 show that use of all types of news media consistently showed a *negative* linkage with support for democratic principles in restricted media environments. In sharp contrast, in pluralistic media environments media use was associated with *positive* support for democracy.

Lastly, national pride and identification with the national community represents the most diffuse form of system support. Nationalistic feelings were measured here by a scale combining national pride with confidence in the armed forces, which emerged as a distinct dimension of regime support. Here exposure to television and radio news was a strong and significant predictor of nationalism in restricted media environments, although similar finding were also evident in pluralistic media environments.

Conclusions and implications

How should these findings be interpreted? Classic debates about the impact of foreign propaganda during wartime were concerned that it posed a major threat to America by altering attitudes and behavior among the gullible public.[45] Lasswell also thought that propaganda has a positive value, if employed to reinforce democratic values.[46] Contrary to these beliefs about strong media effects, the earliest experimental evidence studying the impact of allied film propaganda on soldiers by Hovland et al concluded that there were only minimal short-term *changes* in attitudes and behavior arising from this process.[47] These conclusions fuelled the 'minimal effects' thesis emphasizing the limited power of the mass media to convert, compared with the stronger influence of inter-personal communication in small groups.[48] This claim remained the conventional wisdom during most of the Cold War era. But the short-term impact of official propaganda is only one way that states can try to use the news media to shape public support and ideological values. The long-term way that attitudes and values may be shaped by living in restrictive media environments requires alternative methods of investigation and different research designs.

This study started with the hypothesis that in autocracies where the state consistently restricts media freedom and controls broadcasting, regular exposure to the domestic news media would generate more positive orientations towards the regime. These direct effects were predicted to be strongest among regular consumers of radio and television news, the sector of the mass media where the state usually exercises the greatest control over the ownership and content. Equivalent results were not expected to be found in pluralistic media environments, where audiences receive both multiple positive and negative messages about the regime, nor to be evident in sectors where the state exercises less direct control over the contents. The empirical findings that emerged from the analysis largely confirmed these propositions.

To summarize the key results, the study examined how regime support varied under restrictive and pluralistic media environments. The macro-level comparisons confirmed, as expected, that

confidence in government was significantly higher in societies with restrictive rather than pluralistic media environments. This cannot be regarded as conclusive proof that state control of the media directly causes public support for the regime, though it points in that direction.

Multivariate regression models examined the micro-level effects of exposure to various types of news media within restrictive or pluralistic media environments. These analyses included controls for common social and demographic background variables, such as education, income, age, and gender, as well as political interest, which could plausibly affect both media access and attitudes towards the regime. Analysis of the micro-level data revealed that in societies with limited media freedom, *regime support was significantly higher among the regular audience for television and radio news, whether measured by confidence in regime institutions, attitudes towards democratic principles, or nationalistic feelings.* Similar models run at national level, not reported in detail here, show that this relationship was particularly strong in China, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Serbia, and Zambia, all societies with limited independent journalism, while at the same time no equivalent effect was found in poorer democracies with more pluralistic media systems, such as Ghana and India.

In interpreting these results, certain important issues need to be considered, namely whether survey data monitoring support for the government tap real attitudes in societies that suppress free speech. Conceivably, the respondents may be expressing the politically correct response, rather than expressing their true feelings. It is not possible to test this proposition with the available survey evidence; if there is self-censorship on any sensitive issue, all surveys can do is to report what respondents say. Nevertheless if respondents are offering what they believe is the 'politically correct' response, it is striking that the media effects documented in this study are most clearly evident for the broadcasting sector, where the state can exercise the greatest control but are *not* consistently found among those who use the Internet. There is no obvious reason why any self-censorship response effect should vary across users of different media sectors. Moreover, even if we accept the claim that in restricted media environments, respondents are masking their true evaluations of the government, this in itself is important for the social construction of reality and what is perceived as socially acceptable in these countries.

The evidence presented here tends to support the proposition that state control of the broadcast media and limits on press freedom do achieve their intended effect, by strengthening regime support among the news audience in these societies. Contrary to conventional notions of 'limited media effects', derived from the classic Hovland experiments and the long tradition established by Lazarsfeld,

state control of the airwaves matters.[49] What still needs to be determined in further research is what techniques prove most important in this process, in particular whether it is the result of official propaganda disseminating positive images and messages about the leadership and authorities, or alternatively whether it is due to state censorship of independent journalism which restricts alternative viewpoints and perspectives. To do so will require closer examination of the content of the news, and what messages are most persuasive; we suspect that it is some combination of propaganda and censorship that allows autocracies to reinforce their popular support. These findings emphasize the importance of liberalizing the media in societies such as Burma, Zimbabwe and North Korea, strengthening freedom of expression, publication, and information. This not only improves human rights in these states, but also generates conditions most conducive to the transition from autocracy and the consolidation of democratic governance.

Figure 8.1: Indicators of press freedom, 2005
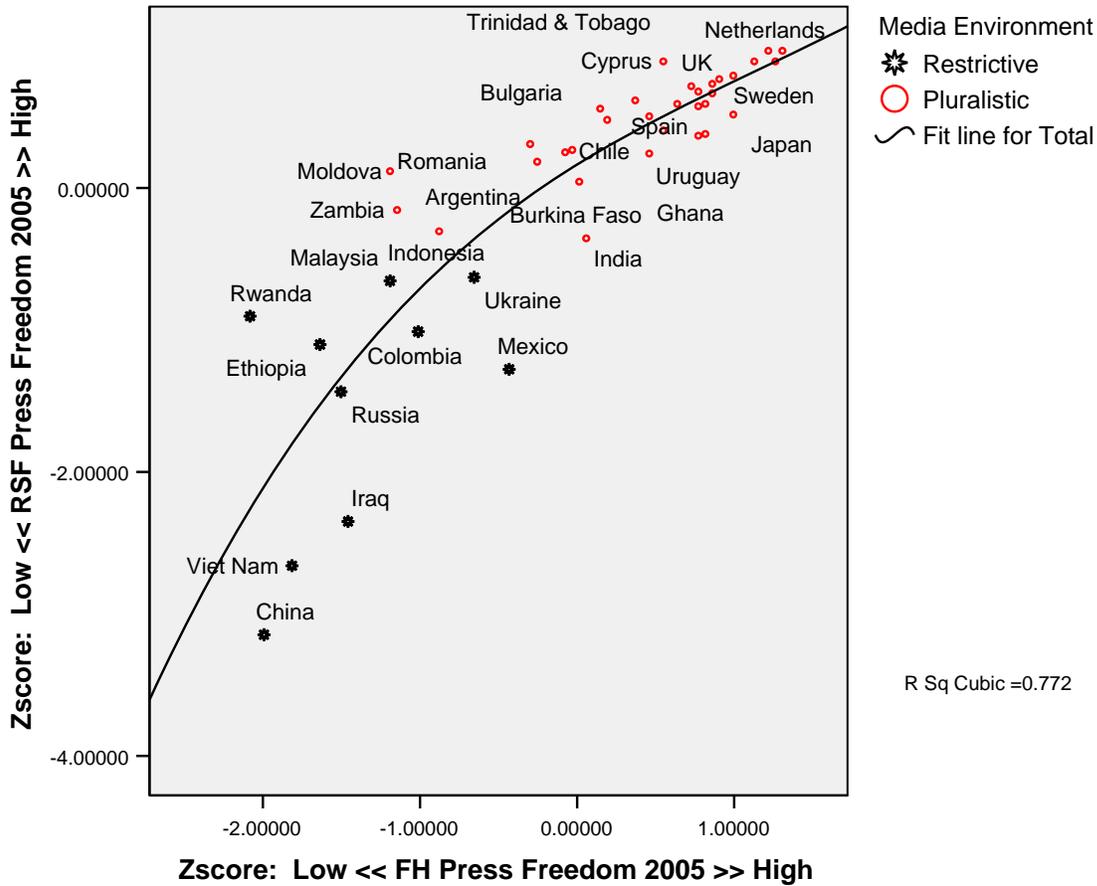
Note: The ratings of press freedom for 2005 provided by Freedom House and Reporters sans Frontiéres for the 44 countries included in the 5th wave of the World Values Survey, 2005-6. The 100-point scores were reversed and standardized around the mean (Z-scores).

Sources: Freedom House. *Freedom of the Press 2006: Table of Global Press Freedom Ranking* www.freedomhouse.org; Reporters sans Frontiéres *Annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2005* (Sept 2004-Sept 2005) www.rsf.org

Figure 8.2: Press Freedom and Confidence in Government
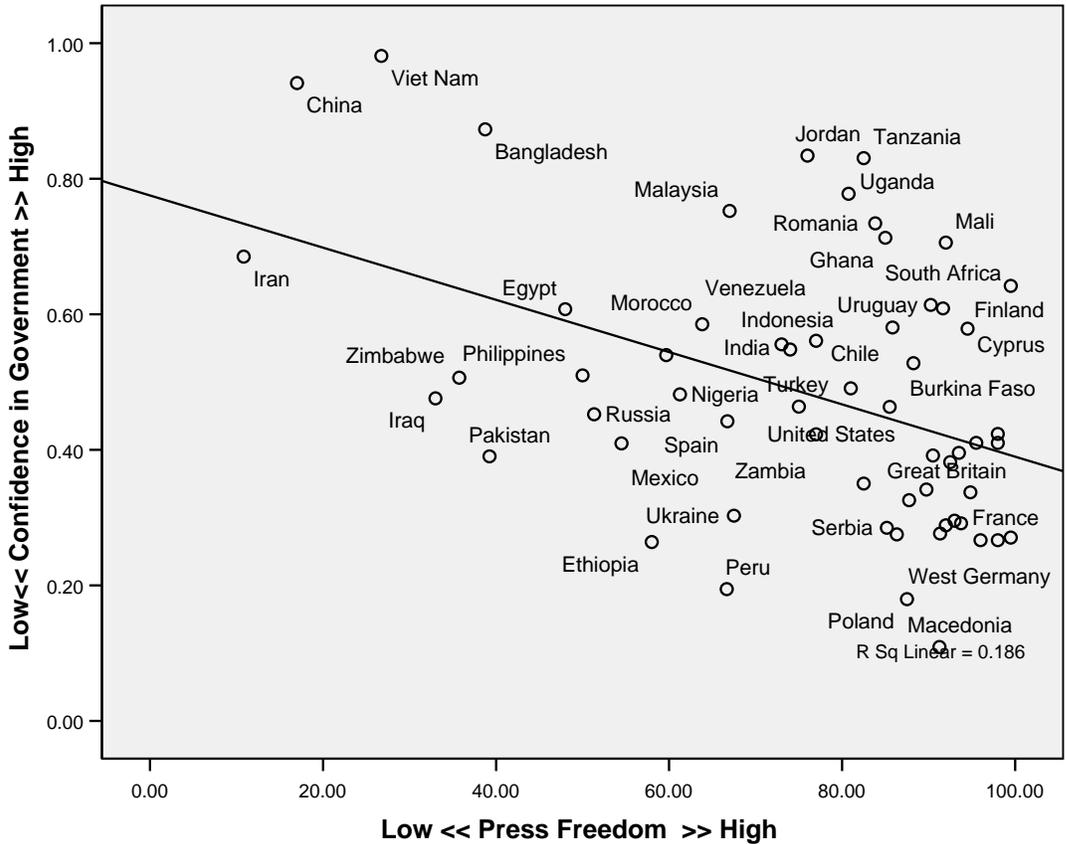
Note: *"I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them. The government in [your nation's capital]."* Proportion in each country expressing 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in government.

Sources: World Values Survey waves 4 and 5 combined. Press Freedom measured by Freedom House www.freedomhouse.org .

Figure 8.3: Access to the news media

Proportion of the population with no regular use of any news media

Country	Value
Rwanda	31
Burkina Faso	31
India	31
Zambia	24
Mali	24
China	22
Ghana	18
Ethiopia	13
Brazil	10
Colombia	9
Mexico	8
Uruguay	8
Taiwan	7
Moldova	6
Romania	5
Serbia	5
Argentina	5
Indonesia	5
Ukraine	5
Slovenia	4
Chile	4
Viet Nam	4
Italy	4
Great Britain	4
United States	3
France	3
Russia	3
Trinidad and Tobago	3
South Korea	3
Cyprus	3
Poland	2
Bulgaria	2
Andorra	2
Canada	2
Malaysia	1
East Germany	1
Netherlands	1
Japan	1
Australia	1
Finland	1
West Germany	1
Sweden	0

Note: Q. *"People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information."* The figure illustrates the proportion of respondents reporting no regular use of either a daily newspaper, news broadcasts on radio or TV, or the Internet/email as an information source.

Source: World Values Survey, 2005-6

Table 8.1: Factor analysis of regime support

	Confidence in regime institutions	Support for democratic principles	Support for nationalism
Confidence in government	.809		
Confidence in parties	.795		
Confidence in the civil service	.783		
Confidence in the courts	.777		
Against having a strong leader who does not bother with parliament and elections		.760	
Against having the army rule		.738	
Favor having a democratic political system		.631	
Strong feeling of national pride			.921
Confidence in the armed forces	.471		.504
% variance	32.7	17.1	11.1

Notes: The table represents the results of Principal Component factor analysis using varimax rotation with kaiser normalization, excluding all coefficients below .40. See the technical appendix for details of all variables.

Source: World Values Survey 2005-6

Table 8.2: Confidence in regime institutions

	Restricted media environment				Pluralistic media environment			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
Information sources								
Use TV/radio	**.992**	**.122**	**.085**	***	.066	.057	.007	
Use daily newspaper	**.217**	**.075**	**.032**	**	.011	.036	.002	
Use Internet/email	**-.222**	**.094**	**-.027**	**	**-.109**	**.037**	**-.020**	**
Controls								
Income	.243	.016	.176	***	.086	.008	.074	***
Education	-.435	.060	-.088	***	-.233	.026	-.064	***
Age	.142	.025	.059	***	-.038	.011	-.023	***
Gender	.001	.069	.000		-.083	.032	-.016	***
Interest	.740	.039	.195	***	.598	.017	.218	***
Constant	6.26				8.03			
Adjusted R^2	.083				.053			
N. respondents	8,696				24,632			
N. nation-states	10				34			

Note: The table presents the results of OLS linear regression models where the dependent variable, 'confidence in regime institutions', was measured on a 16-pt scale. See Appendix A for the items used to construct each variable. The figures represent the unstandardized beta coefficient (B), the Standard Error, the Standardized Beta, and the significance of the coefficient. Sig. P. *.05 **.01 *.001. All models were checked to be free of any problems of multicollinearity.

Source: World Values Survey 2005-6

Table 8.3: Support for democratic principles

	Restricted media environment				Pluralistic media environment			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
Information sources								
Use TV/radio	**-.256**	**.073**	**-.036**	*******	**.325**	**.041**	**.051**	*******
Use daily newspaper	**-.114**	**.045**	**-.028**	******	**.107**	**.026**	**.028**	*******
Use Internet/email	**-.665**	**.057**	**-.131**	*******	**.332**	**.027**	**.087**	*******
Controls								
Income	.130	.010	.155	***	.042	.005	.050	***
Education	.653	.036	.217	***	.235	.019	.090	***
Age	.020	.015	.013		.137	.008	.117	***
Gender	-.058	.042	-.014		.016	.023	.004	
Interest	.272	.024	.117	***	.139	.012	.071	***
Constant	6.09							
Adjusted R^2	.102				.052			
N. respondents	8,696							
N. nation-states	10				34			

Note: The table presents the results of OLS linear regression models where the dependent variable, 'support for democratic principles', was measured on a 12-pt scale. See Appendix A for the items used to construct each variable. The figures represent the unstandardized beta coefficient (B), the Standard Error, the Standardized Beta, and the significance of the coefficient. Sig. P. *.05 **.01 *.001. All models were checked to be free of any problems of multicollinearity.

Source: World Values Survey 2005-6

Table 8.4: Support for national community

	Restricted media environment				Pluralistic media environment			
	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.	B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
Information sources								
Use TV/radio	**.668**	**.045**	**.157**	***	**.122**	**.029**	**.027**	***
Use daily newspaper	-.013	.028	-.005		.017	.018	.006	
Use Internet/email	-.017	.035	-.006		**-.158**	**.019**	**-.059**	***
Controls								
Income	.039	.006	.078	***	.028	.004	.024	***
Education	-.189	.022	-.105	***	-.155	.013	-.085	***
Age	.046	.009	.052	***	.037	.005	.045	***
Gender	.133	.026	.055	***	.063	.016	.024	***
Interest	.142	.015	.102	***	.147	.009	.108	***
Constant	5.54				5.78			
Adjusted R^2	.052				.028	.028		
N. respondents	8,696				24,632			
N. nation-states	10				34			

Note: The table presents the results of OLS linear regression models where the dependent variable, 'support for national community', was measured on an 8-pt scale. See Appendix A for the items used to construct each variable. The figures represent the unstandardized beta coefficient (B), the Standard Error, the Standardized Beta, and the significance of the coefficient. Sig. P. *.05 **.01 *.001. All models were checked to be free of any problems of multicollinearity.

Source: World Values Survey 2005-6

Table 8.5: Summary of results

	Restricted media environment			Pluralist media environment		
	TV/Radio	Newspapers	Internet	TV/Radio	Newspapers	Internet
Confidence in regime institutions	**+**	**+**	**–**	N/s	N/s	–
Support for democratic principles	**–**	**–**	**–**	**+**	**+**	**+**
Support for national community	**+**	N/s	N/s	+	N/s	–

Note: See Tables 2-5 for details. The symbols summarize the direction of any significant coefficients established in the previous regression models. The symbols highlighted in **bold** have the polarity that is consistent with the core hypotheses.

Table 8.A1: Technical appendix

Variable	Q.	Coded
Household income	V.253 *"On a card is a scale of incomes on which 1 indicates the 'lowest income decile' and 10 'the highest income decile' in your country. We would like to know in what group your income falls, counting all wages, salaries, pensions, and other incomes that come in."*	Coded 1 (low) to 10 (high)
Gender	V235.	1=Male, 0=Female
Education	V238."*What is the highest educational level that you have attained?"*	8 categories from 'No formal education' (1) to 'University degree' (8)
Age	V237. Age in years	Recoded into 6 age groups from 18 to 85.
Interest	V7. *"For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life….Politics."*	Very important (4), rather important (3), not very important (2), not at all important (1).
Use radio/TV	*"People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information. Radio/TV"*	Used last week(1), Not (0)
Use daily newspaper	*"People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information. Daily newspaper"*	Used last week(1), Not (0)
Use Internet/email	*"People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information. Internet/email."*	Used last week(1), Not (0)
Media environment	Classified from the RSF Worldwide Press Freedom Index.	0=Restrictive (China, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, Rwanda, Vietnam, Ukraine),

		1=Pluralistic, (all the remainder)
Institutional confidence	V131-147 *"I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them.* *Government in [your nation's capital], political parties, the civil service, the courts."*	4=A great deal of confidence, 3=quite a lot of confidence, 2=not very much confidence 1= none at all. Summed for a 16 point scale (Confidence in Government + political parties, + civil service+ the courts)
Support for the national community	V132 Confidence in the armed forces (item coded as above) V.209 *"How proud are you to be [nationality]."*	4=very proud, 3=quite proud 2=not very proud, 1=not at all proud. Summed to an 8-point scale.
Support for democratic principles	*"I am going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad or very bad way of governing this country?* *V148 Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections?* *V150. Having the army rule?* *V151 Having a democratic political system?"*	The three items were recoded in a consistent pro-democratic direction then summed to form a 12-point scale.

[1] Reporters sans frontiéres. 2007. 'At least five journalists arrested in Rangoon, including Japanese daily's correspondent.' 30 Sept 2007.

http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=23837

[2] Other examples include Chinese suppression of news about Tibetan protests in March 2008.

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[9] Reporters sans frontiéres. 2007. *North Korea - Annual Report 2007*.

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[10] See, for example, the International Federation of Journalists. http://www.ifj.org/ and the Human Rights Watch. http://www.hrw.org/

30

[11] See, for example, cases documented by the Index on Censorship http://www.indexoncensorship.org/, The World Press Freedom Council www.wpfc.org, and the International Press Institute http://www.freemedia.at.

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[13] See for example the International Federation of Journalists. http://www.ifj.org/ and the Human Rights Watch. http://www.hrw.org/

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[38] For more methodological details and results, see Freedom House. 2007. *Global Press Freedom 2007.* www.freedomhouse.org. The IREX *Media Sustainability Index* provides another set of indicators (http://www.irex.org/resources/index.asp). The Media Sustainability Index by IREX benchmarks the conditions for independent media in a more limited range of countries across Europe, Eurasia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Unfortunately the IREX index does not contain sufficient cases of countries included in the WVS-5 to be useful as a cross-check for this study.

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