

Freedom in the World

Political Rights and Civil Liberties
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Freedom in the Comparative Survey: Definitions and Criteria

Freedom, like democracy, is a term with many meanings. Its meanings cover a variety of philosophical and social issues, many of which would carry us far beyond the discussion of political systems with which the Comparative Survey of Freedom has been principally concerned. Unfortunately, linguistic usage is such that the meanings of a word such as freedom infect one another, so that a "free society" may be taken to be a society with no rules at all, or a free man may be taken to be an individual with no obligations to society, or even another individual. It is this global sense of individual freedom that leads many Americans to scoff at the idea that theirs is a free society. Not primarily concerned with politics, most Americans apply the word "free" to their personal relationships, sensing correctly, but for our purposes irrelevantly, the necessity to work at a job, or to drive at a certain speed on the highway. To these individuals, "freedom" sounds like a wonderful goal, but hardly a goal that their society has achieved. Yet freedom, when addressed in a narrow political sense, is the basic value, goal, and, to a remarkable degree, attainment of successful democratic regimes.

Freedom as independence is important to the Survey, but this too is not a primary basis of judgment. When the primary issue for so many countries in the colonial era was to become free from a colonial or occupying power, "freedom" meant that a country had emerged from control by another state, much as the United States had achieved freedom in the 1780s. This sense of freedom was applied to the term "the free world" after World War II because the Soviet Union forced satellization on so many countries of Eastern Europe. By contrast those beyond this sphere were said to be free. In this sense Spain was part of the free world, but at the time only in its relative independence. Still, for a people to be ruled by leaders from among themselves rather than by

foreign leaders is an aspect of political freedom—self-determination is a democratic right. But the fact, for example, that the dictators of Haiti have been Haitians has done little for the freedom or democratic rights of this oppressed people.

Since democratic freedoms and human rights are often considered together it has often been assumed that the Survey of Freedom is equivalent to a survey of human rights. However, in spite of the considerable overlap of the two, concern for democracy and concern for human rights are distinct. A free people can deny human rights to some of their number, and they can certainly deny human rights to others. Thus, the Japanese tendency to exclude foreigners, and to discriminate against those who come to Japan, is unfortunate but does little to affect its democracy. If people are beaten cruelly in the jails of Arkansas, this too is a violation of human rights, but the ill-treatment may both be passively approved by the people of the state and be of little consequence for those requirements for free speech and nonviolent pluralism necessary for the expression of political democracy.

One concern that many have felt with the human rights movement has been its tendency to proliferate as "rights" an ever-lengthening list of desiderabilia, a list that mixes general principles of natural rights with the particular concerns of modern intellectuals. This weakens the proposition that there are basic natural rights that all peoples in all places and times should feel incumbent upon themselves and their societies. It also leads to an increasing opposition between expanding democratic freedoms (that is, the ability of a people to decide its own fate) and expanding human rights.

In the Survey, freedom or democracy is taken to mean "liberal democracy." It is surprising how many well-informed persons believe that since the "German Democratic Republic" also uses the term democracy in its label, we must include regimes of this type within our definition. It would be like saying that since the German fascists called their party "National Socialist," discussions of socialism must use definitions that would include the Nazis. Words can be appropriated to many uses, and no one can stop the appropriation, but when an extension of meaning adds little but confusion, and begins to call black white, then it should be rejected.

In rejecting the Marxist-Leninist or extreme leftist usage of the word democracy, as in "people's democracy," we do not mean to imply that there is not a range of acceptable meanings of "democracy" that must be taken into account in any survey of democratic freedoms. We have explicitly addressed in previous volumes of the Survey the question of how "economic freedom" might be defined.¹ Our conclusion was that a system was free primarily to the extent that the people were actually given a choice in determining the nature of the economic system. Therefore, a system that produces economic equality, if imposed, is much less democratic than a more unequal system, if freely chosen. Of course, questions must always be asked about the extent to which a system is freely chosen by any people. Economic measures such as land reform in a poor peasant economy may play a significant part in improving the ability of people to take part in the political process fairly, and thereby choose the economic strategies that they desire.

The Comparative Survey was begun in the early 1970s as an attempt to give a more standardized and relativized picture of the situation of freedom in the world than could be provided by essays of individuals from different backgrounds that had formed, and in part still form, Freedom House's annual review of the condition of freedom in the world. My own experience had been that the world media and, therefore, informed opinion often misevaluated the level of freedom in countries with which Westerners had become particularly involved. In many countries oppressions were condemned as more severe than they were in comparative terms. On the other hand, the achievements of the postwar period in expanding freedom were often overlooked. Many small countries had quietly achieved and enjoyed democracy with relatively little media attention. The most oppressive states were those about which there was the least news in the media. Although these imbalances are still present, it is possible that some improvement in the presentation of the state of freedom in the world has resulted from the development of these Surveys.

The Comparative Survey of Freedom was hardly the first survey. There had been a number of other surveys. Bryce had listed the number of democracies in the world in about 1920.² An extensive cross-comparison of societies on social and cultural variables was published in the early sixties by Banks and Textor.³ Based on an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data for all nations in

the period 1960-62, the authors ranked and categorized polities on a wide variety of indices. These included economic development, literacy, and degree of urbanization, as well as political and civil rights. Since the authors' purpose was ultimately to discover correlations among the variables, their indices were more specific than those used in the Comparative Survey. They were interested primarily in presenting detailed information on items such as the nature of the party system, the presence or absence of military intervention, the freedom of opposition groups to enter politics, or the freedom of the press.

The next major effort, by Robert Dahl and colleagues at Yale, was much closer in intent to the Comparative Survey.⁴ In updating Banks and Textor's work they placed all significant states along a variety of scales relating to democracy. The resulting scales were then aggregated into scales representing the two fundamental dimensions of "polyarchy" according to Dahl: opportunities for political opposition and degree of popular participation in national elections. The resulting lists of polyarchies and near-polyarchies were very similar to our lists of free states. A similar rating of democratic systems was developed about the same time by Dankwart Rustow.⁵ In both cases, and especially that of Rustow, there seemed to be an overemphasis on the formal characteristics of participation in elections and too little regard for the civil liberties that must complement elections if they are to be meaningful. Nevertheless, the resulting lists were very similar to those produced a few years later in the first Comparative Survey of Freedom.

A recent attempt to rank most, if not all, nations on a human rights scale by Charles Humana achieves similar results to my own.⁶ This is particularly remarkable in that Humana's goals are quite different. Human rights for Humana covers a broader spectrum of issues, and the issues include both those generally acknowledged in international documents and those that Humana is particularly concerned about (such as military training, amounts spent on defense, and homosexual rights). His work again suggests the close connection of human rights and democracy or freedom, yet it tends to rank down poorer countries by bringing in a number of basic needs as "rights."

The essential difference between the Comparative Survey and the other attempts of the last generation has been its annual presen-

tation of the evidence and rankings, as opposed to what are essentially one-shot presentations. The latter often represent much more detailed study, but they suffer from the lack of experience with repeated judgments and changes over a period of years that has served to improve the Comparative Survey.

In many ways more comparable to the Survey are the annual reports on human rights to Congress of the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.⁷ Presenting detailed information on the state of human rights in every country, the reports consider political and civil liberties as well as other issues. They are, of course, influenced by America's foreign policy concerns, but with this caveat they are remarkably informative. Improving in coverage and comparability are also the annual reports of Amnesty International.⁸ Amnesty's concerns in the area are much narrower, but information on Amnesty's issues--execution, political imprisonment, and torture--often has a wider significance. Both of these efforts have now become basic sources of information for the Comparative Survey.

The purpose of the Comparative Survey, then, is to give a general picture of the state of political and civil freedoms in the world. By taking a consistent approach to the definition of freedom, distinctions and issues that are often overlooked are brought out. In particular, its comparative approach brings to the reader's attention the fact that the most publicized denials of political and civil liberties are seldom in the most oppressive states. These states, such as Albania and North Korea, simply do not allow relevant information to reach the world media. There may or may not be hundreds of thousands in jail for their beliefs in North Korea: few care because no one knows.

Besides giving a reference point for considering the performance of nations, by its existence the Survey stands for the importance of democracy and freedom to an often cynical world. Too often, Westerners believe that democracy is impossible outside of a few Western countries, and consign the rest of the world to perpetual despotism. The story of the struggle for democratic freedoms is a much more complicated one, and it needs to be told. In a sketchy manner the Survey records the advances and retreats of democracy, and alerts the world to trends that should be resisted and those that should be supported.

The Categories of the Survey

The two dimensions of the Survey--political rights and civil liberties--are combined summarily for each country as its "status of freedom." **Political rights** are rights to participate meaningfully in the political process. In a democracy this means the right of all adults to vote and compete for public office, and for elected representatives to have a decisive vote on public policies. **Civil liberties** are rights to free expression, to organize or demonstrate, as well as rights to a degree of autonomy such as is provided by freedom of religion, education, travel, and other personal rights. The **Status of Freedom** is used to differentiate those countries that are grouped toward the top, middle, or bottom of the political rights and civil liberties scales.

Political rights and civil liberties are rated on seven-point scales, with (7) the least free or least democratic and (1) the most free. With no exact definition for any point on these scales, they are constructed comparatively: countries are rated in relation other countries rather than against absolute standards. The purpose of the rating system is to give an idea of how the freedoms of one state compare with those of others. Different persons with different information, or even with the same information, might compare countries differently. But unless the results of such comparisons are wildly different, there should be no concern. For example, if the Survey rates a country a (3) on political rights, and another person, accepting the criteria of the Survey, rates it a (4), this is an acceptable discrepancy. If judgments of two persons should turn out to be more than one point off, however, then either the Survey's methods are faulty, or the information of one of the judges is faulty.

The generalized checklist for the Comparative Survey is outlined in the following table. Detailed discussion follows.

Checklist for Freedom Ratings

Political Rights

1. Chief authority recently elected by a meaningful process
2. Legislature recently elected by a meaningful process

Alternatives for 1. and 2.:

- a. no choice and possibility of rejection
 - b. no choice but some possibility of rejection
 - c. choice possible only among government or single-party selected candidates
 - d. choice possible only among government-approved candidates
 - e. relatively open choices possible only in local elections
 - f. open choice possible within a restricted range
 - g. relatively open choices possible in all elections
3. Fair election laws, campaigning opportunity, polling and tabulation
 4. Fair reflection of voter preference in distribution of power
--parliament, for example, has effective power
 5. Multiple political parties
--only dominant party allowed effective opportunity
--open to rise and fall of competing parties
 6. Recent Shifts in power through elections
 7. Significant opposition vote
 8. Free of military control
 9. Free of foreign control
 10. Major group or groups denied reasonable self-determination

11. Decentralized political power
--including: groups or factions other than the national government having legal regional or local power
12. Informal consensus; de facto opposition power

Civil Liberties

13. Media/literature free of political censorship
 - a. Press independent of government
 - b. Broadcasting independent of government
14. Open public discussion
15. Freedom of assembly and demonstration
16. Freedom of political or quasi-political organization
17. Nondiscriminatory rule of law in politically relevant cases
 - a. independent judiciary
 - b. security forces respect individuals
18. Free from unjustified political terror or imprisonment
 - a. free from imprisonment or exile for reasons of conscience
 - b. free from torture
 - c. free from terror by groups not opposed to the system
 - d. free from government-organized terror
19. Free trade unions, peasant organizations, or equivalents
20. Free businesses or cooperatives
21. Free professional or other private organizations
22. Free religious institutions

23. Personal social rights: including those to property, internal and external travel, choice of residence, marriage and family
24. Socioeconomic rights: including freedom from dependency on landlords, bosses, union leaders, or bureaucrats
25. Freedom from gross socioeconomic inequality
26. Freedom from gross government indifference or corruption

Discussion of Political Rights.

(1-2) Political systems exhibit a variety of degrees to which they offer voters a chance to participate meaningfully in the process. Let us briefly consider several levels of political participation and choice.

At the antidemocratic extreme are those systems with no process, such as inherited monarchies or purely appointive communist systems. Little different in practice are those societies that hold elections for the legislature or president, but give the voter no alternative other than affirmation. In such elections there is neither a choice nor the possibility--in practice or even sometimes in theory--of rejecting the single candidate that the government proposes for chief executive or representative. In elections at this level the candidate is usually chosen by a secretive process involving only the top elite. More democratic are those systems, such as Zambia's, that allow the voter no choice, but do suggest that it is possible to reject a suggested candidate. In this case the results may show ten or twenty percent of the voters actually voting against a suggested executive, or even on occasion (rarely) rejecting an individual legislative candidate on a single list. In some societies there is a relatively more open party process for selecting candidates. However the list of preselected candidates is prepared, there is seldom any provision for serious campaigning against the single list.

The political system is more democratic if multiple candidates are offered for each position, even when all candidates are gov-

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ernment or party selected. Popular voting for alternatives may exist only at the party level—which in some countries is a large proportion of the population—or the choice may be at the general election. Rarely do such systems extend voter options to include choice of the chief authority in the state. Usually that position, like the domination by a single party, is not open to question. But many legislators, even members of the cabinet, may be rejected by the voters in such a system, although they must not go beyond what the party approves. Campaigning occurs at this level of democracy, but the campaigning is restricted to questions of personality, honesty, or ability; for example, in Tanzania campaigning may not involve questions of policy. A further increment of democratic validity is effected if choice is possible among government-approved rather than government-selected candidates. In this case the government's objective is to keep the most undesirable elements (from its viewpoint) out of the election. With government-selected candidates there is reliance on party faithfuls, but self-selection allows persons of local reputation to achieve office. More generally, controlled electoral systems may allow open, self-selection of candidates for some local elections, but not for elections on the national scale. It is also possible for a system, such as that of Iran, to allow an open choice of candidates in elections, but to draw narrow ideological limits around what is an acceptable candidacy.

Beyond this, there is the world of free elections as we know them, in which candidates are both selected by parties and self-selected. It could be argued that parliamentary systems such as are common outside of the United States reduce local choice by imposing party choices on voters. However, independents can and do win in most systems, and new parties, such as the "Greens" in West Germany and elsewhere, test the extent to which the party system in particular countries is responsive to the desires of citizens.

(3) In most of the traditional western democracies there are fair election laws, at least on the surface. This is not true in many aspiring democracies. Senegal, for example, did not allow opposition parties to join together for the last general election, a regulation the government seems determined to maintain. Since effective oppositions often emerge from coalitions, this regula-

tion is a useful device for preventing fragmented opposition groups from mounting a successful challenge. Election laws in Egypt and South Korea have been devised so that the size of the majority of the governing party is artificially inflated after its victory.⁹ This is a useful device where there is a danger of excessive fragmentation leading to majorities too weak to govern, but it seems in these cases to be intended to reduce the size of the opposition.

Political scientists dispute whether it is fairer to allow people to contribute to candidates as they like, or whether the government should disburse all campaign funds. Obviously, if the former system is allowed there will be advantages for the more wealthy. However, if the latter is allowed there will be advantages for those who already have power, since governmental disbursement systems must allow funds to be spent in accordance with past patterns (and impoverished campaigns favor incumbents who initially are better known). If outcomes of elections were determined simply by the amounts spent, then depending on government financing would support a quite unchanging vote distribution. One example of this tendency on a restricted scale is the use of the public media for electioneering, usually by giving the parties, or candidates, or at least the major parties and candidates, specified and equal time on television or radio.

Perhaps the most common accusation against the fairness of elections is the extent to which the government takes advantage of the resources of office to defeat its opponents. Incumbents and government officials can often issue statements and make appearances related to the campaign that are not strictly described as campaigning. "News," whatever its origin, is likely to favor incumbents simply because as long as they are incumbents their actions are more newsworthy. Other practices that continue in the less-advanced democracies, but were common in all democracies until recently, are various forms of "vote buying," whether this be by actually distributing money, or the promise of large projects, or the promise of future positions to well-placed influentials in critical districts. The use of government equipment such as jeeps and helicopters has often been alleged in campaigns in the third world, such as those of Congress (I) in India or of Barletta in Panama in 1984.

Few democracies are now seriously plagued by direct manipulation of votes, except occasionally on the local level. However, new democracies and semidemocracies are plagued both by such manipulations and equally by accusations that they have occurred. Elections recently in El Salvador, Panama, and Mexico have been marred by such accusations, and in the latter two cases, at least, with some justification. One test of a democracy is the extent to which it has effective machinery in place to prevent flagrant cheating. Such methods generally include genuinely neutral election commissions and poll watchers from all major parties to observe the voting and tabulation of results.

Given the advantages of the incumbents, and thereby generally the government and its party, any campaigning rules that restrict the campaign are likely to affect opposition candidates or parties most severely. The very short campaigns prescribed by many democratic systems would seem to Americans to be unfair—yet many countries have a fully competitive system with such limited campaigns (probably because their strong parties are, in effect, continuously campaigning). More serious are restrictions placed on campaigning ostensibly to reduce the chance of violence, such as Malaysia's rule that all rallies must be held indoors, even during campaigns.

(4) Even though a country has a fair electoral process, fair campaigning, and meaningful elections, it will not be a functioning democracy unless those elected have the major power in the state. The most common denial of such power has come through the continued domination of the political system by a monarch or a self-selected leader, as in Morocco or Pakistan. Another common denial of real parliamentary power is occasioned by the continued direct or indirect power of the military—or military and king as in Thailand. In Latin America it is common even in otherwise functioning democracies for the military services not to be effectively under the control of the civilian and elected government. By tradition, ministers of defense in much of Latin America are appointed from the military services rather than being civilians as is the practice in more mature democracies. In countries such as Guatemala and El Salvador, the problem has gone beyond that of the military not being under civilian control. In such cases, at least until recently, an economic elite has been unwilling to let

elected governments rule. Such an elite may directly and indirectly struggle against its opponents through violent internal warfare outside the control of the system—although elements of the system may be used to implement the desires of these shadowy rulers.

(5) In theory it should be quite possible for democracy to be perfected without political parties. Certainly the founding fathers of the American Republic did not think parties were necessary. The leaders of many countries that have moved from liberal democratic models to single parties argue for the necessity to reduce the adversarial spirit of parties; they claim to be able to preserve democracy by bringing the political struggle within the confines of one party. However, in practice policy is set in single parties by a small clique at the top; those in disfavor with the government are not allowed to compete for office by legal means—indeed, they are often ejected from the single party all together, as in Kenya.

The conclusion of the Survey is that while parties may not be necessary for democracy in very small countries such as Tuvalu, for most modern states they are necessary to allow alternatives to a ruling group or policy to gain sufficient votes to make a change. Therefore, the existence of multiple parties is important evidence for the existence of democracy, but is not absolutely conclusive. We are waiting for demonstrations of the ability of one-party or nonparty systems to achieve democracy. (Nepal's experiment with a nonparty system is worth watching in this connection.)

"Dominant Party" structures such as those of Malaysia or Mexico allow oppositions to mobilize to the extent that they can publicize alternative positions and effectively criticize government performance, but not to the extent that they represent a realistic threat to the group in power. Controls over campaigning, expression of opinion, patronage, and vote manipulation, as well as "punishment" of areas that vote against the government are methods used in such systems to make sure that the governing party remains in power.

(6-7) An empirical test of democracy is the extent to which there has been a recent shift in power occasioned through the

operation of the electoral process. While it is true that the people of a country may remain relatively satisfied with the performance of one party for a long period of time, it is also true that a party in power may be able over time to entrench itself in multiple ways to such a degree that it is next to impossible to dislodge it by legitimate means. For a time in the first years of the Survey there was the suspicion that the social democratic party of Sweden had accomplished this. However, in 1976 social democratic domination was ended after forty-four years. The extent of democratic rights can also be empirically suggested by the size of an opposition vote. While on rare occasions a governing party or individual may receive overwhelming support at the polls, any group or leader that regularly receives seventy percent or more of the vote indicates a weak opposition, and the probable existence of undemocratic barriers in the way of its further success. When a government or leader receives over ninety percent of the vote this indicates highly restrictive freedom for those opposing the system: over ninety-eight percent indicate that elections are little more than symbolic.

(8-9) A free, democratic society is one that governs itself through its own official processes. The two most blatant means of denying the control of a society by its elected leaders are military or foreign control. Since control of violent force is a basic requirement of all governments, when those who directly have this power begin to affect the political process, this aspect of government is turned on its head. The traditional democracies have long since been able to remove the military from power; at the opposite extreme are purely military regimes, as in much of Africa. A few countries remain under a degree of foreign control or influence. For example, in Europe, Finland, and to a lesser extent Austria, must remain neutral because of the pressure of the Soviet Union. Mongolia and Afghanistan are under direct Soviet occupation.

There are many vague accusations that one or another country is under military or foreign control. In this spirit the United States is said to be "ruled" by a military-industrial complex or Mexico is said to be under American control. But there is simply too much evidence that these "controllers" are frequently ignored or slighted for such accusations to be taken too seriously. To a

degree every country in the world is influenced by many others--large and small. (While smaller countries generally have less power of self-determination than larger countries, for most issues the power of the individual voter in the smaller states to control his life through the ballot is likely to be greater than that of people in larger countries.) The Survey's position in regard to both of these kinds of "outside" control is to record only the most flagrant cases, and to not enter the area of more complex interpretations.

(10) A democratic polity is one in which the people as a whole feel that the process is open to them, and that on important issues all individuals can be part of a meaningful majority. If this is not true, then the democratic polity must either divide, or devise methods for those who feel they are not part of the system to have reserved areas, geographical or otherwise, in which they can expect that their interests will be uppermost. In other words, there must be either external or internal self-determination. Most democracies are relatively homogeneous. But even here, without some forms of elected local or regional government, people in some areas will feel crushed under a national majority that is unable to understand their particular problems or accept their values. Other democracies, such as India or the United States, have devised elaborate methods for separate divisions of the country to be in important degrees self-governing. The problems of over-centralization in Europe have recently been addressed by countries such as France, Spain, and the United Kingdom, but in the case of Northern Ireland, current subdivisions or political boundaries continue to make a population feel like foreigners in their own land.

(11) The question of self-determination is closely related to the extent to which political power has been decentralized. Since it would be possible for a country to have an elaborate degree of decentralization and still hand down all the important decisions from above, there must be the empirical test of the extent to which persons or parties not under control of the center actually succeed politically. The fact, for example, that Japanese are able to play a leading role in Hawaiian politics, or that the

Scots nationalists are able to achieve a significant vote in Scotland suggest an authentic devolution of political power.

(12) Finally, the Survey wants evidence for the extent to which the political decision process depends not only on the support of majorities at the polls, but also on a less adversarial process involving search for consensus among all groups on issues of major public interest. A democracy should be more than simply a society of winners and losers. The most common way for this to be demonstrated is for the opposition to be taken into account in major decisions and appointments, even when it does not have to be consulted in terms of the formal requirements of the system. The recent unwillingness of Malta's governing party to treat its opposition in this way, in spite of the fact that the governing party received less than a majority of the popular votes in the last election (but a slight majority of the seats), has made that country's political life into the struggle of two warring camps.¹⁰ Obviously, this test of informal power is particularly important in judging the degree of success of one-party "democracies" that base their claim to legitimacy on their willingness to achieve national consensus.

Discussion of Civil Liberties.

(13) The checklist for civil liberties is much longer and more diffuse than that for political rights. While many civil liberties are considered in judging the atmosphere of a country, primary attention is given to those liberties that are most directly related to the expression of political rights, with less attention being given to those liberties that are likely to primarily affect individuals in their private capacity.

At the top of the list are questions of freedom for the communications media. We want to know whether the press and broadcasting facilities of the country are independent of government control, and serve the range of opinion that is present in the country. Clearly, if a population does not receive information about alternatives to present leaders and policies, then its ability to use any political process is impaired. In most traditional democracies there is no longer any question of freedom of the press: no longer are people imprisoned for expressing their

rational views on any matter--although secrecy and libel laws do have a slight affect in some countries. As one moves from this open situation, from ratings of (1) to ratings of (7), a steady decline in freedom to publish is noticed: the tendency increases for people to be punished for criticizing the government, or papers to be closed, or censorship to be imposed, or indeed for the newspapers and journals to be directly owned and supervised by the government.

The methods used by governments to control the print media are highly varied. While pre-publication censorship is often what Westerners think of because of their wartime experience, direct government ownership and control of the media and post-publication censorship through warnings, confiscations, or suspensions are more common. Government licensing of publications and journalists and controls over the distribution of newsprint are other common means of keeping control over what is printed. Even in countries with some considerable degree of democracy, such as Malaysia, press controls of these sorts may be quite extensive, often based on an ostensible legal requirement for "responsible journalism." Control of the press may be further extended by requiring papers to use a government news agency as their source of information, and by restricting the flow of foreign publications.¹¹

Broadcasting--radio or television--are much more frequently owned by the government than the print media, and such ownership may or may not be reflected in government control over what is communicated. It is possible, as in the British case, for a government-owned broadcasting corporation to be so effectively protected from government control that its programs demonstrate genuine impartiality. However, in many well-known democracies, such as France or Greece, changes in the political composition of government affects the nature of what is broadcast to the advantage of incumbents. The government-owned broadcasting services of India make little effort to go beyond presenting the views of their government.

In most countries misuse of the news media to serve government interests is even more flagrant. At this level, we need to distinguish between those societies that require their media, particularly their broadcasting services, to avoid criticism of the political system or its leaders, and those that use them to "mobilize" their peoples in direct support for government poli-

cies. In the first case the societies allow or expect their media, particularly their broadcasting services, to present a more or less favorable picture; in the second, the media are used to motivate their peoples to actively support government policies and to condemn or destroy those who oppose the governing system. In the first, the government's control is largely passive; in the second it is directly determinative of content.¹²

The comparison of active and passive control by government brings us to the most difficult issue in the question of media freedom—self-censorship. It is fairly easy to know if a government censors or suspends publications for content, or punishes journalists and reporters by discharge, imprisonment, or worse; judging the day-to-day influence of subtle pressures on the papers or broadcasting services of a country is much more difficult. Perhaps the most prevalent form of government control of the communications media is achieved through patterns of mutual assistance of government and media that ensure that, at worst, reports are presented in a bland, non-controversial manner—the practice until this last year, at least, of the largest newspapers in Pakistan and the Philippines.

Some critics believe that most communications media in the West, and especially in the United States, practice this kind of censorship, either because of government support, or because this is in the interest of the private owners of the media. In the United States, for example, it is noteworthy that National Public Radio, financed largely by the state, is generally much more critical of the government in its commentaries than are the commercial services. The critics would explain this difference by the greater ability of commercial stations to "police" their broadcasts and broadcasters. The primary explanation, however, lies in the gap between the subculture of broadcasters and audience for public radio and the subculture of broadcasters and especially audience for commercial stations.¹³

(14) Open public discussion is at least as important a civil liberty as free communications media. The ultimate test of a democracy is the degree to which an atmosphere for discussion in public and private exists free of fear of reprisal by either the government or opposition groups. Even in the relatively free communist society of Yugoslavia people are still being imprisoned

for the expression of critical opinions in private.¹⁴ Certainly Iranians have had to be careful in the early and mid 1980s not to express too openly opinions that go against the prevailing climate of opinion in their country.

(15-16) Open discussion expressed by means of political organization, public demonstration, and assemblies is often threatening to political incumbents. There are occasions in which such assemblies may be dangerous to public order and should be closely controlled or forbidden. But in many societies this hypothetical danger is used as a pretense to deny opposition groups the ability to mobilize in support of alternative policies or leaders. In Malaysia, for example, the government's denial of public assembly to the opposition has been one of the main ways to restrict the ability of the opposition to effectively challenge the rule of the government.¹⁵ Obviously, denial of the right to organize freely for political action is the most generalized form of the attempt to prevent the effective mobilization of opposition to government policies. Control over political organization is a distinguishing characteristic of one-party states, but many multiparty states place limits on the kinds or numbers of political parties that may be organized. Controls over extremist parties that deny the legitimacy of democratic institutions, such as many fascist or communist parties, are understandable—still, they represent limits on freedom. (Obviously, political and civil freedoms overlap closely on the right to political organization. The distinction is between the existence of a denial of a right to participate in elections and the denial of a right to organize to present alternative policies or arguments for and against change in other ways.)

(17) A democratic system is not secured unless there is a legal system that can be relied on for a fair degree of impartiality. The electoral process, for example, needs to be supervised by electoral commissions or other administrative systems that ultimately can be checked or overruled by the judicial system. People accused of actions against the state need to have some hope that their cases will be tried before the courts of the society and that the process will be fair. One of the tests that the author often applies to a country is whether it is possible to win

against the government in a political case, and under what conditions. A reliable judicial system requires a guarantee of the permanence of judicial tenure, particularly at the highest levels, as well as traditions of executive noninterference developed over a period of years. Of course, in no society are all trials fair or all judges impartial; but in this respect there are vast differences between democracies and nondemocracies.

A significant but less striking difference exists between the ways in which security services treat the public in democracies and nondemocracies. Since the people of a democracy are the sponsors of the system,¹⁶ in theory the security services are their hired employees, and these employees should treat them with the utmost respect. However, because of the nature of the task of police and army, and their monopoly over force, in larger societies, at least, this relationship is often forgotten. Even in full-fledged democracies many security services have a reputation, for example in France or certain parts of the United States, of treating people with carelessness and even brutality. But it is clearly true that to the degree that security forces are the employees even in theory of a smaller group than the people as a whole, then their behavior will be even less "democratic."

(18) Certainly democracy requires that people be free from fear of the government, especially in regard to their politically related activities. To this degree, the emphasis of organizations such as Amnesty International on the extent of imprisonment, execution, or torture for reasons of conscience is closely related to any measurement of democracy. Oppressive countries imprison their opponents, or worse, both to silence the particular individuals, and to warn others of the dangers of opposing the system. Recently exile and disappearances have been used as a further deterrent. "Disappearance" is generally a form of extra-judicial execution; often carried out in support of the ruling system: such terrorism may or may not be directly under the orders of government leaders. These practices underscore the fact that a great deal of such internal state terrorism does not involve the normal legal process; frequently opponents are incarcerated through "detentions" that may last for years. In the Soviet Union and some other communist countries, the practice of using psychiatric institutions to incarcerate opponents has been developed on the

theory that opposition to a people's state is itself a form of mental illness.

It is important in this regard to distinguish between the broader category of "political imprisonment" and the narrower "imprisonment for reasons of conscience." The former includes all cases that informed opinion would assume are related to political issues, or issues that can be defined politically in some states (such as religious belief in communist or some Islamic societies). It includes those who have written articles that the regime finds offensive as well as those who have thrown bombs or plotted executions, or even caused riots, to dramatize their cause. Since clearly the latter actions cannot be accepted by any government, all states, at whatever level of freedom, may have some "political prisoners." But if we take the category of political prisoners and separate out those who appear to have not committed or planned, or been involved in supporting, acts of violence, then we have the smaller category of "prisoners of conscience." Their existence must be counted against the democratic rating of any country. This is not to say that the existence of prisoners of conscience who have been involved in violence cannot also be taken in many countries as an indication that a system may not be sufficiently responsive to demands expressed nonviolently—too often there may be no effective means to express opposition without violence. The distinction between prisoners by reason of conscience and political prisoners is in practice often blurred by the outsider's difficulty in deciding whether particular incarcerated individuals have or have not committed or planned acts of violence. Nevertheless, by looking at the pattern of a regime's behavior over a period of years it is possible to estimate the degree to which a regime does or does not have prisoners of conscience.

Anti-dissident terror undertaken by groups that support the general system of a country but are not, or may not be, under government control is often difficult to evaluate in determining a country's rating. In the case where the terrorism is carried out by the security services, or their hired hands, we can either assume that these services are no longer controlled by the civilian administration, and to this extent the system cannot be called free, or that the civilian administration actually approves of the actions. In cases where the terror stems from parties or

cliques outside of this structure, which to some degree has been the case in El Salvador, then the judgment has to be based on a finer balance of considerations.

(19-21) Democracies require freedom of organization that goes far beyond the right to organize political parties. The right of individuals to organize trade unions, or to organize cooperatives, or business enterprises, are certainly basic rights that may be limited only with great care in a free society. The right of union or peasant organization has been particularly significant because it allows large groups of ordinary people in many societies to balance through numbers the ability of the wealthy to concentrate power. However, in some societies, such as those of western Africa, the ability of medical, bar, and academic associations to mobilize or maintain alternatives to ruling groups has been of equal importance. The primary reason that democracies require freedom of organization is that there have to be organized, countervailing power centers in a society—which is one definition of pluralism—if a society is going to maintain free institutions against the natural tendency of those in government to aggregate power.

(22) It is for this reason that religious freedom, in belief and in organization, has been particularly important for the defense of freedom in a more general sense. Religious institutions have been able to maintain opposition strength in societies as different as those of Poland and Chile. A strong religious institution can build a wall around the individual dissident that a government will be loathe to breach for the sake of imposing its order. In countries such as Argentina or Poland, in recent years the organized church and organized unions have gone a long way toward insuring a society able to resist the encroachments of government. The question is not whether a particular established organization, such as the church, is itself favorable toward democracy. It is rather whether there are organizational structures willing and able to exist independently of government direction. Without such countervailing organizational power it is unlikely that significant civil liberties can be maintained against government pressure.

(23) Civil liberties also include personal and individual social rights, particularly those that are likely to most directly affect the ability of people to withstand the pressures of the state. Especially important are those to property, travel (including emigration), and to an independent family life. The right to property does not necessarily mean the right to productive property, but it does mean the right to property that can provide a cushion against government pressures such as dismissal from a position, that will make possible private publications, or other activity that cannot be financed unless people have more than subsistence incomes. The ability of an individual to travel, particularly to leave the country, is of great importance to dissidents or potential dissidents. It allows them additional sources of support and an additional refuge should the effort to improve conditions in their own country fail. An independent family offers another type of emotional haven that makes possible independent thinking and action. Opposition to Mao during the 1960s in China became almost impossible when individuals could no longer trust even spouses and children not to inform on their activities. The complete isolation of the individual, even in the midst of a crowded life, is the ultimate goal of oppressors.

(24-25) Civil liberty requires, then, that most people are relatively independent in both their lives and thoughts. It implies socioeconomic rights that include freedom from dependency on landlords, on bosses, on union leaders, or on bureaucrats. The kind of dependencies that the socioeconomic system imposes on individuals will vary from society to society, but widespread dependencies of these kinds are incompatible with democratic freedoms. This implies that there should be freedom from gross socioeconomic inequality. It should be noted that we are not saying that democracy requires that incomes or living standards be equalized. But we are saying that if inequalities are too great, if a small group of very wealthy lives in the midst of a large number of very poor individuals it is likely that relations of dependency will develop that will make impossible the unfettered expression of opinion or a free and uncoerced vote.

(26) Finally, there would seem to be an indirect requirement that the civil liberties of a democracy include freedom from the

extremes of government indifference and corruption. These conditions make it impossible for the people affected to feel that they are in any important sense the sponsors of their political system. Such indifference and corruption also implies that the mechanisms of democracy in the state are simply not working. If there is a continued record of disregard for the interests of the people, and yet the representatives of the people are not replaced by the electoral or judicial process, the system is not working. Such indirect tests are necessary for a rating system that is based in large part on regular monitoring of press reports from around the world.

Status of Freedom

After countries are rated on seven-point scales for levels of political rights and civil liberties, these ratings are summarized in terms of overall assessments as free, partly free, and not free. This categorization is interpreted to mean that the list of operating democracies in the world is made up of those countries given the summary status of "free." Terms such as "free" and "not free" are only to be understood as relative expressions of the degree of political and civil liberties in a country.

It should be clear that the more important ratings are the basic ones for political rights and civil liberties, and that the Status of Freedom is a summary statement that arbitrarily divides up the other scales for ease of presentation (particularly in the annual "Map of Freedom" derived from the Survey). This lumping together will place in the same category countries that are actually quite far apart in terms of their democratic practices--such as Hungary or South Africa at the lower edge of partly free as compared with Malaysia or Mexico at the upper edge.

Methods and Criticisms of the Survey

The Survey is based on library research, updated by a more or less continuous flow of publications across the author's desk. Once the basic nature of the political system and its respect for civil liberties is established, following the flow of information

Once the basic nature of the political system and its respect for civil liberties is established, following the flow of information either confirms or disconfirms this general picture, as well as recording any changes that may occur. It also has had the effect since the beginning of the Survey in 1972 of refining the author's sensitivity to those conditions and indicators that go with different levels of democratic rights.

The use of general descriptions and a flow of information is particularly useful because the Survey is based on evidence of democratic or nondemocratic **behavior** by the governments of countries in regard to their own peoples. Because interest in human rights and democracy is often centered in the legal community, many students or analysts in this area concentrate their attention on changes in laws or legal structures. Even Amnesty International takes the position that the numbers imprisoned or executed in a country is a less important indicator of change than change in the law in regard to these practices.¹⁷

The Comparative Survey has received good and bad reviews.¹⁸ The criticisms have been of two sorts. The most common have been based on the misunderstanding that the Survey is commissioned by Freedom House as a tool in the struggle of capitalism and communism. In spite of the fact that the Survey has always shown some "socialist" countries as relatively democratic and some capitalist countries as relatively tyrannical, and that no economic system criteria are used in measuring political rights or civil liberties, critics often allege that the Survey automatically rates capitalist countries as "free." In this same vein it may be alleged that the Survey ignores certain "human rights" such as the right to adequate nutrition. This is, of course, a criticism that can be addressed on several levels. Most appropriate is the remark that the Survey is of political and civil freedoms and not of human rights. (In philosophical terms neither freedom nor democracy are properly understood as including all "goods" and only "goods.")

The criticism is also made that the Survey does not take into account social and economic rights. Clearly, some social and economic rights, such as the right to the freedom of workers or of businessmen to organize, are considered basic rights by the Survey. It is our feeling that some of the other proposed rights, including some of those implied by the Universal Declaration of

order to give people maximum freedom to develop their societies in terms of their needs and desires as they understand them, it is important that the list of rights be reduced to the minimum that allows them to make this determination.

The objection that the Survey should take more seriously "economic rights" in the narrower sense of economic freedom has been addressed in the 1982 and 1983-84 Freedom in the World volumes. As was mentioned in the beginning of this Chapter, the conclusion was that the basic economic right of all democracies was for the people to have an authentic and repeated opportunity to choose the economic system they desired. Their choice might range from libertarian to any one of a number of forms of socialist. To this we added that to be effective this economic freedom of choice must be based on some relative equalities in power; the absence of dependency that is included in the checklist above as a requisite civil liberty in a democracy must be generally present for economic freedom to be meaningful.

Another common criticism has been that the Survey is not sufficiently quantitative and rigorous. It has been pointed out that it would be possible to take the checklist variables, such as we outline above, and assign values to each, such that the results could be cumulated to yield more objective ratings. Aside from making a number of experiments along this line, the author has answered this criticism by pointing to the problems that others have had in applying such schemes to this data. Robert Dahl used such a scheme in developing his list of democracies. Yet he notes that in at least one case he had to adjust the results to obtain the relationships that he intuitively "knew" were correct in spite of the quantitative apparatus.¹⁹ In his rating of countries according to human rights variables referred to above, Charles Humana also seems to have had difficulty assigning numerical scores to variables, and in summing these to obtain comparable "scores" for each country.

Two more objections to more quantification may be mentioned. First, we simply do not have adequate information to make possible assigning scores to the wide variety of individual variables that would be involved. Second, all such systems assign definite values to each area of the problem, so that when there is a particularly good or bad showing in an area the scoring system cannot flexibly record this special quality of a country's demo-

cracy or lack of it. Only a very few points could be accorded, for example, to religious freedom, and yet in a particular instance the denial of religious freedom might be the outstanding fact in the judging of a country's civil liberties.

If more resources were available for assistance and on-site investigations, the Surveys could be greatly improved. They began, and have continued to be, a generalized attempt to improve the informed public's picture of the world. In spite of their limitations, some political scientists, economists, and sociologists have used the yearly Surveys as a source of data for correlation analyses of related variables. They are useful simply because they represent the only annual attempt to compare the level of democratic rights in all the countries in the world.

NOTES

1. See R. D. Gastil, *Freedom in the World: 1982* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), especially the article by Lindsay Wright, and *Freedom in the World: 1983-84*. For further discussions of the definitions of freedom and democracy from the viewpoint of the Survey see the relevant discussions in *Freedom in the World 1978 and 1984-85*.
2. James Bryce, Viscount, *Modern Democracies* 2 vols. (Macmillan, 1924).
3. Arthur Banks and Robert Textor, *A Cross-Polity Survey* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963).
4. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pages 231-49.
5. Dankwart A. Rustow, *A World of Nations* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1967).
6. Charles Humana, *World Human Rights Guide* (London: Hutchinson, 1983).
7. For example, United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1984*, Report submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations, U. S. Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U. S. House of Representatives by the Department of State (Washington, 1985).
8. Amnesty International Report, 1983 (London: Amnesty International, 1983).

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9. On Senegal see Africa Research Bulletin, December 1983, page 7050; on Egypt, Middle East, July 1984, page 22.

10. See Keesing's Contemporary Archives 1982 and 1983, pages 31339-40, 33096.

11. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1984, pages 32782-85; Far Eastern Economic Review, September 20, 1984, pages 40ff. Compare also the discussion by Leonard Sussman, pages 98-115 below.

12. William Rugh, *The Arab Press: News Media and Political Process in the Arab World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979).

13. For an attempt to suggest the relatively greater importance of subcultural as opposed to class or other interests in determining the opinions of people in our society see R. D. Gastil, "Selling Out' and the Sociology of Knowledge," *Policy Sciences*, 1971, 2, pages 271-277.

14. Amnesty Action, January 1985.

15. See, for example, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 23, 1984.

16. Alfred Kuhn, *The Logic of Social Systems* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975), pages 330-61.

17. Amnesty Action January 1, 1985. The discussion on page seven suggests that improvement in human rights is not seen so much in changes in the numbers imprisoned or killed as it is in changes in the laws of a country, such as the outlawing of torture or a change in a judicial policy that permits unjust imprisonment.

18. For example, Kenneth Thompson in *Human Rights Quarterly*, November, 1982, 4,4, pages 539-40; and Lars Schoultz in *Universal Human Rights*, January-March, 1980 2,1, pages 94-96.

19. Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pages 243-245.

Survey Ratings and Tables for 1985

The trend toward democracy of the last few years continued in 1985. Although the news media made the world aware of continuing problems of repression and oppression in many countries, such as South Africa, Poland, Chile, and Nicaragua, more quietly there was movement toward the further institutionalization of democracy or the extension of its acceptance in a number of areas of Latin America and Asia. In examining some of the details of this progress in the following discussion, it is necessary to remember the fragility of many of the advances. In much of the world the story of freedom remains that of the undulation of political rights and civil liberties.

The Tabulated Ratings

The accompanying Table 1 (Independent Nations) and Table 2 (Related Territories) rate each state or territory on seven-point scales for political and civil freedoms, and then provide an overall judgment of each as "free," "partly free," or "not free." In each scale, a rating of (1) is freest and (7) least free. Instead of using absolute standards, standards are comparative. The goal is to have ratings such that, for example, most observers would be likely to judge states rated (1) as freer than those rated (2). No state, of course, is absolutely free or unfree, but the degree of freedom does make a great deal of difference to the quality of life.¹

In political rights, states rated (1) have a fully competitive electoral process, and those elected clearly rule. Most West European democracies belong here. Relatively free states may receive a (2) because, although the electoral process works and