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Transcript

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Millennium Challenge Corporation Hosts a Press Freedom Panel Discussion

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Transcript

HARRINGTON: Good afternoon. My name is Maureen Harrington. I'm the vice president for policy and international relations here at the MCC.

And I have the distinguished opportunity today to welcome you all to the MCC for our roundtable, where we are going to be exploring the links between press freedom and poverty reduction. So thank you all for being here.

As many of you know, the Millennium Challenge Corporation takes very seriously the belief that democratic institutions are a key element of long-term economic development. And that belief is reflected in our approach in three different ways.

First, through our selection process. As many of you know, the Millennium Challenge Corporation works with a very small number of countries. And our model is designed to reward those countries that are putting in place

good policies. And some of the issues that we look at when we're selecting our country partners are related directly to democracy.

There are three indicators that we call our democracy indicators. There's the political rights and civil liberties indicators, which are from Freedom House. And we also have a voice and accountability indicator, where we receive the data from the World Bank institute.

And both the civil liberties and voice and accountability indicators incorporate measures of press freedom directly into the scores. So when we're choosing our country partners, press freedom is something that is reflected in the selection process.

The next element of our approach that looks at democracy is how we go about implementing the compacts with our country partners. We work with our country partners in a way that complements the democratic institutions that are already in place.

And I won't spend a lot of time talking about this. MCC has written a paper specifically on how we work with democratic institutions. It's available here today, and I'd encourage you to read it.

And the last area where we're supporting democratic efforts is directly through our Threshold Program. There are a number of programs that we are providing funding for through the Threshold Program that work directly with journalists and finding ways to strengthen press activities in the countries where we're working. And that includes Malawi, Moldova, Ukraine, and Tanzania, among others.

So through these outlets, we have emphasized the importance of transparency and free-flowing information. And I'd also like to acknowledge, actually, our colleagues here from USAID who manage the Threshold Program for us. They can also provide more information about our activities in the Threshold Program, and we appreciate their partnership and all the hard work that they provide to help make those press freedom activities function very well.

Today we wanted to focus on the critical role the media plays in providing the flow of information that's necessary for accountability and long-term development.

So with that in mind, I'm delighted that we have this panel here today. We're looking forward to learning from all of your experiences and, I think, the interesting debates and discussion that we're going to have today. And we thank you for taking the time to be with us.

I'd also like to thank my colleague, Matt McLean, and his colleagues from the CPA office here for all of their hard work putting this event together.

And I would like to now ask my colleague, Alicia Phillips Mandaville, who is our associate director in the development policy group, to help moderate the discussion. She is also the author of the democracy paper that's available here for you today and can take any questions you might have about that.

So, again, thank you all for coming. We're excited about this opportunity to have a discussion with you today. And we're looking forward to the debate.

Thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

MANDAVILLE: Thanks. Thank you all for coming, for being here today to have this conversation with us.

I did just want to take a moment and introduce our panelists so that everyone knows who's who and why we're hearing some diverse perspectives on the issue today.

So starting here immediately to my right, Joseph Siegle, who is currently the serious adviser for governance at DAI. He's also affiliated with the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland.

Previously, he was a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, spent some time at World Vision, and has advised both USAID, State Department, and Department of Defense on a variety of democratization and post-conflict issues. Joe's trained as an economist and a political scientist. I think he's authored and co-authored several pieces on the political transition in transitioning democracies.

And, perhaps most important for us today, his doctoral work focused and looked quite a bit at the role that free press played in economic outcomes. And so we'll be looking forward to hearing about what might honestly be Joe's favorite subject in the world.

To his right is Mark Whitehouse, who is the director of media programs at IREX. He has more than 15 years of experience in democratic and media development, including USAID, State Department, and privately funded media projects. He led the team that developed the Media Sustainability Index, which is a tool that the media developed and that community uses to assess media conditions and environments.

And prior to joining IREX, he also worked at the Carter Center, USAID, and the American Council for International Education. So we're looking forward to hearing some perspective from someone working on the ground with journalists in transitioning environments.

Next to him is Richard Winfield, who is the chairman for the World Press Freedom Committee. In addition to his chairmanship, his involvement in media freedoms and extending media freedoms is reflected in pro bono work, his law school teaching, and previous law practice.

He currently teaches media classes both at Columbia's and Fordham's law schools in New York. Since the mid-'90s, he's led media reform programs for ABA CEELI. And over three decades, he's served as the Associated Press's general counsel, defending media clients (inaudible) hundreds of cases around the world.

So we're looking forward to hearing from him, a good global take on what it's like to maybe work in the trenches, defending media freedoms in some places.

And then, finally, at the end of the table, we have James Traub, who is an actual journalist. We thought it would be useful to have one of those on hand today.

(LAUGHTER)

And he is currently a contributing writer to the New York Times Magazine. He's previously been a writer and contributed to the New Yorker, the New York Review of Books, Foreign Affairs, the Atlantic Monthly, and The New Republic, among others.

He's written extensively about international affairs, as well as national politics and urban affairs, which includes education, immigration, race, poverty, a full range of issues, many of the things that we are thinking about, the issues that journalists are covering in the countries that we work in, as well.

His last book was about Kofi Annan and the United Nations. It came out in November 2006. The next book will be on democracy promotion. It's due out this September. And I know I, for one, am looking forward to reading it and hearing his thoughts today.

One logistical note to the speakers. I'm supposed to keep time on you guys, so I have a 5-minute warning and a 10-minute mark. At some point -- we haven't installed ejector seats in any of the chairs, but I will stand up and politely cut you off if we go too much farther past that, because I know we have some good questions today. We'll want to have a good conversation.

This is MCC's first kind of foray into looking more deeply into one of the institutions of democracy or one of the mechanisms that's part of the basic democratic accountable system. As Maureen mentioned, we've done some good work already on looking at how democracy as a whole and economic growth fit together.

We're looking forward to looking into each of the individual pieces. And I think we couldn't kick it off in a better way.

So with that, I'll turn it over to Joe, and I will get out of the way.

SIEGLE: OK, thank you, Alicia.

And I am told we're supposed to keep this microphone close to our mouths as we speak today. And since I have a tendency to use my hands a lot when I speak, that may be a particular challenge. So forgive me if you only hear part of this.

I wanted to focus my remarks on two aspects of this relationship: first, looking at some of the empirical underpinnings of the links between freedom of the press and economic growth and development; and, secondly, looking at some of the reasons why we tend to see positive patterns between these two phenomena.

Now, the figures that I'll cite will refer specifically to countries with per capita incomes below \$4,000 a year. This is roughly the candidate pool of countries that the MCC deals with. And I'll be using Freedom House's Press Freedom Index as my measure of countries which are either more or less open in their media environments.

Countries that score above the median on Freedom House's Press Freedom Index are considered more permissive media environments. Those that score below the median are considered more restrictive environments.

OK, so starting at the most aggregate level, when we look at this relationship, starting from 1980 to the present, we see that countries with more open media sectors have actually grown at a rate more than double those of countries with more restrictive media environments. And this is using five-year lagged growth rates.

So countries with more open media have grown on average about 2.5 percent per year. Countries with more restrictive environments have been just over 1 percent per year on average. And those countries with more restrictive media environments have actually been subjected to on average about 40 percent higher levels of growth volatility.

So this means that the gains that they due realize from their growth are often wiped out by subsequent falls in their growth experience, which, of course, undercuts their prospects for sustainable development.

Putting this in a little bit different perspective, if we look at the top 30 performers among low- and lower-middle-income countries over the last 10 years, controlling for post-conflict countries, controlling for the oil-rich exporters, we see that, of these 30 top performers, only two score in the lower half of the Freedom House scale, China and Kyrgyzstan.

And I think it's particularly striking in that, from 23 percent of all of the growth data points for this lower-than-median group of countries are not reported. So the figures that I cite and the differences that I cite are likely even larger than what we're talking about today.

And, in fact, relevantly for our discussion today, you know, it suggests that an issue like press freedom is in some ways a prerequisite to even doing these sorts of comparisons on the development and growth trajectories that we care so much about.

All right, if we turn this to talking about some of the social development measures, we see very comparable patterns of divergence. To throw out a few illustrations, again, looking at five-year rates of progress, countries with more permissive media environments have, on average, realized declines in the infant mortality rates of about 13.5 percent over the last 25 years. This compares to declines of only 7.5 percent for countries with more restrictive media environments.

Secondary school attainment rates have improved by about 6.5 percent on average for the more open media environments, compared to less than 2 percent for the more closed systems.

And cereal yields, which are particularly important given that many of the countries we're talking about rely heavily on their agriculture economies for their growth and broader economic development, these have improved by an average of about 8.5 percent over five years for the more open societies, compared to less than 5 percent for the more closed systems.

And as with the volatility figures on the growth side, we see that countries with more closed media environments are more subject to all sorts of humanitarian catastrophes, both in terms of the frequency and magnitude of these catastrophes. And this is played out in terms of conflict, in terms of refugees, in terms of internally displaced persons.

And this relationship has been famously captured by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen when he noted that there's never been a major famine in a democracy with a free press.

Let me switch now over to talking about some of the reasons why we see these patterns of a positive relationship between a free press and growth and development. There are lots of explanations, both direct and indirect. I'm going to try to hit on four that I think are particularly important.

First, a free press helps to contribute and open up the marketplace of ideas in a society. And this is particularly important in a policy debate at the front end, because it introduces more information and more ideas, more perspectives than would otherwise be the case. This helps to check against any ideologically driven or more radically based policies that political leaders may wish to take.

And it similarly expands the agenda that is part of the public discourse. And, indeed, to the extent that independent media is a voice for the public, it tends to represent a greater focus on development issues. And this then can become part of the public discourse and a priority set for the government.

Secondly, independent media helps to contribute to stronger levels of accountability on public officials. And there are numerous ways that this takes place.

One that has been particularly important from the democracy practitioner community and an important lesson over the last 10 years or so has been that, unless there is a strong domestic demand for better government ser-

ices, for more responsive government services, for more transparent government services, any amount of work that we do from the international side, in terms of trying to build capacity or tweak institutions, change or push legal reforms, can only go so far without stalling.

Indeed, you need that strong domestic effective demand for better services for these reforms to really gain traction and be sustained over time. And an independent media plays a crucial role in that process.

Third, an independent media plays a very indispensable role in the society as a feedback loop. So when something is going wrong, when there's a looming disaster in a society, that information is transmitted much more quickly back to the offices of political leaders, to the society more generally, and this, in turn, mobilizes more timely responses, more vigorous responses as a means of trying to mitigate humanitarian suffering and the reputational damages that this will cause political leaders.

This is one of the primary reasons that democracies in general and countries with more open press regimes in particular have done a better job at mitigating humanitarian catastrophes over time.

Fourth and finally, more open societies, as represented by countries with broader press freedoms, do a better job at holding the light of transparency on corrupt activities. And, again, there's numerous ways by which this check on corruption takes place, but in the most general terms what we see is that independent media have incentives to expose malfeasance.

This, in turn, changes the benefit and cost ratio that public officials face when contemplating engaging in corrupt activities. This, in turn, reduces the level of corruption that we see in these societies and, in effect, changes the incentives for corruption than what exist in more closed media environments.

And this seems to be borne out in terms of aggregate relationships of the countries that score in the top half of the Freedom House Press Freedom Index. Only one country, Libya, scores on the bottom half of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

So, obviously, there's a lot more to discuss on this issue, but let me stop there and turn it back over to you, Alicia.

WHITEHOUSE: OK, well, first, I'd like to thank the MCC for pulling this together. I was just saying that, to someone here who used to work at NDI, a colleague in the democracy and governance community, that sometimes the media development community is rather isolated from the larger community.

A lot of times we talk to ourselves and we very much agree with ourselves as to the importance of media development, but perhaps we don't spend enough time talking to those both in the larger democracy community, as well as those working on economic development.

And I'm also pleased to hear your remarks and that I follow that, because I'd like to open by stating that I've been working at IREX for almost 11 years now. And when I started, the concept of discussing media and its role in economic development was virtually absent in the media development community.

It was there; it was discussed. But it was really a marginal consideration, in many respects. The field was very much about democracy. And, of course, that's well and good and has been the main focus of it, but it was neglecting the role in the economy, the role in poverty reduction, the role in improving social welfare in many cases.

And this was true, I think, both in terms of much of the donor community, but as I said, also, the implementer community. And donors looked at media as part of a democracy promotion strategy.

However, this mindset has been changing. And more research is being done, some of which you pointed out, more of the ties being made between media and economic development, and that's filtering down into the media development community very strongly. So we do see media playing a very crucial economic development role.

And today I'd actually like to focus two aspects of that role, one of which Joe talked about, in terms of information and feedback loops, but also another one that we're coming to understand better, which is that media itself is an economic actor.

It's just not sitting outside the economy providing information. Media outlets are employers; they're advertisers; they're taxpayers. In essence, they're businesses. They're small, in some cases medium enterprises in the countries in which we're working.

And I'd actually like to start with that, just tell one story. It's from a more developed transitioned country, yet it offers some lessons as to what the donor community and media development community could do to work on this aspect of developing media as businesses.

And the country I'm choosing is Kosovo. Of course, it's been in the news recently for its independence declaration and burning border posts and U.N. buildings, but there is an economic success story there in the media that I think needs to be told.

And donors really got involved in Kosovo after the end of the NATO campaign and the withdrawal of Serbian forces. There really weren't independent media, per se, in Kosovo, so a lot of attention was focused on starting up media outlets, helping those who wanted to build media outlets to build those, and that was quite successful.

There was a flourishing of media outlets, TV, radio, print, most of it well-intentioned, some -- those of you who follow Kosovo, I think, were used more to perpetrate hate speech. But by and large, it was well-intentioned, democratically oriented individuals who got involved in building new media outlets.

However, not a single one of them that I'm aware of knew anything about running a business. They were journalists; they were good journalists. They were editors; they were good editors. But they had to run businesses now.

And in this, I think you can look at what's gone on as a success of the media development community. And I'm going to talk about two television stations, two national, private stations, KTV and RTV₂₁.

And USAID, working with IREX, sort of after this initial building period, decided that it was clear that donor funding would be ending, the grant support provided to these stations to get started would be ending, so it started a process of working with the stations to consult on sales, marketing, management, working closely with the stations and with their buy-in and with their participation.

It wasn't imposed on them. They clearly participated in this. And the incentive for them -- although maybe at first they thought, "Oh, no, we're going to lose our grant support" -- the incentive was, if you work with us, we hope you will make a profit, you will become a profitable business.

And the process has taken -- so far, we've been doing this about four years, regular consulting, regular financial audits, they can understand what's going on, regular management training, regular sales work with them.

But another important aspect of this was to say that they don't exist in isolation. They are part of the broader community and the broader economic community.

So we worked with them to bring in advertisers and market research companies to develop market research that they all bought into and they all accepted. And they could see their audience; they could see what people wanted to watch. Advertisers could say, "If I want to reach this demographic, I know that I'm going to go to RTV₂₁ at 9 p.m. and buy ads."

That in and of itself helps then develop the consumer market, helps develop the economy in that way. Unfortunately, I'm not sure there's great data on that, so maybe you could work on that. But I think it's kind of an accepted view of things that does need some more data.

But the point is it takes a lot of work, a lot of investment of time and resources. It is not something that can be done with a couple of trainings. It takes years of effort.

And yet when you look at things in the grand scheme of donor money going to countries like this, it's really quite a small amount of money. So my point to the larger donor community is it's an investment worth making.

Sometimes there are short time horizons to prove results, but sometimes the reality is it's going to take more than a three-year grant cycle to get those results. And yet there are success cases that prove they do come.

And you look at Kosovo, where the advertising revenue is up 25 percent just over the last two years. These two stations alone are 1.5-million-euro businesses, which is substantial for Kosovo. They employ hundreds of people, who then take their incomes and go out and are members of the economic community.

So I think that's perhaps sometimes an overlooked aspect, that media is an economic player.

I'd like to also quickly -- I think because Joe talked about this more, about the information side of media -- just tell a story and what it says about what donors can do on that side. And this comes from a recent visit I made to Sierra Leone and visited a radio station outside the capital in one of the most remote and most poor districts in Sierra Leone, which is itself ranked last in the human development index. So this is the poorest and least developed of the least developed.

This district has one radio station, Radio Bintumani, which doesn't even reach outside the capital city, has no electricity, so they work on generators and people listen to it using generally battery-powered radios. Yet every single person talks about the importance of that radio station to get information.

And they also take tapes of some of their broadcasts and drive them -- or, more accurately, usually ride motorcycles around this district -- to play them in communities, so they can hear what's going on.

And one specific case I'd like to quickly point out is a group of women farmers, a cooperative, very successful, that work together to develop their marketing together. They were buying airtime and/or given airtime on this radio station to talk about their success story, which was wonderful.

However -- and this is the role donors can play -- through no fault of their own, they aren't necessarily good at telling their story, and the radio station didn't quite know how to use radio best as a storytelling medium, to talk about their success so other people who are looking to form cooperatives could learn from their success.

And yet this station several years ago received an equipment drop, has received a training once, maybe twice a year, but then their staff turns over. And it's stations like these -- and this might be at the micro level, but it's vital to economic development in these countries -- that donors should look at this and should make an effort to really support that, to say, "We can help these stations, because they can help this sort of local economic growth happen."

WINFIELD: Thank you. I'm Dick Winfield, chairman of the World Press Freedom Committee.

Alice suggested I look at a non-success story, looking at the typical narrative, where, let's say, a nation emerged in Central Europe, threw off the controls of the Soviet era, reformed its media laws, and soon developed a moderately free and independent press and a moderate growth. In other words, out of the ashes of an autocratic past, two phoenixes arose, one for a more or less free press and the other for a vital economy.

So Alicia suggested I consider the hypothesis of the link -- looking at the polar opposite of that. In other words, does the converse, a distinctly non-success story help support the idea of a link? In other words, can we find a narrative of a country in recent years where, one, there had been a thriving press and there had been a moderately thriving economy, and, second, the government intervened, cracked down hard on the press, ending any semblance of a free and independent press, and, third, over time the economy collapsed?

A few years ago, I represented an Associated Press journalist out of South Africa who was covering the violence in Harare in Zimbabwe. The police under Mugabe arrested him, detained him, jailed him, confiscated his passport, and framed him for having bombed the offices of the largest newspaper in Harare, the Daily News.

Our successful efforts to get him out of jail, having his passport restored, and getting him back to Johannesburg and out of Harare piqued my interest in the country. And with the elections three days from now, I think we ought to take a look at Zimbabwe.

And let's review developments in Zimbabwe along parallel timelines in the past two decades, the first for repressed freedoms and the second for changes in the economy.

Looking at press freedoms first, when Zimbabwe achieved its independence just under 30 years ago, its press was relatively free and flourishing. That was soon to change. Beginning in the late 1990s, the Mugabe regime enacted five draconian legal measures against the press, targeting independent broadcasters and newspapers and journalists.

First, a law was enacted that no journalist could work without a license. If a journalist tried, he would be jailed. Reporters who worked -- who were foreign journalists were deported. One journalist was deported in direct violation of an order of the supreme court.

Uncooperative journalists did not get licenses. A large number of journalists were jailed and beaten. About 90 journalists fled Zimbabwe. Newspapers were licensed, and sequentially shuttered, put out of business, along with all the private broadcasters.

The second measure of the Mugabe regime was to change the law which gave the government wide powers to intercept, monitor all private communication, including the Internet, including those for business and commercial transactions. Businesspeople can't discuss or communicate proprietary information without fear that it will be intercepted and exploited.

Third, the Broadcasting Services Act was enacted in 2001, granting a state monopoly on all broadcasts, electronic broadcast. A short-wave radio station operated by exiles in England tries to reach Zimbabwe, but Zimbabwe jams the short-wave radio broadcasts. State security forces confiscate radios that are tuned to unlawful stations.

And the fourth draconian measure was the criminal code was amended to punish insults to the president or the acting president, an insult law, a seditious libel law. So critics of Mugabe are regularly prosecuted and jailed.

And, fifth and finally, the Official Secrets Act, a holdover from the British colonial area, was amended and expanded four years ago. And it covers not only official secrets, but also transmission and leaks of secrets of the ruling party, the Zanu-PF.

So these five legislative measures and their highly politicized enforcement destroyed what had been a relatively free and independent press. What remains today among the media is owned or controlled by the regime, the ruling party, or cronies of Mugabe.

So criticism of the government is unthinkable and prosecutable. Economic news is scant and, since it comes from the ministries, it is highly unreliable.

Four days ago, the Wall Street Journal assessed whether or not Mugabe would win re-election on Saturday. And the Journal reported that Mugabe is still popular in the rural areas, quote, "where access to unfiltered information is scarce," closed quote, and where people still remember the president when he came to power in the 1980s.

I had another Zimbabwe client, a pro bono political asylum applicant, who had been a headmaster in one of these rural areas. And he confirmed what the Wall Street Journal reported, saying that he'd meet men in the community in the bar after school closed and nobody had the slightest idea what was happening in the country, in the economy, much less Harare.

So that's the recent timeline for the media. And it is one of precipitous and deliberate decline. Now, let's turn to the parallel timeline for the economy.

Until the past decade, Zimbabwe was the bread basket of Africa, a net exporter of agricultural products, and one of the most prosperous post-colonial states. That was then.

Consider the record in the last decade. First, beginning about eight years ago, the regime seized all the white-owned farmland, commercial farmland, representing about 70 percent of all arable land in Zimbabwe. The owners were evicted and supporters and cronies of Mugabe and the regime and war veterans occupied the farmlands.

The wheels promptly came off agricultural production. The yields from harvest plummeted. The critical shortage of food which resulted is so serious that food riots broke out, shelves and stores are virtually empty, and, aside from food, there are serious shortages of medicine, fuel and hard currency.

The rate of hyperinflation exceeds 100,000 percent. I don't really know what that means. It's just impossible to comprehend 100,000 percent economy. Employment hovers between 80 percent and 90 percent. About three-quarters of the farm population fall below the poverty line.

About 3.5 million, or 1 in 4 Zimbabweans, fled into exile. Another 500,000 or so are internally displaced persons. Most of these are victims of the massive and brutal campaign engineered in 2005 to tear down urban homes and shops belonging to opponents of Mugabe.

So in recent years, life expectancy for men has dropped to 37 and 34, the lowest in the world. And the ravages of HIV-AIDS affecting much of the population helps explain this.

I think, is it a coincidence that these two spirals are synchronous and parallel? Certainly a number of pathologies caused the economic chaos. My suggestion is that the government's systematic and often violent suppression of news and information constitutes a major pathology.

To destroy freedom of expression is to do more than merely muzzle a press; it's more than shuttering newspapers and broadcasters. It's also -- to destroy freedom of expression, as Zimbabwe proves, is to dry up the market for information and (inaudible) economy can survive without a vital marketplace of information.

Thanks.

TRAUB: Thanks so much.

When I was asked to do this, my initial response was, "Well, I actually can't think of any connection between a free press and development." And I was told that that shouldn't stop me.

So I went back and thought about it some more. And, of course, I am a profound believer in a free press as an indispensable instrument of accountability.

And I know from, for example, reading Joe Siegle's really tremendously valuable book -- Joe is one of the co-authors of a book called "The Democracy Advantage," that democracies, as Joe explained, on balance are more effective in terms of economic development than non-democracies, and therefore it must be that, if a free press is a fundamental constituent of a democracy, and democracies are good for development, then free press is good for development.

So I accept it in a kind of abstract way, but all of the examples that occurred to me kind of went in the other direction. And so I thought it might be useful to express some of the restrictions on this apparent connection.

Probably one of the more forceful attempts to reject the argument that Joe and others make in "The Democracy Advantage" is a book that Kishore Mahbubani wrote, called "The New Asian Hemisphere." And Mahbubani argues that what he calls the Asian march to modernity, the tremendous economic success of Asian countries, China but not only China, is a matter of embracing the free market.

And, indeed, he explicitly makes the following kind of remarkable claim. He said, "At the end of the Cold War, people in the West made the mistake of thinking that what had triumphed was Western values, whereas, in fact, what had triumphed was free market principles."

And he said Russia made the dreadful mistake of thinking that it was Western values, and they embarked on perestroika and glasnost, and it all came to nothing, whereas Deng and the Chinese generally understood, no, no, it really was the free market.

And so they didn't attempt to endorse or copy Western political values and Western political freedoms, but rather to wholeheartedly pursue economic freedom. And, in fact, Mahbubani's book is a kind of full-throated endorsement, from what I can tell, of economic freedom without political freedom.

He makes the point that -- of course, he accepts that there's no real free expression in many of these countries, but he said that doesn't mean there's not profound communication and information flows. So, he says, to be part of the global economy, clearly Chinese traders, entrepreneurs and so forth need to have full access to commercial information.

So, indeed, there is a need for any economy that seeks to be a part of the global economy to have access to commercial information. But, of course, that's not the same thing as political information.

And when we talk about a free press, we don't mean simply the commercial information that's valuable to a marketplace. We mean the kind of political information that the state may find uncomfortable and chooses to restrict.

So his argument is, well, no, it's actually -- it is commercial information that is the lifeblood of a successful or developing economy and that can exist absent a free press. Indeed, he doesn't say this, but it is clearly so, that in countries with state-run or state-controlled press, the press is, in fact, quite consciously used for ends that may be developmental ends.

For example, in China, one often finds there are campaigns to rout corruption in a certain area or to expose pollution and bad environmental habits, (inaudible) one marshals the press for developmental ends, but one is marshaled by the state. So it's obviously a very different idea of how political information can be used to those ends.

One can also point out, for example, the tremendous importance of the growth of cell phones, not just in China, but all over Asia and, indeed, all over the third world. These are devices that empower individuals through communication, but that don't in any way or don't certainly need not involve the kinds of opening effects that Joe and the others have described that comes with a free press.

And, clearly, this is true not just in China. Russia has now obviously taken the advice that the key Western insight was the free market, not political values. And so now in Russia you have a wholly controlled press with an increasingly open economy and, again, free flows of commercial information, but a wholly obstructed flow of political information. And the Russians would say, like the Chinese, "Well, we're doing rather well, aren't we?"

So at the very least, I think you can say there are plenty of examples of countries where there is, in effect, an open market in commercial information with a profoundly restricted market in political information.

Then, if you look in a kind of different direction, you can say, well, let's think about India, for example. India is a country which has had political freedom, democratic freedom, press freedom since the beginning. And yet it grew 2 percent or 3 percent every year for 50 years or so.

The crucial thing that has turned India from a sleepy country with the so-called Asian rate of growth, old-fashioned idea, or probably the Hindu rate of growth, which was this 2 percent to 3 percent annual rate, to a giant is not any change at all in press or political freedom, but the adoption of -- well, there are many things, but a chief one is the adoption of free market principles.

So it's not that their having press freedom hinders economic growth; it's that it was coincidental to and had more to do with the change of economic rules.

Now, I've also been in plenty of third world countries with a free press and an economy in shambles. In Port-au-Prince or in Kinshasa, you can read lots of newspapers and they are quite open and raucous in their criticism of the state.

But it has no effect at all, because none of the institutions which actually would connect the will of the people who are being spoken to, to the operations of the state, exist.

What's also true is that we tend, when we think about a free press, we tend to think about newspapers. Well, in very poor countries, newspapers may perform a really important role in terms of the elite, and that includes political accountability, but they don't perform much of an educational role in terms of the mass public, because very few members of the mass public read these newspapers. Newspapers in the third world tend to be entirely limited to a very small number of cities, and they tend to have a kind of -- often a sort of circular focus or an insular focus within an elite.

I was struck when I was in Angola, for example, that Luanda also has a lot of quite free, unfettered newspapers, though it has a thoroughly authoritarian regime. When it came to the radio station, interestingly, Ecclesia, the Catholic-run radio station, that the regime really cracked down on, because that had a kind of capacity to reach people that the newspapers didn't reach.

So there also is an issue about what kind of media we're thinking about, what kind of press we're thinking about when we talk about the importance of press freedom, because that press freedom is more dangerous to regimes in some cases than it is in others.

So given all those provisos, I did want to say something about my idea of what is a kind of positive example of this, which does involve what strikes me as a kind of more democratic use of free press.

When I was in Mali -- and Joe was there at the same time for a meeting of the Community of Democracies -- this was last, I guess, November -- I spent time in the countryside. Now, Bamako also has lots of newspapers, and some of them are pretty good, and you could buy them all in the hotel, but they're not read outside of Bamako and Timbuktu and a few other cities. Again, they were elite commodities.

Interestingly, though, Mali claims to have the largest reach of radio of any country in Africa: 90 percent or so of Malians can actually get the radio.

Now, the radio is, I suppose, something like what Mark was describing in regard to Sierra Leone. To some extent, it's an informational device. And, again, we should keep bearing in mind this distinction, that authoritarian countries are quite happy to have all sorts of informational technologies available, so long as they don't touch on political issues and, therefore, are not seen as a threat.

The radio in Mali is essentially privately run. It has a deep community function, and so a lot of it is giving farmers news and things like that, but it's largely privately run. There is a willingness to some extent to speak politically. They endorse candidates and so forth.

And the one station I went to visit, in a small town in Mali, I said, "Well, what languages do you broadcast in?" Well, it turned out they do almost no French whatsoever, because, again, the newspapers and the TV in Mali are in French. Hardly anybody in Mali speaks French outside of the cities. So they broadcast in four different local languages.

And they have mullahs on to preach sometimes, but they vet their speeches beforehand, because they don't want to have inflammatory speeches. And they allow candidates to speak during campaigns. They interview candidates. They allow them to buy airtime and so forth.

And it's true that, as you go around small towns in Mali, there's a radio everywhere, and it's sort of playing out in the open. And so I don't know, I couldn't say what was the connection between this and development issues, but it did seem to me that it performed a function that was both profoundly informational in the non-political sense, but also political, in the consciousness-raising sense.

And so that does strike me as a potentially powerful medium, but I also do want to leave you with this sense that -- at least it strikes me that it is all too easy to think all good things go together, and economic development is

good, and democracy is good, and press freedom is good, and therefore they must go together, whereas at least it's my impression that the linkage between them is quite a bit more complicated and problematical than it may seem.

MANDAVILLE: Great, thanks very much to all of you. I think we've got some good range of perspective and a couple of different avenues we could go down.

Two things struck me. I will turn it over to questions first. I'll save my questions at the end so that we can get some other folks in here, but two things struck me, one on the theoretical, one on the practical side.

One, in listening to this distinction between the mundane economic information needed for basic market function and then political information that maybe governments are more concerned about, where's the line between those things? And at one point does restrictions on one influence media's ability to communicate the other? And I wonder if maybe we can get back to that at the end.

And then the second, with a more political -- or, pardon me, a more practical perspective, as an organization that benefits tremendously the more information the media circulates throughout the society, throughout the economy, I was very interested to hear this point about thinking about the media as a business, as well as just an avenue to move information, and wondered if, at some point, we could talk about there are things that outside actors, who are interacting with evolving media firms or evolving media outlets, want to keep in mind, as they're looking at working through that transition with them, but still continuing to rely on them to play the role of information sharing.

So I'll leave those to cogitate for a little bit, and then I'll take some questions from the audience.

Please, if you could just identify yourself and then ask your question, I think we've got a microphone.

QUESTION: Sure. I'm Bob LaGamma of the Council for a Community of Democracies. Following some of the remarks that James made about countries where there is a free media, I'd like Joe to explain Nigeria to me, please.

Nigeria has had the most dynamic press for 50-plus years, even before independence. Azikiwe, the first president, was a publisher. And this is a competitive press that had 16 dailies in Lagos and dailies all over the country, radio stations, television, and yet they can't get anything right economically.

Schools are less efficient than they were 20 years ago. Grain production has almost disappeared. All the standards that you cited are downhill, despite the presence of the most dynamic free press on the continent, I would argue.

SIEGLE: Thanks, Bob. You know Nigeria better than I do, and I would just offer a couple of quick thoughts in response.

One, in terms of the broader statistics that I cited -- of course, these are looking at the overall patterns that we see. And as with other illustrations that I've provided, there are exceptions. You have countries with stronger press that have actually struggled developmentally and the reverse. But that doesn't negate the strong divergences that we see.

The case of Nigeria is fascinating. And, you know, to the extent that there was a free press prior to 1999, when Nigeria actually did move towards democracy, that press was severely constrained. And the ability to engage in a dialogue with the political leaders was severely limited; there wasn't a two-way exchange of information.

And as a result, the political leaders were able to pursue policies that they saw fit without engagement from civil society, without engagement from the public. They were not considering the priorities of the general public. And that is what led to the ruinous policies that Nigeria pursued.

Now, we have seen since 1999 actually significant improvements on a whole host of development measures in Nigeria. And, indeed, while they're still dealing with a lot of the legacies, these institutional legacies of corruption and dysfunction that they've inherited, there are steps being made on the transparency side, on curbing corruption, on being more transparent, on their use of revenues.

And so I do see some of the same institutional contributions of democracy supported by a free press taking hold in Nigeria.

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Abdul Aziz Khan from Voice of America, and my question is also for Mr. Joseph Siegle.

Sir, I have been a journalist in United Arab Emirates and I have also been a journalist in Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Now, in United Arab Emirates, the freedom that we had was such that we could not come on television and say the name of the head of state.

Like, for example, in United States, I can go on that camera and I can say, "President Bush did this and President Bush did that." In United Arab Emirates, we could go to jail for saying, "Zayed did this, or Zayed did that." So we had to come on the camera and say, "His royal highness, Shah bin Sultan Al Nayan, has said this." So being critical of the government is one thing, but this was the level of freedom that we had.

Now in Pakistan, we, as far as my personal experience goes, we have been extremely critical of President Pervez Musharraf. If you were to open a Pakistani television channel now, you would find President Musharraf getting blasted on every possible level and his personality is being butchered.

And my question to you, sir, is that if we compare the economic growth of United Arab Emirates to Pakistan, then we find that United Arab Emirates has done far much better than what Pakistan has done. It's practically on the verge of economic collapse.

So while I would love to believe in this idea, because as a journalist my bread and butter is also tied to freedom of press, but I just wanted to know how these comparisons fit into your thesis. Thank you.

SIEGLE: Sure. Well, I would start again by citing that the statistics are talking about broader patterns rather than the exceptional cases. I mean, the UAE is easy. I mean, nearly all that growth is because of the oil that you have.

And, indeed, you know, I would, by the last count that I've done, a full quarter of the growth that we see among autocratic governments around the world is due to oil production. Indeed, 70 percent of the hydrocarbon-rich countries in the world are autocratic; 40 percent of the remaining autocratic governments in the world today are hydrocarbon-rich. So there's a very close synergy there.

So I don't think the distinction you portrayed really instructs our discussion today. But with regards to Pakistan, I think there are parallels to what we talked about with Nigeria. And, you know, clearly, when Musharraf came into power, one of the first things he did was to clamp down on the press.

Now, as his popularity has waned, as his authority has waned, he's had to step back from that somewhat. And with the resurgence and the re-legalization of the democratic parties in Pakistan, you know, the free press is -- the criticisms coming through in the press are, indeed, gaining traction in the political arena and Musharraf is on the defensive. And they're having to adapt, just like democratic processes lead leaders to adapt in other circumstances, as well.

TRAUB: I just want to add something to that. Like you, as a member of the press, it's obviously a very close issue. But I would never want to have to justify press freedom on the utilitarian grounds that I can prove that it enhances economic development, even though perhaps it can.

If you look at Pakistan, where I honestly don't know how you would connect growing press freedom to economic development, because Musharraf, in fact, tried to adopt a kind of Asian-style development, with little political freedom but much economic freedom. And to some extent, it worked. Pakistan has had greater economic growth than it ever had experienced before, with, until recently, less political freedom.

And yet, if you look at the indispensable role which the press played in creating the political environment which led to Pakistan's most democratic election and has led to I think a really exciting, at least potentially exciting future for Pakistan, the press played an indispensable role, both television, newspapers, radio, everything. And it was actually kind of a glorious moment for the press in Pakistan.

So, obviously, our conversation is limited to matters of development. But if you sort of take it from a different end and say, "Why is it that we care so much about the free press?" It's actually because of what happened in Pakistan.

QUESTION: Hi. First, I want to thank MCC for putting on this brilliant discussion. I'm going to try not to make a speech. Cut me off if we...

MANDAVILLE: I'll cut you off then.

QUESTION: My name is Noluthando Crockett-Ntonga. I have about six jobs. I am professor of journalism at Trinity University. I'm a consultant in international development. I'm a writer for AllAfrica.com. I'm a former correspondent for NPR.

My question is, Joe, when you were speaking, I was so excited, because it seemed like the chicken and egg. It seemed clear to me. But then after listening to everyone else, I really got confused, because it seems like it's very, very messy.

You know, like the way you described it, it sounds like, "OK, you do a free press, and boom, boom, boom happens." But after listening to the rest, I'm not so sure. And I would just like if everyone could just respond to that. Which comes first?

MANDAVILLE: Which comes first?

All right, why don't we -- if we've got a -- should we go ahead and roll them together then?

All right, real quick responses from the gut, maybe.

SIEGLE: OK, let me just start. Well, again, you know, we can talk about individual cases. And this field is filled with anecdotes, and there are exceptions. That's why I like to start talking about the broader patterns of experience over time and over all countries.

And that's what we forget, that, while there are exceptions, by and large most countries that have more closed press restrictions do more poorly. And many do abysmally. So we tend to forget that; we tend to focus on the successes. And there are lessons from the successes, the autocratic successes. They're just not very typical, and that's what we need to keep in mind.

With regards to the chicken and an egg, clearly, there are simultaneous effects happening. The figures I cited, though, were all five-year lagged figures. So these were relationships of growing press leading to future economic growth. So a country that's more free in its press today tends to grow twice as fast as a country that's less free five years down the line.

I have more to say on the broader discussion and sort of tag onto some of the interesting points that James made on the East Asia experience, but I think I'll try to pick that up in another round.

WINFIELD: Let me just add my observation that I don't think it's possible to divide neatly political news and information from economic news and information. For instance, China suffered a horrendous famine, killing 16 million to 29 million people in the late '50s and early '60s. And the control of the state press was absent.

Now, was the famine and those deaths a political act? And was the denial of coverage of political news of the deaths an economic or political or was it a hybrid?

Second, when the SARS epidemic broke out in China, the clampdown was absolute on the coverage of the SARS epidemic. And as it turned out, it was cellphones that broke the wall of silence.

And I think we have to compare -- this is not a zero-sum game. State-owned media do provide some of the vital information for economies. But compared to free and independent media, the World Bank study produced in 2002 showed that the state-owned media generally provide less vital, less compelling economic information. And, deprived of that information, markets in these autocratic states are far less vigorous than they could be, and the economy generally remains stagnant.

So people in countries with heavily state-owned media are more likely to suffer hard times comparatively, given the alternatives. So there are no absolutes in this equation or in this discussion. What we're suggesting is that free and independent media, unrestricted media, are more likely to facilitate the exchange of information that is vital to a growing economy, compared to the restrictions in state-owned media.

WHITEHOUSE: Just to follow up, first of all, as a matter of job protection, I think we should be doing this in every country in the world, including the United States, for both the political and the economic reasons that have been discussed here today.

But there is -- you know, I agree with what Joe said. There are exceptions. And James pointed out several very clear exceptions, China in particular.

But I would argue that -- and one can't necessarily prove this with China -- but it's not going to continue its growth and it's not going to get to the next level without an opening of press freedom.

That is in part what happened in Korea, the South Korean example, with a very restricted press, and it followed a developmental model in some ways similar to China, but from a right-wing perspective, perhaps. But as it grew into a more mature economy, its press was liberalizing at the same time.

So I would argue, in China, also there's not a distinction necessarily, a clear distinction between commercial and political information. You want to talk about inflation or inflationary pressures, that's political. It's also an -- it's economic information, but it's incredibly politically sensitive.

And for China to continue to grow and to move beyond exporting cheap goods, they're going to have to move into providing that information that is increasingly political, yet is economic at the same time. And that's where donors can help with those sorts of things.

TRAUB: I just want to say one very brief thing about this. And I actually accept the idea that, in a sense, the East Asian model is not generalizable.

It's true that if you could choose, if you were in a highly impoverished country and you could choose between the kind of East Asian autocratic model, with a highly consolidated state, relatively high levels of rule of law, commercial law, stuff like that, but no press freedom, and on the other hand the sort of feeble African democratic model of lots of newspapers and freedom of expression, but totally frail institutions, well, you would choose the East Asian one.

But you don't have that choice in real life. So in real life, if you are trying to give advice to Zambia, to an impoverished, third world country, which is not going to turn into Singapore, then you probably would say, "Yes, actually, it will help to have a free press. Let's just think about what kind of free press actually makes a difference in your country."

QUESTION: First, nice to meet you, Alicia. I worked under Peter when I was in my doctorate program at Mason.

MANDAVILLE: Peter is my husband. Full disclosure.

QUESTION: And thank you to the panel. This has been awesome for me. My name is Carla Skopina (ph). And like my esteemed colleague here, I also have a number of jobs and so forth. I'm a professor and so forth.

But I'm especially interested in the institutions and so forth. I've been in international development for about 27 years, and I spent 11 years in the former Soviet Union and now have been working over in Iraq, because of my financial expertise as a post-Soviet finance expert.

If you can hold this for me, though, I kind of need my notes. I'll try not to make this too long.

MANDAVILLE: I hope it's not that complicated.

(LAUGHTER)

QUESTION: No, it's really not, and that's what's wonderful about this, because this was absolutely awesome, and it took the whole panel for me to get it. So bear with me just a quick sec.

As Joseph, when you went through your -- I started off, first of all, like James, like media and economic development, OK. You know, I get that media is an institution, but what is its direct link with economic development?

And so, Joseph, when you started going through your statistics and all that, because I'm primarily interested in the institutions and institutional developments, I thought I was left with, after you went through your four critical components and the contributions of media, I was left with, well, don't you need an institutional mechanism between the information that's provided by media and what's necessary for society enact or act upon the information that media is providing?

Because I'm back from Iraq, I'm thinking mostly about Iraq, but I'm also thinking about, well, if you reveal some kind of -- if you're in a society that's not so free and you reveal the corruption of leaders or the corruption of your government, well, that's all fine and well, but what are the people to do about it? If they find out that their leaders are corrupt, so what? Do you see what I'm saying?

And then Richard goes into this whole thing about Zimbabwe, and I thought, "Well, there you go. Those are all the missing links. That's what it is. Those are the institutional links that are missing between the information that's provided by society and what society needs to actually do anything about it."

MANDAVILLE: So I think we have here a question about maybe whether media is partly the glue that pulls together some of these institutional frameworks...

QUESTION: Exactly, which is what Mark provides, this whole commercial thing, and James linked in about -- right, so do you see how the whole panel brought the whole story together? But then I'm left with, what about the integrity of the media and the information that's actually coming out of the media?

And what in the responsibility of that, as the media as an institution, to actually -- what access can -- because we are here at MCC, an institution that advises LDCs about democracy and about building institutions and so forth, what do we do as an institution, we at MCC and organizations like us, what do we do for LDCs to help them build an institution like media organizations and the responsibility of those media organizations to actually empower their government or their societies to do something with the information that they get from their media to actually practice the democracy and the societal change that will effect the economic growth or that will effect the institutional change in other areas, not just economic growth, that we're all looking for in our policy?

MANDAVILLE: So why don't we let maybe Mark -- or I guess Richard wants to start, given all these moving parts.

WINFIELD: Good question. I think there are, in looking at the idea of assistance to the media abroad, consider a stool with three legs. The first leg is helping train journalists, fact-based, objective reporting.

The second leg of the stool would be providing the kind of sustainability assistance that IREX provides to enable the press to become a vital economic institution, so they can sustain themselves.

And the third is to provide technical assistance and training for the reforms of media law, deregulating the press, ending repression.

Those three, I think, help -- should there be a -- is there a single model that works? Do you have to respect the culture and the traditions of the society? Yes. But an integrated and coordinated approach to media assistance, along the lines that NED is performing, in the person of Marguerite Sullivan, is, I think, a formula for providing this kind of assistance.

And the record has been generally good. The organization that I'm involved with, I've chaired the last couple of years, World Press Freedom Committee, one of our missions is to bring about reform of media laws abroad and, in particular, the repeal of criminal defamation and insult laws of the kind that Mugabe inspired and uses to protect him.

And we've had some considerable success. And we also provide legal assistance and financial assistance to media defense lawyers in developing worlds, representing journalists in crisis, journalists who have been indicted under criminal defamation and insult laws from having offended the sovereign or the head of state. These people are in need of assistance.

So there's a whole menu of assistance factors that are available. And I would certainly hope, now that we're beginning to understand the centrality of free press to economic development, I hope that the donors like MCC and others exercise real rigorous scrutiny of provable improvements in press freedoms and provable progress in deregulating the press as a measure of a candidate country's eligibility for aid. I think that's the least that we could take out from this afternoon's proceedings.

MANDAVILLE: I think we've got a limited amount of time, and I want to get maybe a couple more questions in, but I'll give everyone a little bit -- just a minute at the end to add in anything that you feel like got cut out of a response to a question.

So I do want to get two more. And I promised this gentleman here and then this woman in the grey.

Please go ahead.

QUESTION: My name is Frank Smyth. I'm with the Committee to Protect Journalists. This is an unprecedented panel, and I really appreciate it.

I want to go back to the indicators that Maureen laid out and also Joseph referred to, the World Bank and the Freedom House. What these indicators don't take into account or at least they minimize are violent attacks against journalists, especially murders.

The overwhelming majority of journalists killed around the world are not war correspondents. They're local journalists who are outright murdered. And the impunity rate for murdering journalists worldwide is about 85 percent.

So I'd like to just ask or if there's any way that we could find a way to incorporate that, because when you talked about, Joseph, mechanisms of accountability, it's actually the journalists -- not necessarily investigative reporters, though they're included, but journalists that are just uncovering some kind of wrongdoing or malfeasance who are the ones who are most often targeted.

So I think we need to find a way to expand the indicators and take into account that violence.

MANDAVILLE: Thank you. Please go ahead.

QUESTION: Thanks. My name is Marguerite Sullivan. I'm director of the Center for International Media Assistance at the National Endowment for Democracy.

And I just want to build on what Dick Winfield was saying and a little bit of what Frank was saying. I would say there's four legs, and they wouldn't necessarily merit all of them MCC's support, but they are, as Dick said, certainly professionalization of the media, economic sustainability, the legal enabling environment, which definitely relates to impunity, and a fourth one is media or news literacy, particularly in the I.T. age.

If the public doesn't -- where you have citizen journalists -- if the public doesn't know what is good news and doesn't know what to do when a journalist is killed and how to go out in the streets, or a station that shut down, and really demand good media, and fight for their media, you need all of those.

And it directly relates to what you're saying. It would relate to civil society. I mean, you need those four factors to really have a thriving media.

MANDAVILLE: I think we've got just a last little bit, so maybe I will go ahead and answer this question about the indicators, since it's -- one of my other hats on the policy team is as one of the indicator people. And then we'll give each of the members of the panel just a few minutes to make a couple of last remarks before we potentially get thrown out of the room at half-past.

So to the question of the indicators, actually, violence against journalists and killing of journalists is incorporated into two different indicators, well, into one indicator most specifically. It does show up as a component of the voice and accountability indicator, which is a World Bank institute aggregate of many human rights and other accountability mechanism measures.

It comes in most directly through the human rights report and then the Cingranelli and Richards data set, if you really want to get in the weeds. We can talk a little bit more after, if you're interested.

There are times where that information, because it's aggregate, does get covered by other facts and other aspects of voice and accountability. When there's a particularly extreme situation, we do flag that information for our board and for our senior management so that they're aware of situations on the ground, as it relates to journalists.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

MANDAVILLE: No, it does actually specify when journalists are involved. And, in fact, the Cingranelli and Richards data set has an entire specific question on -- I want to say violence and killings are actually two separate things, but I could be wrong, so I probably shouldn't have just said that out loud.

That may not be the best note to turn it over to final comments, but I think we've had actually some very excellent questions here, a full range of issues to cover, some good opinions, some good range of things. I know a couple of different times I maybe cut off members of the panel and they wanted to add something.

So if I give each of you a couple of minutes to just give last words or give last comments.

SIEGLE: OK, I'll use my final words to pick up on this strand that we've had throughout the question period and clearly articulate that independent media, separate from other accountability structures, is not going to have the benefits on economic growth or, for that matter, democratization that we've been talking about there today.

In fact, in the process of looking at this broader relationship about governance and economic growth, I created an accountability index that has five different parts to it: checks on the chief executive; independence of your civil service; separation between your private sector and your political authority; the rule of law; and independent media.

Each of these five different institutions all are statistically significant in predicting growth and multivariate analysis. Combined, they are much more powerful.

So of those five, surprising to me and others, an independent media was actually the most consistently significant across regions. So I interpret that to say you need all of these things. They all contribute something unique. An independent press, though, contributes to each of those other four in different ways.

So as per our examples on Nigeria or Pakistan, you might have an independent press or have somewhat of an independent press, but unless there's an opposition party that can serve as an effective check and balance on the executive branch, that information can't really take hold as much as if there are other vehicles that can seize that information and do with it.

But the inverse is true. You might have an opposition party, but if there isn't independent press, they have a very difficult time getting access to information, doing the analysis that can really challenge the ruling party. And so all of these things do contribute to one another.

That said, the independent press has a very important role in this whole process.

WHITEHOUSE: That's something I wanted to follow up on and just second. Joe said it very well, that today we put a tremendous burden on the media, which is unfair. And as Joe pointed out, it's one actor, one part of a larger system, and that's the context in which we should take it.

I would like to provide a cautionary note in terms of, what do donors, what does MCC, what do implementers like IREX do? And that is, we've been talking, taking a very instrumental view of the press, of the media. It's an instrument to provide information. It's an instrument to support democracy.

If that's translated into an instrumental view of donor support, meaning I'm simply going to go to these media outlets and say, "Please do more economic reporting, and here's some donor money to do that," it can have a very disruptive effect on the media.

One, it sends a message that -- and we've seen this in our work -- it sends a message that, if you pay for it, we'll print it, which is a very dangerous message to give to the press. I would admit we're sometimes guilty of that, but you have to keep that in mind.

If we're looking at media in terms of how to help MCC, help these countries meet certain standards, we have to look at them as more of a system. We have to support them as businesses. We have to be involved with them over the long term to help them succeed and help them learn, which they know, but help them achieve true independence.

You simply can't come and say, "Please do a program on, you know, HIV-AIDS. And please do a program on some form of economic development. And here's your money." I think ultimately that can have a detrimental longer term effect.

WINFIELD: Let me say a brief word about corruption. We looked at the Freedom House index and the Transparency International index. The T.I. index looks at perceived corruption and ranks countries accordingly. Freedom House surveys the degree of press freedom in countries, and each country is identified as having a press that is either free or partially free or not free.

If you look at the data for last year, corruption and press freedom, the linkage becomes pretty clear, at least on the corruption side. Of the 10 most corrupt regimes, the bottom 10, none has a free press. Of the 50 most corrupt regimes, only one has a press that can be regarded as free.

And a free press acts in really two functions. It's a source of information and a scourge, as a source of information of the kind of vital information that is necessary to create a vital free market and responsive democracy, and operates as a scourge, as well.

At its best, the press can be not merely a watchdog, but a mastiff, sniffing out corruption, investigating it, exposing it, and bringing pressure to bear on corruptible politicians, raising the stakes, as Joseph said.

So with those two functions, as a source of information and as a scourge against corruption, I think the case for a free and independent press as a contributor to economic development has been made pretty convincingly.

TRAUB: Well, I've been in the, I find, strange position of defending an Asian values argument that I actually don't like.

(LAUGHTER)

But that's not because I think it's necessarily wrong about economic development. And I think, therefore, I've had to approach the press from a direction that's a little bit abnormal to me.

In the end, I think that -- honestly, I remain somewhat agnostic about at least the directness of the connection between the two, though I have no reason at all to doubt Joe's statistics.

But, of course, in the end, the case for the centrality of a free press is, as Richard said, that it's a scourge and that no democracy can survive absent the willingness to accept this adversarial institution in its midst, something which is quite unnatural to states and, for that reason, is harassed and banned and imprisoned all over the place.

So the instrumental -- to use Mark's word -- the instrumental value of the press ultimately, of course, is not finally an economic one. It's the instrumental value of its political function, which is, in the end, of course, its core function.

MANDAVILLE: All right, great. Well, I'd like to thank everyone for coming, especially our panelists for providing such great insight.

(APPLAUSE)

END