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*Colombo, Sri Lanka*

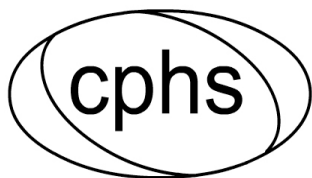
*Session 2 : Indicators of Poverty Alleviation through Press Freedom*

## Press Freedom and Poverty

*An analysis of the correlations between the freedom of the press and various aspects of human security, poverty and governance*

*UNESCO-CPHS Research Project*

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This article summarizes briefly the main conclusions of a research project carried out for UNESCO by the Center for Peace and Human Security of Sciences-Po. Since January 2006, a team of five Sciences-Po's Masters students (Marina Guseva, Mounira Nakaa, Kirsi Pekkala, Bachir Souberou and Sami Stouli) has collected and organized quantitative and qualitative evidence of the correlations between indicators of an environment favorable to free and independent media and indicators of human development, human security, poverty reduction, good governance and peace.

This year, the World Press Freedom Conference focused on the links between freedom of the press and poverty. As a result, this summary concentrates on the most appropriate indicators to explain the correlation between poverty and press freedom. This work is quite close to that presented by Daniel Kaufmann or Pippa Norris (using the same indexes of Press Freedom and the same approach as the latter), but brings some other elements of conclusion into play by looking specifically at various indicators of poverty. The main idea is to see if it is possible to find any logical process in the race for development where a free press can play a role.

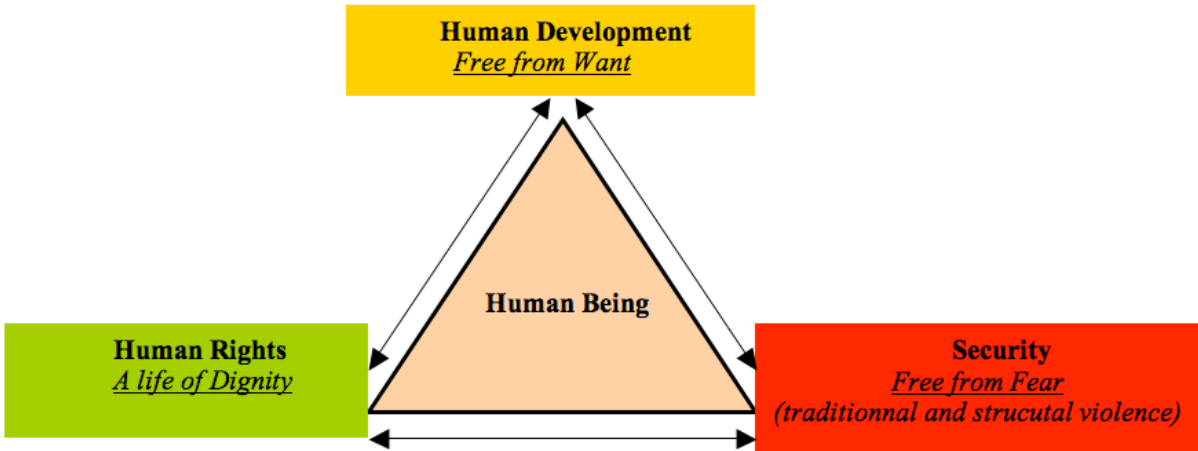
There is no need here to recall the mission contained in UNESCO's mandate or Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the subsequent international declarations about freedom of the press. They are taken for granted, as a starting point on which everyone agrees. This paper is thus divided as follows: first, it focuses on the background framework and the methodology adopted for the study (how the analysis can be considered in terms of human security); second, it provides explanations for the main correlations observed between press freedom and indicators of poverty ; third, it draws some conclusions and indicates what further studies need to be done.

**I – Conceptual framework and Methodology**

*A – Background: Broad Human Development Approach*

Diversity in its various forms is at the core of democracy: freedom of the press is central to democracy as the freedom of expression is necessary to any other form of freedom. Where liberty to express oneself does not exist, there is only very restricted access to other liberties and thus human rights cannot be respected.

A broad conception of Human Development is used as the background framework to this analysis: human beings are at the center of this system, showing that everyone has the right to be free from fear (as assessed through indicators of violent mortality rate, the number of refugees by country or infant mortality rates), free from Want (as can be assessed through indicators of access to clean water, nourishment, health and medical conditions, education, employment, income distribution), and free to be worthy, to have a life of dignity (living in a safe and secure environment, degree of corruption and good governance).



UNDP uses the notion of Human Security - understood as economic security, food security, health security, environment security, personal security, community security and political security- to precise the notion of human development. In our study, these various dimensions have been cross-cut with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Three main and broad dimensions have been kept:

development in its broadest sense, governance and violence. This paper gives the results for the two first dimensions only<sup>2</sup>.

### *B – Indicators and methodology*

To assess the freedom of the press, we used the indicators established by Freedom House in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004. This index varies between 0 and 100: from 0 to 30, the press is free; between 31 and 60, the press is relatively free; over 61 the country is considered as suffering from a lack of press freedom. The indicators explained and used thereafter come from the World Bank (governance indicators – see the work by Daniel Kaufmann et al.) or from various sources such as UNDP (MDGs' indexes), World Development Indicators or UNESCO (ISU). We established averages with the numbers available for the 5 years as mentioned above. Though such means are usually impossible or difficult to establish (especially for some indicators such as HDI, because of their composition and for statistical/methodological reasons), we decided to use them in order to maximize the number of data available (in term of countries and of figures available by country): it then becomes possible to compare the situation of different countries and the way in which freedom of the press can have an impact on these situations. These averages are only a way to stabilize and compare the situation of countries to each other, not a tool to compare their own evolution in time.

The methodology adopted uses simple econometrics to assess the correlations between the freedom of the press (FOP) and different indicators of development and governance. The idea is to see what impact freedom of the press has on development? What kind of correlations can be observed between poverty alleviation indicators and press freedom indicators? If no nexus of logical connections is revealed, is it nonetheless possible to see a strong influence between all the different indexes?

The correlation coefficient measures the intensity of the linear relation between the variables. For each correlation, the scatter-gram indicates the regression line  $Y = a * FOP + b$  where “a” is the estimated effect of FOP on indicator Y. The determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) gives the percentage of Y variations explained by FOP.

The analysis of correlation is close but not to be confused with causality analysis. The purpose of correlation analysis is to look at linear correlations between press freedom (FOP) and poverty alleviation. The figures obtained do not say anything about the causality between the two variables: it only gives an idea of the relationship they have, of the intensity of this linear relationship, of the influence of one variable on another, all else being equal. When the correlation is significant between two variables, this means that A can imply B as B can imply A. But a third factor, C, can also cause A and B, which are in no way linked in the beginning. What's more, if several indicators were taken into account in the correlations, then the correlation coefficient would certainly be different.

The main hypotheses tested are, each time, that press freedom has a positive effect on development. And indeed, this is often confirmed.

## **II – Correlations between press freedom and poverty alleviation indicators**

### *A – Governance and Press freedom indicators*

As explained by Pippa Norris, freedom of the press operates like a watchdog over the abuse of power, as a civic forum for political debate and as an agenda setter. Press Freedom thus has, as already proved, some effects on governance indicators. We looked at 5 indicators of governance in the study<sup>3</sup>. Each time we obtained significant results with high correlation coefficients. All the indicators vary between -3 and 3, the higher the figure, the better the performance.

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<sup>2</sup> The longer study is of course more detailed and give all the results

<sup>3</sup> For details on Governance indicators, see the papers by Daniel Kaufmann and Pippa Norris in this book, but also their previous work on the topic (cf. our bibliography)

## 1 – Political Stability and FOP

Political Stability is positively correlated to FOP - if people have a free press, they have a possibility to debate in a non-violent way. Governments thus have a good tool to manage possible social tensions (civic forum function). Cuba and North Korea represent peculiar countries as they have no FOP but a political stability comparable to the average: for these countries, the indicator of political stability does not mean that the government suits everyone, but that it is very difficult to complain against it. Countries like Norway, Switzerland or Finland are to be found in the top left hand corner. .

## 2 – Government effectiveness and FOP

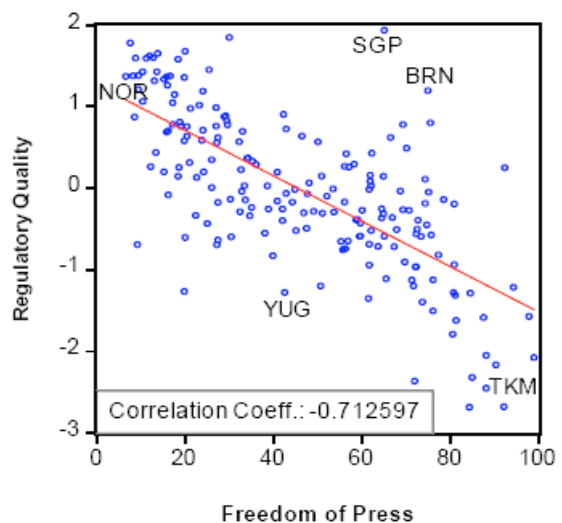
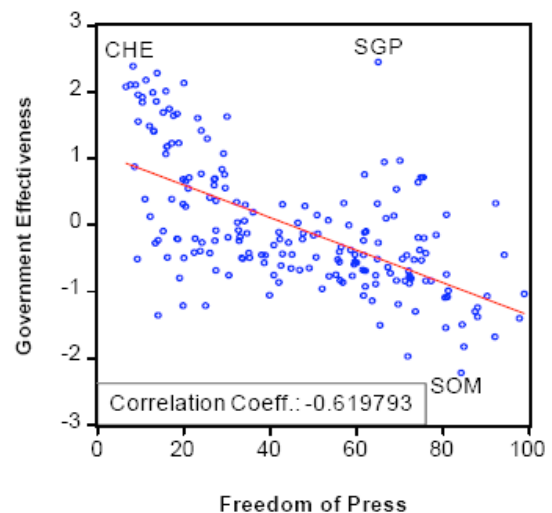
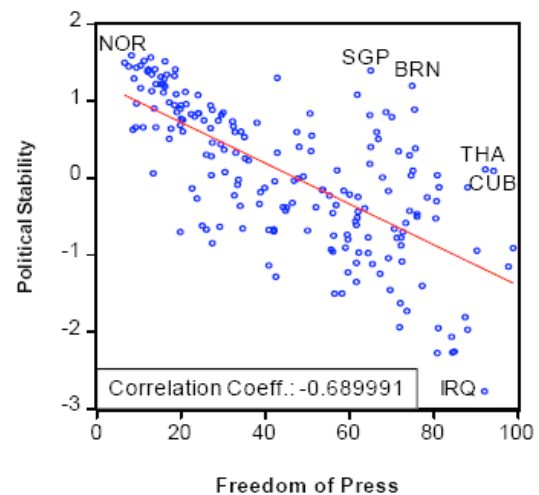
Here also FOP is strongly associated to government effectiveness: the press helps to see if government policies attain their goals or not. FOP is a tool for the population to assess and judge public policies and services (agenda and policy makers' dimension). Some countries, mostly island countries like Belize, Dominican Republic, Micronesia, Guyana, Jamaica or Marshall Island, benefit from a free press but are subject to weak government effectiveness. Countries like Switzerland, Sweden, Norway or Netherlands are to be found in the top left hand corner. No country cumulates a high indicator of government effectiveness with a non-free press.

## 3 – Regulatory Quality and FOP

This correlation is one of the most essential as it shows very clearly how economic development and press freedom are related to each other. The regulatory quality (business transactions and public services) is crucial for individuals to work in a confident economic environment. A free press helps to guarantee such an environment: rules and reliability of the system are observed through the press. Singapore and Brunei are two exceptions, cumulating a good regulatory quality but a very bad FOP indicator. Every country having a regulatory quality indicator below -2 can be considered to have bad FOP indicator. Again, countries like Norway or the Netherlands are to be found in the top left hand corner.

## 4 – Rule of Law and FOP

The rule of law corresponds to the independence of the courts and to the



enforceability of contracts. It is also positively related to FOP: respect for and application of the law, assessed through the press, are a guarantee of good governance. Those countries where the rule of law is best respected and where FOP is very high are situated in the top left hand corner. When the rule of law indicator is weak (under -1), the FOP indicator is always above 60 (non free press).

5 – Corruption and FOP

Regression confirms how freedom of the press is strong when corruption is weak. The gap in the level of the FOP indicator is obvious between states where the corruption indicator is above 1 and those where it is below 1: a satisfactory level of press freedom goes hand in hand with minor corruption. Here again, in spite of a good level of press freedom some small islands countries suffer from high corruption. Iraq, Haiti, Russia or Cuba are located in the bottom right hand corner: in countries where corruption is not controlled, the press is constrained. Only Singapore allies a low level of FOP with a strong control of corruption. The watchdog function of the press is again proved here – but it also shows that state censorship and the use of the press as a way to reinforce the power of autocratic regimes still exist.

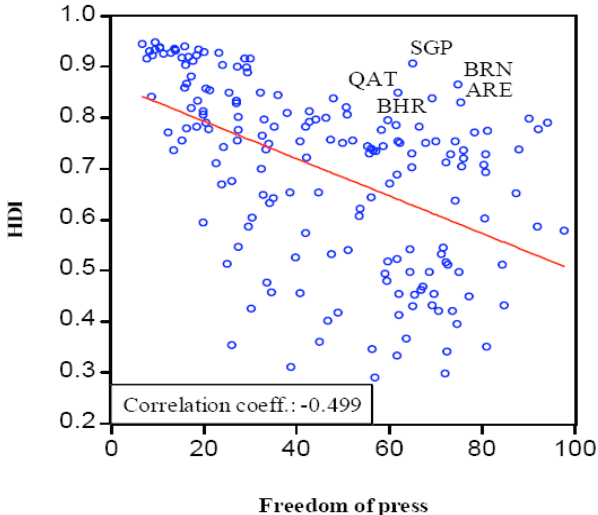
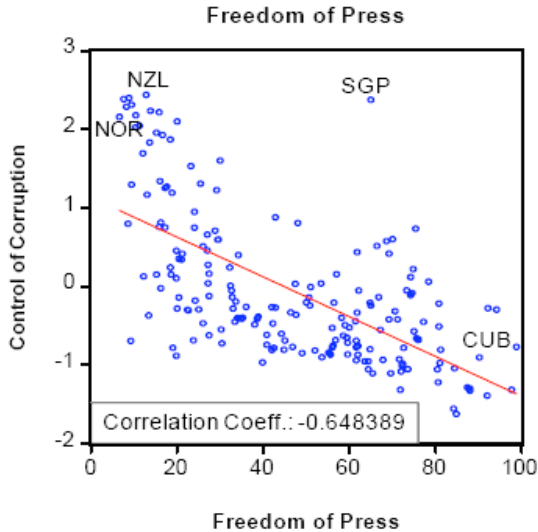
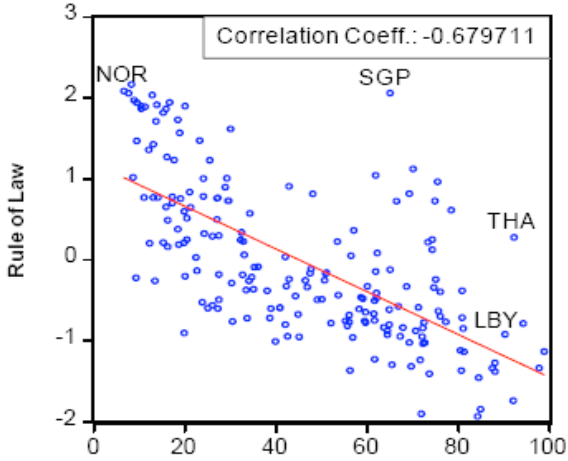
All in all, the results obtained when looking at the correlation between press freedom and governance indicators confirm the previous results obtained by Pippa Norris. This increases confidence in the reliability of the measures. But we need to go further in the study of the indicators in order to have a better idea of the links between press freedom and poverty alleviation: governance and democratization are directly related to each other, and this process, as stressed by Pippa Norris, is indirectly linked to human development in a reciprocal relationship. We shall see what the figures say about this later.

*B – Global Overview*

1 - Human Development Index

This index is used to obtain a brief idea of the development situation of one country compared to another. It brings data on life expectancy, literacy rates and GDP per capita.

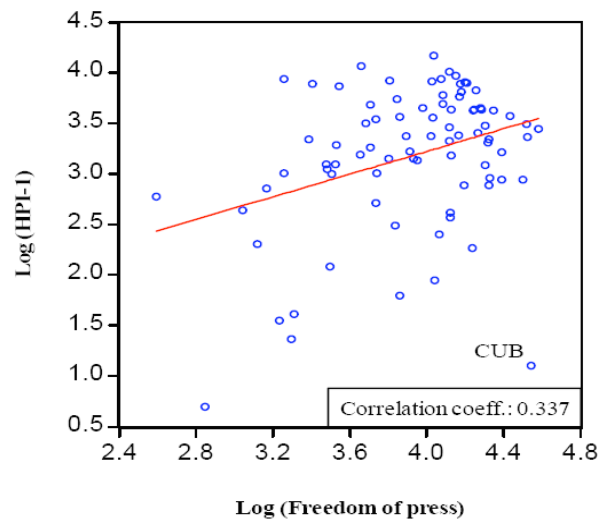
The correlation with press freedom (FOP) shows that countries with a high HDI (>0.8) are also countries for which the FOP indicator is relatively low (FOP<50). Some exceptions are worth noticing for Singapore, Qatar, Brunei, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia: the HDI is high but FOP relatively poor. This can undoubtedly be mainly explained by the GDP per capita in such countries.



## 2 - Human Poverty Index -1

This indicator gives a picture of deprivation in standards of living included in the HDI for Developing Countries: it summarizes the percentage of people that will not live after 40, the percentage of illiteracy among adults, the percentage of people having access to clean water, the percentage of people having access to health services and the percentage of children under 5 suffering malnutrition. It thus gives a first idea of the way press freedom is related to poverty in general.

The correlation is not that high here but it is easy to verify that the higher the FOP the weaker the HPI. The majority of countries are situated in the top right hand corner. Only Cuba has both a weak FOP and a very weak HPI. The poorer the country, the less freedom of the press it has.

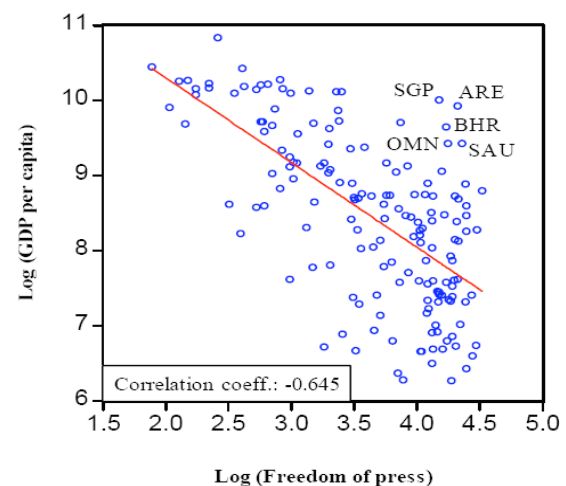


These two indices give a first idea of the correlations between FOP and development and between FOP and poverty both taken very globally. This first very broad approach confirms the hypotheses: a positive correlation exists between press freedom and poverty. In these correlations however, the determination coefficients are weak ( $R^2$ ), meaning that other elements need to be taken into account to explore the relationship between press freedom and poverty.

### *C – Economic Poverty and FOP*

#### 1 – Income per capita and FOP

The correlation between the logged GDP per capita (2002, international dollars) and FOP is relatively high, confirming Pippa Norris' results. We also observe some numerous outliers countries (mainly Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates and, again, Singapore) in the top right hand corner: these countries are economically rich but a lot of restrictions weigh on their press. They show that income is not enough for a country to develop a free press. What's more, no country is situated in the bottom left hand corner, meaning that it is relatively difficult to have a free press when the GDP per capita is very low (except for some countries like Benin, as explained in Pippa Norris' paper).



#### 2 - Economic Inequality (Logged Gini Index)

Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Rep., Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden are among countries cumulating strong FOP and a low level of inequalities.



For Cameroon, Gambia, Nigeria and Zambia, FOP is low and inequalities are high. Yemen has a peculiar situation, having low FOP but a relatively weak level of inequalities (exception to be confirmed, our conclusion may be biased because of the figures). By showing how unequal the situations between human beings are, the press, if free, can reduce their *raison d'être*. Exceptions also show that economic development and FOP do not always go along together

3 - Poverty Headcount ratio at \$2 a Day

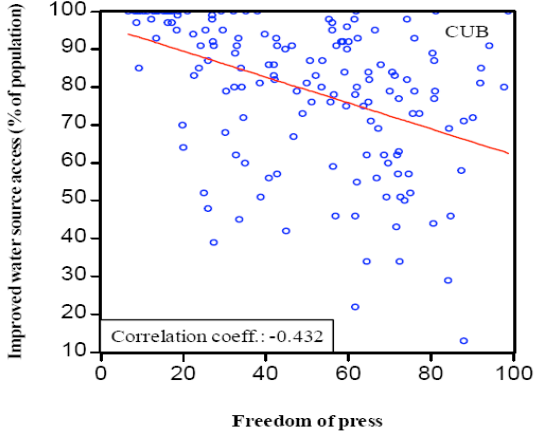
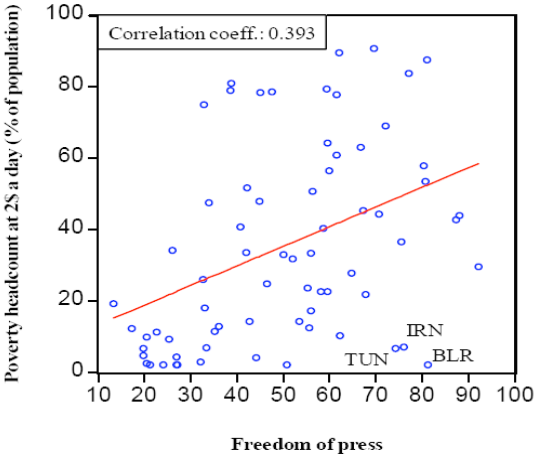
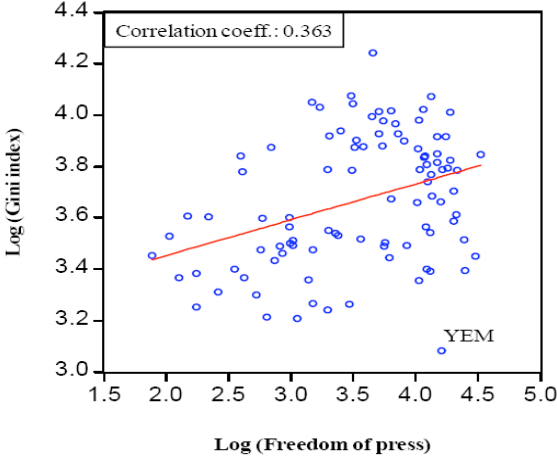
The threshold of \$1 a day (belonging to the MDGs) is interesting but less conclusive than the threshold at \$2 a day. FOP can obviously only exist with great difficulty in situations of extreme poverty. The freer the press, the lower the percentage of people living under the poverty line. This is coherent with some results obtained also by looking at the correlation between FOP and the Poverty Gap: with a good FOP, the poverty gap is greatly reduced. Some outlier countries like Byelorussia, Iran and Tunisia have a non-free press but a low level of poverty. On the other hand, some countries also have a high level of press freedom and the same level of poverty among their population.

Overall, these correlations show that a high level of press freedom (low FOP indicator) is mostly linked to low monetary indicators of poverty (strong GDP per capita, weak Gini index and weak percentage of population under the poverty line). Other indicators are needed however to assess the links between poverty alleviation and press freedom. These indicators assess the non-economic components of poverty.

D – *Decent living conditions and FOP*

1 – Undernourishment, access to clean water and FOP

For these two crucial aspects of poor living conditions, the results are significant. No country cumulates a strong press freedom with a high degree of its population suffering from undernourishment. A good FOP is a guarantee against malnutrition and famine (*cf.* Armatya Sen's results). The same observation holds for access to clean water: as indicated by the scatter-gram, no country is situated in the bottom left hand corner. Finally, countries like Lebanon, Syria, Lybia, Turkey, Tunisia, Malaysia, Cuba, Egypt or Iran have good water access and/or a low undernourishment percentage but no press freedom. This means that even when access to resources is ensured,



nothing guarantees that the press is free.

## 2 - Life expectancy at birth and Infant Mortality rate

These two correlations reflect the reverse relation between the two variables: the better the FOP, the weaker the infant mortality is and the better life expectancy at birth is. These results suggest that FOP has a positive impact of the health situation of a country. The press has a crucial role on a country's health situation: a free press can help fight against diseases and predict early on constraints on life expectancy. It should be noticed that for similar life expectancy at birth, the FOP indicator varies a lot, meaning that other variables have to be considered at this stage.

## 3 - Expenditure on health (% of GDP)

The correlation is very significant and positive concerning public expenditure, but really not interesting when looking at private expenditure on health. Where FOP does not exist, the press cannot play any role with regard to health issues: it does not help public needs and public policies lack information on the real state of health in the country in question. However, a free press is necessary to promote the fundamental right to which every human being should have access: access to health.

When looking at the correlation between press freedom and medical personnel and vaccination rates (vaccination against tuberculosis and the number of physicians per 1000 people), it appears clearly that FOP helps underline the fact that some countries lack medical assistance and personnel. Determination coefficients ( $R^2$ ) are not that high in these regressions: certain other variables such as education must have a stronger effect on the number of physicians, and then on the number of children that are vaccinated. The countries with the worst FOP and the lowest number of physicians in their population are mostly African. Of course, conflicts and an insecure environment also explain the difficult conditions such countries are confronted with.

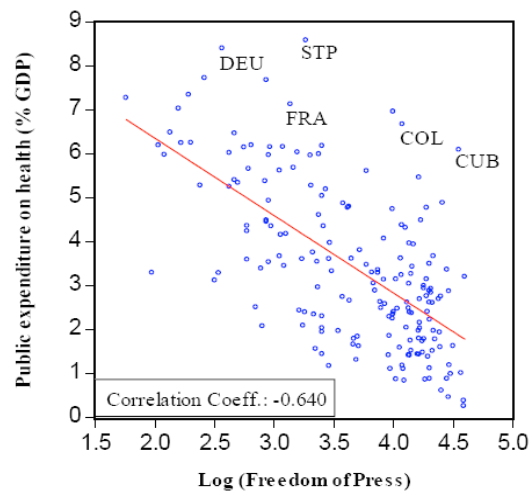
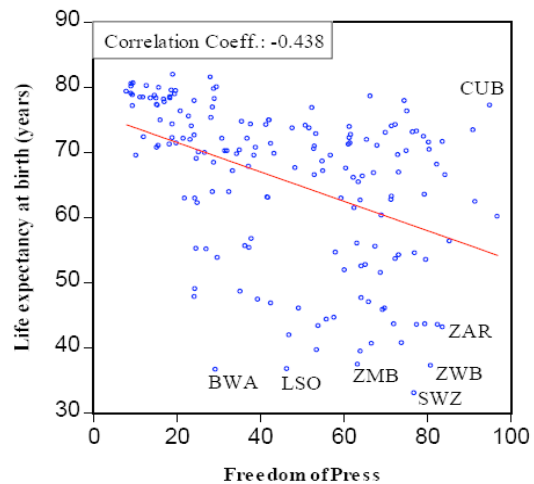
## 4 - Prevalence of HIV

This correlation is very interesting to explain one of the biggest causes of diseases – and thus of poverty - in the world. When considering all the countries affected by HIV, the correlation is very weak. But when dividing these countries in three subgroups, the results are much more interesting: in countries where the prevalence of HIV is situated between 0.1% and 8%, the correlation coefficient is very strong. For the other groups, it is difficult to conclude as countries having a prevalence inferior to 0.1% either have a free press or do not have any. The same is true for countries having a prevalence rate superior to 8%.

FOP certainly helps fight HIV but some countries, despite some significant press freedom, are still confronted with a high prevalence rate.

## 5 - Education

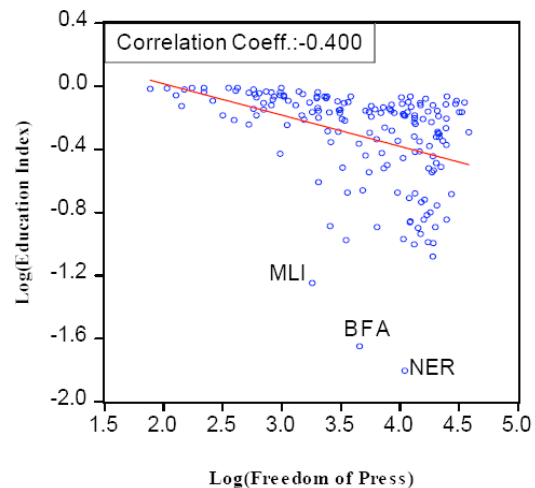
Education is essential to development and press freedom. The correlations observed when studying its links with Press Freedom that the correlation has a double sense: FOP has some effect on





education, but education has even more effect on FOP. The education index gives a global overview of the educational situation within a country, taking into account literacy rate and enrollment. Countries such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso appear as outlier countries: the FOP indicator is not that weak but their education index is. Some countries such as China, Cuba, Libya, Thailand, and Tajikistan have a good education index and a bad FOP.

When looking in more detail at literacy rates and the secondary school enrollment ratio, it appears again that the more people are educated, the more they can also act themselves to defend the freedom of the press.



### III – Conclusion, Remarks and Recommendations

#### *A – To sum up...*

A free press is strongly associated with a good level of development and reduced poverty. Income poverty is of course obviously strong when FOP does not exist, but this is also the case for poverty headcount ratio and Gini index. Access to primary goods and better nutrition also coexist with strong FOP. However, some countries, even if they reach some decent standards of living, still do not have a free press.

A free press is well associated with decent medical environment: where medical staff is missing, a free press can help spreading the word about it, and thus help improve the situation.

FOP and education have a double relationship: education seems to play more on FOP than FOP does on education. But of course, people do care about their education when they are free from fear and free from basic needs, from want. This means that in developing countries, where survival comes first and freedom second, the press needs educated people who use their abilities to help their fellow citizens attain other types of freedom.

A free press has to be understood as being a crucial key in the reduction of poverty, for development in both its social and economic aspects. It helps to show the government, or remind it when necessary, where its true responsibilities lie. A free press is not a luxury good only available to developed country or rich country: the proof is that some rich countries do not necessarily have a free press! As a development tool, the press is as effective as investment or education.

#### *B – Limits and suggestions for further research*

The causality question cannot find any resolution in this approach. Without press freedom, the development of a country, and what's more the development of individuals, can only be restricted.

Media access should have been used to obtain stronger correlations. However, comparisons show that the conclusions obtained are quite close. Beside, media diffusion can be ensured if infrastructures are available, as well as economic resources to get this access. The mechanism and nexus are not easy to distinguish.

What's more, 1) Some control variables should be introduced into the regressions (cf. Pippa Norris' paper for an example of such work); 2) some further studies should be done on some countries such as Cuba and Singapore and see if they can, by their peculiar situation, explain a part of the nexus, 3) some correlation on gender equalities should be done as women, especially in the poorest countries, are a key to development: with a better education, they can improve their contraception, they can organize themselves to ask for more health services, etc; 4) correlation could be done per year in order to compare the evolution of each of them in time: some evolution could tell a lot about the mechanism existing between press freedom and poverty alleviation, press freedom and human security.

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