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The extent of new technologies has affected press freedoms worldwide. One of these media-related technological developments is the Internet. Freedom of the press—or of mass communications—is anything that is distributed or published. This includes work done over the Web. My prognosis for the future: there will be more and more online press restrictions in non-democratic countries than democratic ones. Non-democratic countries control the media, whether it is in the form of a newspaper, a television or radio broadcast, and even a simple blog on the Net. Democratic countries have much more freedom in regards to what they can publish. At the end, I will discuss the online system’s prospective development.

A serious problem is the government’s ability to very easily monitor and block the Internet for users. *The Japan Times* confirms my position through a piece called “World Press Freedom” (2009), stating that contrary to a universal expectation, the Internet has not essentially improved freedom of the press. Last year, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) found that bloggers, Web-based correspondents or online editors made up 45 percent of all media personnel imprisoned internationally. Governments’ capability of censoring certain uploads on the Internet has risen, while intimidation of freelance journalists and independent media also considerably rises.

*BBC*’s “New U.S. Study Identifies Emerging Threats to Internet Freedom” (2009) reveals the results from a Freedom House study, forewarning that Internet-user privileges are progressively more at risk as both self-governing and authoritarian governments stretch their capability of controlling and monitoring activity online. Since the Castro administration almost entirely controls Internet access, Cuba received the lowest score in the study. China, Iran, and Tunisia were ranked “Not Free,” while Egypt, Georgia, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Russia and Turkey were ranked “Partly Free.” Interestingly, Estonia had the most Internet freedom, while Brazil, South Africa and the United Kingdom were also ranked “Free.” I can imagine that the United States was part of that ranking, as well.

According to the *BBC* article, “Watchdog Names Ten “Worst Countries” to be a Blogger” (2009), the CPJ named Burma as the leader of the worst online oppressors, because their military government harshly restricts Internet usage and imprisons citizens for years for uploading critical material. The list continues with Iran in second, then Syria, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Tunisia, China, Turkmenistan, and Egypt. CPJ found bloggers and other online journalists to be the biggest specialized group in jail in 2008. CPJ established that governments were filtering, monitoring, and regulating Internet material. Moreover, they recognized that authorities also utilized imprisonments and other ways of lawful persecution to discourage critical blogging.

In another *BBC* report, “Internet Censorship Reaches Unprecedented Level” (2010), Reporters Without Borders condemns the Chinese government’s newest effort to restrict the Internet. In December, the system banned individuals, organizations and companies from the opportunity of receiving .cn domain names. However, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology declared that those desiring to manage a website would need to meet in person with regulators, bringing identity documents with them. This message lifts the ban, but imposes an individual consultation obligation. Still, a total of 70 bloggers, Internet users and cyber-dissidents are presently seized in China’s prisons.

Relating to this, a *BBC* news story, “Taiwan Urges China to Respect Press, Internet Freedom” (2010), states that by using its “Great Fire Wall” technology, China imposes Internet restriction on search results and also demands that foreign Internet companies—Google and Microsoft, for example—remove susceptible keywords and subjects from search results. China still limits several Taiwanese Web sites and global news media, though it relaxed its Internet control briefly throughout the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Anyone can write on the World Wide Web (blog, website, etc.), therefore the text is distributed worldwide. Video footage of events can be sent as files or attachments. Within these videos, one has freedom of speech—general communication. One problem is that there are too many voices (an information overload), so one cannot be noticeable and has to somehow find a way to build an audience. De Beer (2009) says that if online journalism thrives, the information providers who verify trustworthiness over time will receive audience loyalty. These people will continue to read the Web postings, resulting in financial support for the information provider (through advertising or subscription costs). The superior journalists will endure while the not-so superior ones will expire. Criticism will be shown by fact-checking and contradictory uploads by the information consumers. As a result, the viewers will be educated enough to choose and thus will decide who the potential providers of journalism will ultimately be. Media freedom and regulations are constantly changing, so one must try to adapt to this new world we are living in.

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