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Journalists vs. Authoritarians: The State of Press Freedoms in Hungary, Turkey, and Egypt

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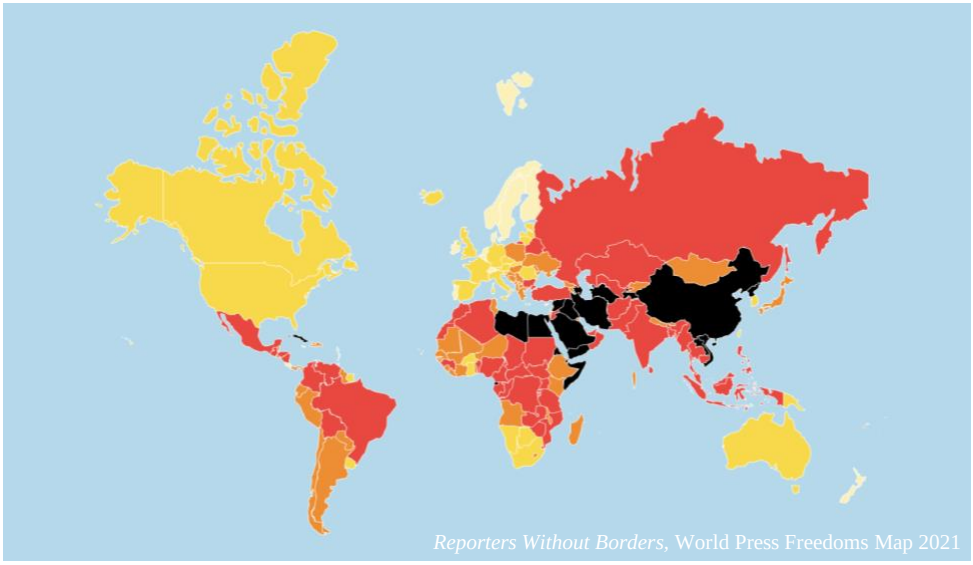

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Abstract

The 21st century has been partly defined by the regression of liberal democracies paired with the rise of modern authoritarian regimes. This phenomenon is marked by a decrease in civil liberties and an erosion of democratic institutions and practices. A free and independent press is often one of the first institutions targeted by rising authoritarian leaders, due to its nature as a government watchdog. This thesis analyzes the state of press freedoms in different authoritarian and illiberal regimes. It aims to answer the question: what is the correlation between the type of government and the way the government treats the press, and why might this correlation exist? The case studies, Turkey, Egypt, and Hungary, represent the spectrum of regimes that fall under the umbrella of authoritarianism and will be used to exemplify the wide-ranging methods of restriction and manipulation that are being used against the press. These methods are employed through the judiciary and new legislation, economic manipulation, and intimidation of journalists. The research draws a line of correlation between these methods and the types of regimes that use them. It finds that the more authoritarian leaning a regime is, the more it is going to restrict its press, because of a lack of governmental checks and balances. This thesis will support further research in identifying the warning signs of an independent press at risk, and thus a democracy at risk.

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Introduction

"The erosion of press freedoms is both a symptom of and a contributor to the breakdown of other democratic institutions and principles, a fact that makes it especially alarming."[1]

In an eroding democracy, press freedoms are one of the first things to be targeted. This is because the press has immense influence on the public. The press not only serves as a watchdog for the government, but also relays information to the people who use it to make decisions about the future of a country. When democracy is diminished, the independent press declines with it.

There is a global decline in liberal democracy. It has been happening for at least a decade and is coupled with a rise of authoritarianism. In authoritarian regimes, civil society is repressed, and free speech and thought are discouraged. As such, authoritarian regimes do not protect the press and its autonomy. Instead, authoritarian leaders see the press as a threat to their rule and try to restrict its ability to do its job. This thesis will analyze press freedoms and their relationship to authoritarian regimes.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to restricting the press, however. Regimes approach this task differently based on the structure of their government and its formal institutions. There are many types of governments between democracy and authoritarianism, and there are many more categories of authoritarian regimes. They can be led by a single leader, or a group of leaders. Power can be completely consolidated under the leader, or there can be other legitimate institutions in place that still hold power. Many times, authoritarian regimes are just lumped into one category; their differences are not often acknowledged. Previous research explains the rise of authoritarianism and the characteristics of authoritarian regimes. There are also bodies of research that show the difference between press freedoms in democracies and authoritarian regimes. However, this thesis will explain three different classifications of authoritarian regimes and draw a line of correlation between these different regimes and their relationship to the press. Given the global increase in authoritarianism that we are currently experiencing, this thesis will help highlight the warning signs of a democracy at risk through the examination of the press.

This thesis aims to answer the following questions: How are authoritarian regimes restricting and manipulating the press? What is the correlation between the regime type and its treatment of the press? Why might this correlation exist? I will argue that the more repressive and openly authoritarian a government is, the more willing they are to use harsher methods of repression against the press. In newer authoritarian regimes, to maintain the facade of democracy, leaders are becoming more covert in their efforts to curb press freedoms.

[1] Sarah Cook, Zselyke Csaky, Adrian Shahbaz, and Sarah Cook. "Media Freedom 2019: A Downward Spiral." *Freedom House*, 2019.

Methodology

I was first exposed to the issue of democratic backsliding and the rise of authoritarianism in a seminar titled "The World of Democracy" with Dr. Thomas DeLuca. This class served as an inspiration for my thesis topic. In this class we tried to define democracy and tracked the rise and fall of democracies throughout world history up until present day. We found that the erosion of democracy happening right now is correlated to a rise of authoritarianism. This alarming phenomenon is happening everywhere, from President Bolsonaro in Brazil to the Peace and Justice Party in Poland.

I wrote a research paper in this class where I evaluated the democratic qualities of two countries using a set of self-determined criteria. One of the criteria I assessed was media freedoms. In my research I discovered that there is a plethora of legal obstacles to press freedoms and free speech in other countries, and there are even more extralegal methods that governments use to keep the press under control.

I initially expected my thesis to be an assessment of global press freedoms. However, I wanted to draw the connection between governments and press freedoms. In choosing states to analyze, I discovered authoritarian regimes that had different characteristics and methods of repressing the media and other institutions. Upon researching the different classifications of authoritarianism, I decided my thesis will focus solely on press freedoms in illiberal democracies and authoritarian regimes.

My three case studies, Hungary, Turkey and Egypt, represent different types of authoritarianism. Egypt is the control group because it has been an authoritarian regime for most of its existence and uses traditional methods of restricting the media. Turkey's newer version of authoritarianism happened through a number of legal measures, making it unique. I was inspired to write about Hungary after reading *The Nationalist Revival* by John B. Judis. This book explains how the rise of nationalism in Hungary has garnered support for the leading political party, the populist Fidesz Party, and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. The government has been dismantling democratic institutions over the years by using this nationalist rhetoric to distract the people and maintain their support. The thesis will focus more on Turkey and Hungary as the newer versions of authoritarianism and emerging phenomenon of illiberal democracy, respectively, with Egypt being used to compare and contrast press freedoms and the methods used to restrict them.

These countries were chosen based on reports by Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders (RSF). Reporters Without Borders releases a world press freedom index[2] each year, evaluating press freedoms in every country. In 2021, Turkey ranked 153 out of 180 countries, Hungary ranked 92, and Egypt was ranked 166. Both Hungary and Egypt's ratings dropped multiple spots from 2019. Turkey was the only one of the three whose ranking went up from 2019 to 2021. Similarly, Freedom House[3] evaluates democracies around the world. In 2021, Turkey received a 32 out of 100, which falls under the "not free" category. Egypt received an 18 out of 100, and Hungary received a 69 out of 100 ("partly free"). I also source information from the Committee

[2] "2021 World Press Freedom Index." RSF. Accessed December 27, 2021.

[3] "Turkey: 2021 Country Report," *Freedom House*, 2021; "Egypt: 2021 Country Report," *Freedom House*, 2021; "Hungary: 2021 Country Report," *Freedom House*, 2021.

to Protect Journalists, a non-governmental organization that promotes global press freedom. CPJ tracks restrictions against the press around the world and documents abuses against journalists including imprisonment, harassment, and murder data for journalists.

It is important to acknowledge that although I use democracy ratings like Freedom House, there is no objective set of criteria for democracy. The criteria I discuss in this thesis are only a handful of necessary criteria for evaluating democracy.

The paper will be structured as follows: each case study will be presented with a historical overview on their leaders and background on the media climate in the country. There will be an explanation of most of the methods used to restrict and manipulate press freedoms. I will then discuss the classifications of each state's political system. First, I will explain the difference between traditional and modern authoritarianism. I will use this explanation to classify each state as a specific authoritarian regime. In the case of Hungary, I will present evidence that it is an illiberal democracy on the path to modern authoritarianism. I will then draw a line of analysis between the government classification and its treatment of the press, thus answering the thesis question. I will conclude with a comparison of each state and speculate as to why there is a correlation between government type and press freedoms.

Case Study: Egypt

"While populist leaders in democracies seek to secure and build on their gains by taming the press, established autocratic governments continue to tighten the screws on dissenting voices, as any breach in their media dominance threatens to expose official wrongdoing or debunk official narratives."[4]

Historical Overview

President Hosni Mubarak ruled Egypt as a dictator from 1981 to 2011. He was ousted during the Arab Spring, a string of revolutionary movements that started in Tunisia in 2011 and swept the Middle East and North Africa. Following his fall, the Egyptian military stepped in to retain power while the country was in transition. At this time, the Muslim Brotherhood, a popular Islamist organization, formed a political party known as the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) under the leadership of Muhammad Morsi. In the first democratic elections the country had seen, the FJP won the two-thirds parliamentary majority, and Morsi won the presidency.[5] Despite the democratic nature of the elections, Morsi's rule did not last long. Dissatisfaction rose after two actions. First, Morsi implemented a slew of presidential decrees that expanded his power and used them to appoint loyal Brotherhood members to key political positions. Second, the government imposed a "religiously tinged constitution."[6] Both of these actions led to mass protests and a coup by army commander General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in 2013, after only one year of democratic rule.

Muslim Brotherhood members and those who opposed the coup took to the streets in protests, but the military violently repressed these protests and designated the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. Hundreds of protestors were killed, and thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members and dissenters were arrested.[7] In 2014, Sisi announced his presidential campaign and, in light of a low voter turnout and questionable legitimacy, won with more than 96% of the vote.[8] With this election, Sisi quashed hopes of a democratic state and instead fashioned his government into an authoritarian body in which opposition was limited. In 2018, Sisi won the presidential election again in a landslide victory. Opposition groups described the election as "farcical"[9] after three other contenders dropped out, presumably under political pressure by Sisi, and another was arrested.

[4] Sarah Cook, "Media Freedom 2019."
[5] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 6th ed. (Westview Press, 2016), 545.
[6] Cleveland, *Modern Middle East*, 546.
[7] "Egypt President Abdul Fattah Al-Sisi: Ruler with an Iron Grip," BBC News.
[8] Cleveland, *Modern Middle East*, 547.
[9] "Al-Sisi: Ruler with an Iron Grip."

In 2019 a "tightly-controlled"[10] referendum greatly expanded President Sisi's powers. It included, among other amendments, the extension of presidential terms. It also grants the president full autonomy over judicial appointments, up to the supreme court level.[11]

Media Background

The 2021 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders ranks Egypt at 166 out of 180 countries. Freedom House's Freedom on the Net 2020 report found that Egypt has a 57.3% internet penetration rate. In 2020, Egypt imprisoned 27 journalists, making it the world's third worst jailer of journalists.[12]

The government has always had some sort of indirect control over the media. During the 1967 Six Day War, this control shifted to direct control for the sake of national security. During Mubarak's presidency, the government went back to indirect media controls. In 1996, new definitions of libel and increased prosecutions of journalists resulted in a brief return to direct control of the media.[13]

After the 2011 Arab Spring and the end of Mubarak's rule, there was a burst of independent media and opposition outlets. This did not last long, and the media was restricted once again following the 2013 coup. As a result, "the media quickly became caught in the political power struggles between opponents and supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood."[14] The Muslim Brotherhood is a restricted topic in the media.

Restrictions and Manipulations

Intimidation

Intimidation in Egypt takes the form of raids and detainment of journalists. This intimidation is further legitimized by arbitrary legislation and creates a chilling effect for journalists who are critical of the government. In May 2016, the government came under fire for ceding two islands in the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia. Following critical media coverage of the decision, the state's National Security Agency raided the offices of the Press Syndicate[15] and arrested several prominent media members. The offices of many other news agencies have been raided since then, including Mada-Masr and Masr al-Arabia. In 2018, Masr al-Arabia's offices were raided after the outlet published a translated New York Times article about the elections in Egypt.

[10] Cook, "Media Freedom 2019."
[11] "Constitutional Amendments in Egypt: What Texts will be Amended?" *BBC News Arabic*, April 9, 2019.
[12] "Journalists Imprisoned 2020." Map. Committee to Protect Journalists.
[13] Jenifer Whitten-Woodring and Douglas A. Van Belle, *Historical Guide to World Media Freedom: A Country-by-Country Analysis* (United States: SAGE Publications, 2014).
[14] Ibid.
[15] A press syndicate is an organization that distributes news materials to various networks and newspapers.

Plainclothes officers entered the office and detained staff for hours as they searched their laptops and software. A year later, a similar incident occurred at Mada-Masr following the release of an investigative story about the president's son.[16]

Aside from raids, journalists have also been detained for unlawful amounts of time and subjected to illegal interrogations. Under Egyptian law, "[prosecutors can] hold detainees for 15 days, renewable for up to 5 months without judicial review, after which judges can order them for 45 days, renewable for up to 2 years without trial."[17] After this period, detainees are supposed to be freed, but there has been a cycle of prosecutors recharging detainees to reset the 2-year detainment. Journalists are regularly arrested on trumped up terror and false new charges and then held for years in pretrial detention.

A 2020 investigation by Amnesty International found that, "the detention and prosecution of at least 37 journalists stems solely from their legitimate work or the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression."[18] The detention and interrogation of these journalists rarely focuses on the charges at hand and often is used to intimidate and harass journalists to receive more information. The report goes on to explain: "In seven of the cases…officials relentlessly interrogated detained journalists about their colleagues including those who publish anonymously, unnamed sources…and their views expressed on social media…journalists were threatened with torture if they failed to disclose this information."[19] The fear of prosecution, along with the use of force both during and after detainment, restricts journalists from publishing critical work that is a necessary aspect of press freedoms.

Legislation

The Egyptian government leverages legislation and judicial bodies to imprison journalists and censor news outlets. One such piece of legislation is the Antiterror Law. The law utilizes vague language that is manipulated to prosecute journalists who report on politically sensitive and controversial topics. For example, a terrorist act is defined as "any use of force, violence, threat or intimidation domestically or abroad for the purpose of disturbing public order, or endangering the safety, interests, or security of the community; harming individuals…"[20] The list goes on and encompasses many different acts. Article 28 of the law seems to address journalists, saying, "Whoever promotes or prepares to promote, directly or indirectly, the perpetration of any terrorist crime, whether verbally, in writing, or by any other means, shall be punished by imprisonment."[21] This law does not directly target journalists, but the inclusion of "in writing," allows the legislation to target those who write about terrorist acts. The ambiguity of this language not only creates a chilling effect for journalists who fear prosecution, but also allows journalists to be arrested on trumped up charges using this legislation.[22]

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[16] "Egypt: Prisons Are Now Journalists' Newsrooms," *Amnesty International*, June 1, 2021.

[17] Dalia Fahmy, "Suspended Animation: The Weaponization of Pre-Trial Detention in Egypt," DAWN, October 2, 2020.

[18] "Prisons are Journalists' Newsrooms."

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Egypt's Anti-Terror Law: A Translation," *Atlantic Council*, August 15, 2019.

[21] Ibid.

[22] "Prisons are Journalists' Newsrooms."

Another law that is vague and creates overarching power for the government is Law No. 180 (passed in 2018). It consists of amendments to Law No. 62, passed in 2016, which was a body of legislation that changed the composition of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation, an authoritative body that oversees media operations and regulations. Under Law 180, Supreme Council membership was reduced from 13 members to only 9. Additionally, the president, Sisi, can now appoint two members to the council, including the head of the Council, and chooses another member who has been nominated by parliament. Previously, members of the press were involved in the selection process for the council, thus allowing journalists to have a direct say in media regulation. With these amendments, the number of members nominated by journalists was reduced from four to only two. As a result, "the majority of the members of the Supreme Council are not working in the press and the media."[23] The members also tend to be loyalists or government sympathizers.

Other amendments to Law 62 greatly expand the powers of censorship and regulation for the Supreme Council. These amendments are as follows:

> *Article 4:* "The Supreme Media Council has the right, for reasons of national security, to prevent the dissemination of publications, newspapers, media, or advertising materials issued or broadcast from either inside or outside Egypt if they contain any information that disturbs the public peace or promotes discrimination, violence, racism, hatred, or intolerance."
> *Article 5:* "The Supreme Media Authority [has] the power to deny an operating license or permit to a media outlet or to close the outlet down if it promotes religious discrimination."
> *Article 12: "*Journalists or media personnel have the right to attend conferences and public meetings, conduct meetings with citizens, and take pictures of public places [only] after obtaining the necessary permits from the Supreme Media Council."
> *Article 19:* "The Supreme Media Council [has] the authority to suspend any personal website, blog, or social media account that has 5,000 followers or more if it posts fake news, promotes violence, or spreads hateful views."[24]

These laws give the Supreme Media Council almost absolute authority over media regulation. Given that most of the members of the council are Sisi loyalists, it is evident that there is little to no independent media regulation in the country.

Censorship

Antiterror acts and false news legislation have been used as an excuse to censor content and news outlets in Egypt. Between 2017 and 2020, an estimated 600 news and human rights websites have been blocked.[25] In May 2017, the government ordered internet service providers to

[23] "The Supreme Council for Media Regulation: A Reading into the Competencies and Practices," *Association of Freedom of Thought and Expression*, April 22, 2019.
[24] "Egypt: Parliament Passes Amendments to Media and Press Law," The Library of Congress, 2018.
[25] "World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Egypt," *Human Rights Watch*, January 14, 2020.

block access to 21 news sites for "publishing content that supports terrorism and extremism and deliberately spreads lies."[26] The sites that were blocked included foreign sites like Al-Jazeera and the Huffington Post's Arabic-language site, as well as local independent outlets like Rassd, Al-Shaab and Mada Masr, an investigative news site. According to the editors of Mada Masr and Huffington Post, neither the government nor internet service providers alerted the outlets that their sites would be taken down. Many of these sites had previously posted articles that were critical of the government or exposed government-related scandals.

In April 2019, following the ratification of Law No. 180, thousands more sites were temporarily blocked. There was a referendum taking place that month to expand President Sisi's powers and extend his term until 2030. Ahead of the voting, an online petition against the constitutional amendments gained traction, with tens of thousands of people signing it. Hours after its launch, the site and thousands of other sites that shared the same hosting service were blocked. One of the sites that was blocked was Al-Mashhad, a news site. In March of that year, Al-Masshad published an investigative piece that alleged police were "helping secure food packages to offer in exchange for votes."[27] The site was blocked for six months, but after an appeal the block was supposed to be reduced to one month. However, the site was still blocked in May of that year.

In April 2020, the news site Darb was blocked by authorities only a month after its launch. Darb was run by the opposition Socialist Popular Movement Party. It covered sensitive topics such as detained activists and the spread of Covid-19 in prisons, and often published stories critical of the government.[28] Technically, the banning of Darb and other sites was legal under Law No. 180 and the antiterror legislation. However, this evidence supports the theory that this censorship specifically targeted sites (news and otherwise) that were critical of the government.

[26] Elijah Zarwan, "Egypt Blocks Access to 21 News Websites," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, May 26, 2017.

[27] M. Elhaeis, "Egypt Tests New Censorship Law with Handling of Al-Mashhad Website Block," Committee to Protect Journalists, May 7, 2019.

[28] "Prisons are Journalists' Newsrooms."

Case Study 2: Turkey

"The AKP government views the news media as a politically engaged economic enterprise rather than a public service that functions to check and balance political authority in a liberal democracy."[29]

Historical Overview

Turkey has always had a turbulent relationship with democracy. Once the hub of the Ottoman empire, the country has deep Islamic roots. But after the state of Turkey was founded by Kemal Ataturk in 1923, it underwent a rapid period of secularization. This resulted in a country suspended between secularism and Islamism.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) won parliamentary elections in 2002. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, founder and leader of the AKP, was elected prime minister in 2003. The AKP is a conservative group with Islamic roots, yet it originally campaigned itself as a secular, progressive party. The party implemented constitutional amendments to strengthen democracy and promote human rights. Around this time the country was also vying for EU membership. It wasn't long, however, before the government's Islamist roots began to show, much to the dismay of the country's secular counterparts. In 2013, a series of anti-government protests broke out in the country.[30] In 2014, Erdogan was elected president.

The 2016 attempted military coup was perhaps the biggest catalyst of President Erdogan's consolidation. On July 15, 2016, the military unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow the president. The attempted coup was widely condemned by the people and politicians alike, and Erdogan was swift to punish those involved. Within 24 hours, more than 3,000 soldiers were detained, and hundreds of judges were dismissed.[31] This continued for a year; "the ensuing crackdown has seen 150,000 public sector workers suspended and 50,000 people from the military, police, judiciary, education, and press arrested on terror charges."[32]

President Erdogan seized the opportunity of unrest in the country to hold a national referendum in 2017. This referendum expanded the power of the president and abolished the office of the prime minister, thus giving the president the role of head of government. The amendments also greatly increased the president's influence over the judiciary and judicial appointments.[33]

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[29] Akser and Baybars-Hawks, "Media and Democracy in Turkey," 315.

[30] The Gezi Park protests began as a series of protests against the destruction of a local park and soon turned into nationwide demonstrations against the government's authoritarian nature and religious conservatism. See "Rise of the AKP in the 21st Century," *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

[31] Ahmed Abd Rabou, "Good Governance and Civil-Security Relations: A Comparative Study of Turkey and Egypt," (2021), 106.

[32] "Unsurprisingly, with the large numbers of arrested and detained army and police officers, it is widely argued that president Erdoğan seized the opportunity the coup attempt offered to take severe countermeasures that not only targeted the coup plotters from the military but extended to include bureaucrats, teachers, scholars, and journalists who were believed to have connections with the Gülen movement." See Rabou, "Good Governance," 107.

[33] "Rise of the AKP," *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Erdogan is still able to remain head of the AKP party in addition to these roles. The AKP has a coalition government with the conservative MHP (Nationalist Movement Party).

Media Background

In the 1990s, while Turkey was applying for an EU membership, the government expanded the legislative framework for media freedoms and protections. But "this Europeanization of policy-making did not result in a paradigmatic change or transformation in the recognition of media freedoms but was rather limited to legislative adaptation."[34] When the AKP rose to power in 2002, the party promised to uphold these media freedoms.

Turkey has many controversial aspects of its history that the government discourages reporters from discussing. The Armenian genocide is an example of this.[35] The Syrian War and the Kurdish conflict are also two contemporary controversies that the government discourages news outlets from covering, and often punishes journalists for reporting on these conflicts. In 2020, 38 journalists were imprisoned in Turkey.[36]

A survey by Reuters found that 41% of respondents trust the news overall in the country. Reporters without Borders gave Turkey a ranking of 153 out of 180 countries in their 2021 press freedoms report.[37] After a 2016 coup attempt, the government ordered more than 150 media outlets to close, most of them independently owned.[38]

Restrictions and Manipulations

Judicial Bodies

Turkey's government has all but eradicated the independent judiciary in the country.[39] As such, the government uses legislative and judicial methods to restrict the media.

The government uses seemingly autonomous institutions to pressure media conglomerates. Many of these conglomerates are owned by government allies and are pressured to support the government in their outlets. One institution that oversees these conglomerates is the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF). It has the authority to "appropriate and resell the property and liquidity of businesses due to bankruptcy or criminal sentencing of the owner."[40] This institution works in tandem with the judiciary to suppress the media.

One such example of this is the Uzan Group, a family group that owned various media outlets in Turkey in the 1990s and 2000s. During the 2007 elections Cem Uzan, a candidate in the election,

[34] Akser, "Media and Democracy," 304.
[35] The Armenian genocide was the deportation and mass killing of as many as one million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire. It took place from 1915 to 1916.
[36] "Journalists Imprisoned 2020," CPJ.
[37] "2021 World Press Freedoms Index."
[38] Ibid.
[39] "Turkey: Freedom in the World 2021."
[40] Akser, "Media and Democracy in Turkey," 310.

openly criticized the AKP and Prime Minister Erdogan. After the election, the Uzan family faced lawsuits for their work with Motorola and were forced to flee the country.

Their conglomerate was seized by TMSF, and the media assets were redistributed to government friendly companies.[41] One of the winners of these media assets was the Dogan Group. Ironically, the owner of the Dogan Group made the same mistake as Cem Uzan and openly criticized Erdogan. This time, however, Erdogan not only employed economic and judicial tools like he did with the Uzan Group, but also attacked the group with rhetoric and other non-governmental methods. The Dogan group similarly lost its media assets and once again the assets were redistributed to pro-government companies.

Another institution that is used to manipulate the media is the High Council for Broadcasting (RTUK). The RTUK is the main media regulation body in the country. It is composed mainly of AKP-loyalists and works in tandem with the judiciary to promote AKP favored policies. Given the influence of the AKP in these seemingly autonomous institutions, and the fact that these institutions work with the judiciary, it is significantly easier for the government to revise legislation and imprison journalists on trumped up charges.[42] More than 200 journalists have been arrested in Turkey in the last five years,[43] making it one of the world's worst jailers of journalists. The fear of imprisonment has what is known as a chilling effect on journalists.[44]

Legislation

Turkey's legislation includes strict antiterrorism laws that are manipulated to repress reporting on sensitive topics such as the Armenian genocide, Cyprus and the Kurdish conflict. It also targets the Kurdish group the PKK, which is outlawed as a terrorist organization. Like Egypt, this legislation is often used to prosecute journalists. Those who question the security forces are accused of espionage and "defaming the judicial system."[45] RSF has reported on numerous journalists who are currently detained for their investigative reporting.

In 2021, Turkey passed perhaps the most restrictive internet legislation yet. The new legislation "requires sites with more than a million daily users to appoint a local representative…to enforce court orders to remove content" and requires platforms to localize their user data.[46] By localizing user data and creating local representatives, these companies are now subject to local legislation, which gives the government greater influence over their platforms. Local representatives are at

[41] Ibid.

[42] The Council of Judges and Prosecutors, HSYK, oversees judicial appointments. The president can appoint 4 members. Parliament can appoint 7 members. See Serap Yazıcı, "Constitutional Amendments of 2017: Transition to Presidentialism in Turkey," Hauser Global Law School Program.

[43] "Turkey: Press Freedom in Figures." RSF. January 29, 2021.

[44] "Even if Turkey is no longer the world's biggest jailer of journalists, the risk of imprisonment and the fear of having to work under judicial control or being stripped of one's passport are still ubiquitous. Around 50 journalists were briefly arrested in 2020 in connection with their coverage of the situation of Syrian refugees at the border with Greece or the Covid-19 pandemic." See "Portrait of Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Reporters without Borders," *RSF*, June 30, 2021.

[45] "Turkey Using Terrorism Legislation to Gag and Jail Journalists." *RSF*, June 15, 2021.

[46] Ayla Jean Yackley, "Turkey's Social Media Law: A Cautionary Tale," *POLITICO*, March 31, 2021.

risk of prosecution or harassment, making it "extremely difficult to defy the government's grip on online content."[47] So far, Twitter, Facebook and Google have appointed local representatives in the country.

Censorship

Turkey also has a slew of legislation targeting the internet and social media, which vastly restricts the way journalists and even ordinary people can communicate information. The first of these is Law 5651. The law aims to minimize defamatory videos and obscene content on the internet. Between 2007—when the law was implemented—and 2009, 3,700 websites were blocked. This included prominent sites such as YouTube, and news sites that report on southeast Turkey, where much of the conflict with the Kurds takes place.[48]

In addition to this censorship legislation, Turkey also floods social media companies with removal requests to censor content that they cannot censor themselves. Some social media sites—specifically Twitter, which is popular amongst journalists—have a "country withheld content" policy that allows governments to submit tweets and accounts for removal based on federal laws. The aforementioned antiterrorism law is often used to submit these requests. Twitter does not remove these posts globally but removes them in the country that requested it. In 2014, Turkey requested to remove 432 pieces of Twitter content (accounts and tweets); by the end of 2017, that number was more than 6,000. As shown in Figure 1, Turkey's content removal requests make up most of the world's removal requests. Figure 2 shows the parallel between Twitter censorship and political developments in the country.

[47] Cigdem Bozdag, assistant professor at the Research Center for Media and Journalism Studies at the University of Groningen, cited in Politico. See Yackley, "Turkey's Social Media Law."

[48] Yaman Akdeniz, "Report of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on Turkey and Internet Censorship," *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,* January 11, 2020.

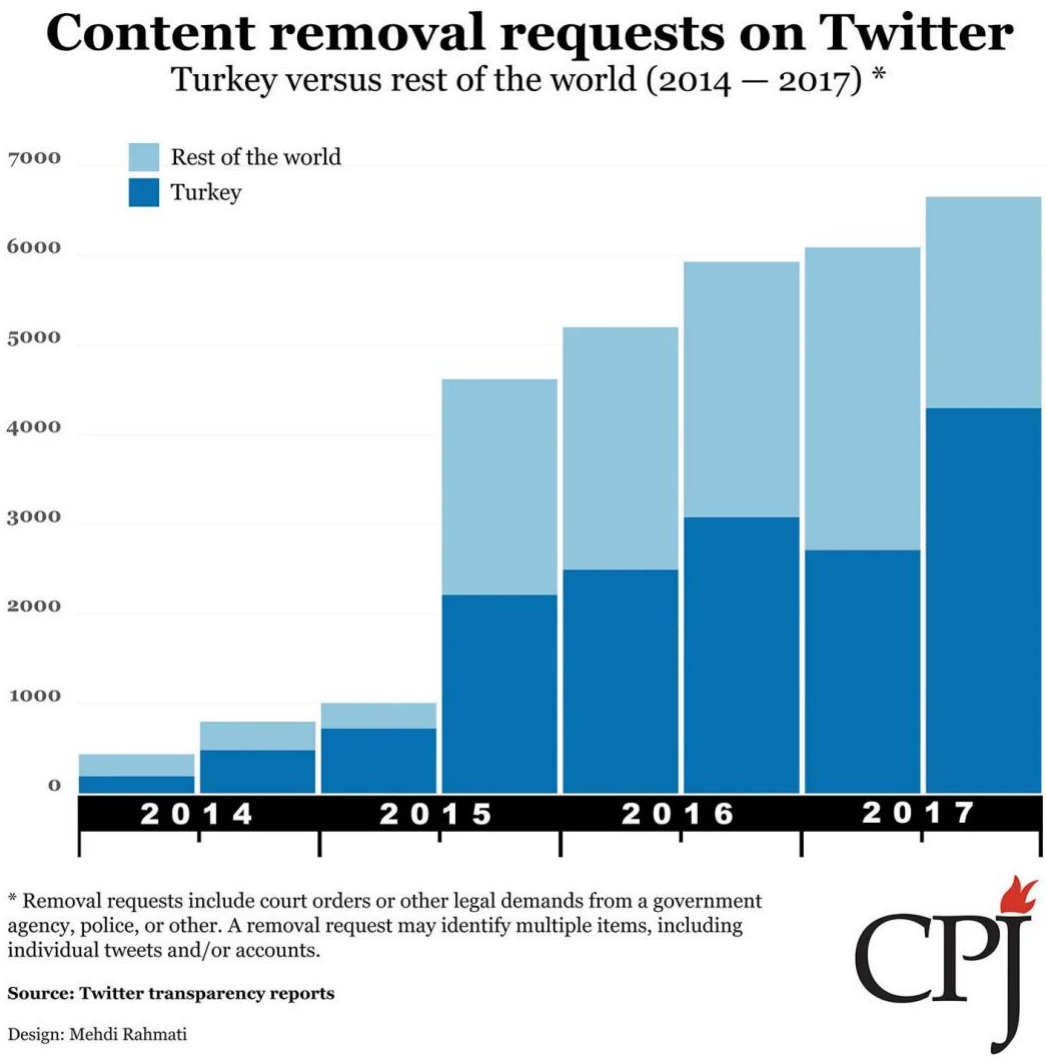

Figure 1.[49]

[49] Ahmed Zidan, "How Turkey Silences Journalists Online, One Removal Request at a Time," *Committee to Protect Journalists,* August 13, 2018.

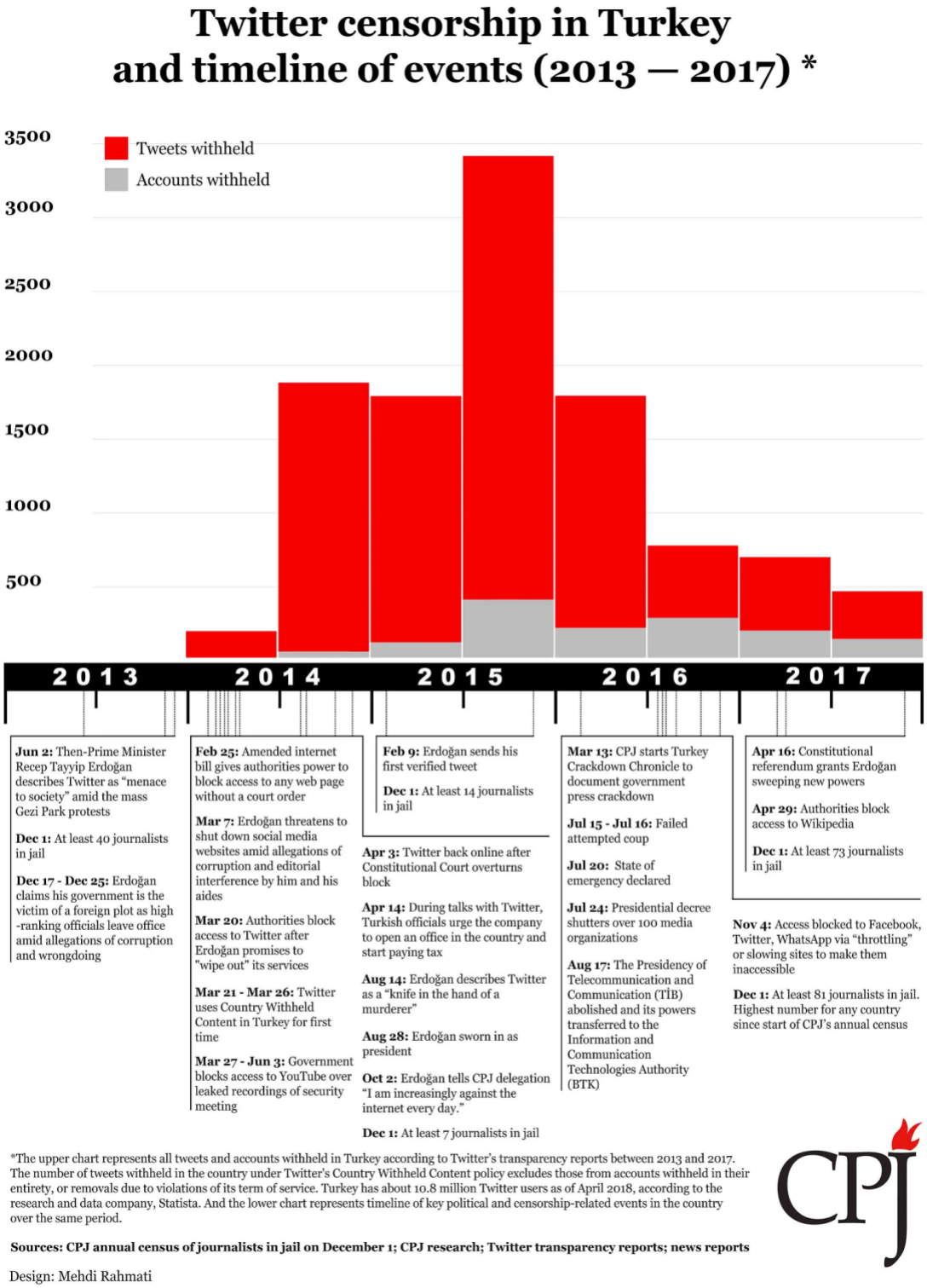

Figure 2.[50]

[50] Zidan, "How Turkey Silences Journalists."

The Committee to Protect Journalists also found that from 2014 to 2017, at least 59 of those restricted accounts were journalists and media outlets with a combined following of over six million users.[51]

Accreditation Discrimination

The government's attitude towards the press is also very telling of its attitude towards protecting its freedom. The government's unofficial "safe" press list "includes journalists deemed safe and friendly; they are given direct access to the prime minister and government officials." Journalists critical of the government or not aligned with the AKP are often denied access to government officials. Erdogan has also been known to hold meetings with media barons—most of whom are aligned with the government—to discuss what to publish and broadcast.[52]

Rhetoric

The rhetoric that the government uses against the media is also an important yet underrated tool of manipulation. As mentioned in the legislation section, the Dogan Group was an unfortunate victim of Erdogan's harsh rhetoric and manipulation. In 2008, Dogan-owned newspapers began publishing stories on alleged fraud by the AKP. After receiving criticism from the government, the newspapers went on to publicly reveal the AKP's attempted repression through political and economic pressure. Erdogan responded by accusing the Dogan Media Group of fraud and publishing false news and made an open call to his party to boycott any Dogan-owned media outlets. The government and its supporters began public campaigns to smear the group's name. This included portraying the group as "rich, snobbish, high class and bourgeoisie." This portrayal of certain media outlets as "richmen's pawns"[53] is a popular tactic used by Erdogan. It pits the people against these so-called elitist news groups and erodes the trust in these outlets.

[51] Ibid.
[52] Akser, "Media and Democracy," 314.
[53] Ibid, 311.

Case Study 3: Hungary

"Score declines linked to economic manipulation of media-—including cases in which the government directs advertising to friendly outlets or encourages business allies to buy those that are critical—were more common across Europe over the past five years than in other parts of the world."[54]

Historical Overview

The Fidesz Party first came to the national stage in the 1998 elections. The party won 148 seats in parliament, and joined two other conservative, right wing groups to form a coalition. During this election Viktor Orbán, a lifelong politician and one of the founders of Fidesz, was also elected prime minister. From the start, his campaign and his time in office was characterized by strong conservative and nationalist sentiments. This didn't last long though; in 2002, Orbán lost reelection and Fidesz's control in parliament slipped.

In 2010, the Fidesz Party made its comeback. Orbán was elected prime minister again and for the first time in Hungary's history, a single party won two-thirds majority in parliament.[55] This election marked the beginning of Orbán's consolidation of power. In 2011, he announced a new constitution called the Fundamental Law of Hungary. It was pushed through parliament in just nine days and came into force in 2012.
The independent judiciary was one of many sectors targeted in this new constitution. First, the selection process for court justices was amended. Instead of an all-party committee that proposed candidates, the appointment was a decision of the Fidesz-ruling parliament. The number of justices on the bench rose from 11 to 15, allowing the Fidesz-ruling parliament to choose five new justices (there was already one vacancy). Parliament now also had the power to appoint the president of the constitutional court, something that was previously left to the judges themselves. The retirement age of judges was lowered and affected more than 200 sitting judges.[56] The Supreme Court was abolished and recreated as the Kuria, and the head of the Kuria was, unsurprisingly, chosen by parliamentary majority. The constitution similarly consolidated power in the finance, education and media sectors. In March 2013, parliament voted to further curb the court's powers; laws previously overturned by the constitutional court were made into constitutional law and written into the constitution. In sum, "the Orbán regime was able to effect 'an unconstitutional coup…[under] the cover of constitutionality, with constitutional means.'"[57] Fidesz continued to win parliamentary majority and Orbán was reelected as prime minister in 2014 and 2018.

Media Background and Landscape

Hungary was part of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War, and as such did not experience free media until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. It wasn't until the 1994 elections, with the

[54] Cook, "Freedom and the Media."
[55] Fidesz held 68% of the seats in parliament, or 283 MPs. See Paul Lendvai, *Orbán: Europe's New Strongman*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 85.
[56] Lendvai, *Orbán*, 103-104.
[57] Lendvai, *Orbán*, 110.

winners campaigning on free media and economic reform, that restrictions loosened in the country. From 2002 to 2010, Hungary's media was classified as "free" in accordance with Freedom House's criteria.[58] After this, media freedoms began to decline as the Fidesz party gained majority in parliament and Viktor Orbán was elected prime minister once again.

This year, Hungary ranked 92nd out of 180 countries on RSF's World Press Freedom Index, down 3 points (89th) from 2020. After 27 years, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty relaunched its operations in Hungary in 2020. This reflects concerns from the international community over press freedoms in the country. A report by Reuters found that only 30% of Hungarian respondents trust the news that they receive. There is an 83% internet penetration rate according to Reuters and according to Daily News Hungary, 83% of Hungarians get their news online.

Restrictions and Manipulations

Media capture

According to a 2019 report on media freedoms, score declines in Europe specifically were linked to economic manipulation of the media, "including cases in which the government directs advertising to friendly outlets or encourages business allies to buy those that are critical."[59] This type of economic manipulation is frequent in Hungary, where the Fidesz Party has taken control of much of the media. As of 2020, as much as 80% of the media market, if not more, consisted of pro-government news outlets, with roughly 41% of online media also composed of pro-government outlets.[60] In 2020, a pro-government businessman by the name of Miklos Vaszily bought a 50% stake in Indamedia, a company that controls funding for Hungarian news outlet Index, the country's largest independent news outlet. Editor-in-Chief Szabolcs Dull was fired after the transition and much of the staff subsequently resigned in protest. The staff then went on to create their own independent outlet, Telex, with the help of crowdfunding campaigns.[61]

Although this is perhaps the most publicized instance of media capture in Hungary, it is not the first time this has happened. In 2016, Hungary's then-largest independent news outlet Népszabadság closed for financial reasons. However, many employees believed that financial issues were not the true underlying cause of this closure, which came just days after the newspaper reported a scandal involving politicians closely linked to Prime Minister Orbán.[62]

After the 2018 national elections, a slew of newspapers owned by oligarch Lajos Simicska were closed due to rifts with Orbán and the Fidesz Party. Simicska was originally a member of Fidesz and a staunch supporter of Orbán, but after a falling out, Simicska used his media empire to publicly support the Jobbik party in national elections.[63] When Fidesz won the elections,

[58] Whitten-Woodring, *Guide to World Media Freedom.*
[59] Cook, "Media Freedom 2019."
[60] "Hungary: Freedom on the Net 2020," *Freedom House,* 2020.
[61] Marton Dunai, "Pro-Government Businessman Buys into Top Hungarian News Portal's Funding Stream," *Reuters,* March 31, 2020.
[62] "Hungary: RSF Appalled by Leading Hungarian Daily's Closure" *RSF,* October 11, 2016.
[63] Lili Bayer, "Lajos Simicska," *POLITICO,* December 6, 2017.

Simicska was forced to shutter his outlets, including 80-year-old daily newspaper Magyar Nemzet.[64]

Advertising bias

In a time where the news media is shifting from print to digital and many independent outlets are struggling to stay afloat financially, advertising has arguably become more important than ever in maintaining financial stability. Because of this, the state is using its own advertising powers to support pro-government outlets and punish independent and opposition media.

In 2014, the government introduced a tax on advertising revenue for media companies. One of the victims of this tax was the independent, German-owned media company RTL Klub, the most popular commercial television channel in Hungary. Ultimately, RTL Klub was subjected to tax rates as high as 40%. Many believed it was an intentional move to cinch the media through financial means. "The objective of the introduction of this tax is nothing less than an aggressive attempt by the government to undermine the biggest media company of the country, which has proved its independence from the political parties and the government over the past 17 years," a spokesperson for RTL Hungary said at the time.[65]

Lajos Simicska's outlets are another example of the way state advertising is being co-opted. Before Simicska's public fallout with Fidesz, and the subsequent closing of most of his media outlets, his company benefited greatly from state advertising. Simicska purchased a daily named Metropol in 2011 and "immediately after the month of purchase, [Metropol's] share in state-owned firms' print advertising jumped to above 50%,"[66] after being below 20%. This is shown in Figure 3. The green line represents Simicska's purchase.

[64] "Hungary: Freedom in the World 2020 Country Report." *Freedom House*. 2020.
[65] Margit Feher, "Hungary Adopts Tax on Advertising Revenue," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 11, 2014.
[66] Adam Szeidl and Ferenc Szucs. "Media Capture Through Favor Exchange." *Econometrica* 89, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 290, doi:10.3982/ECTA15641.

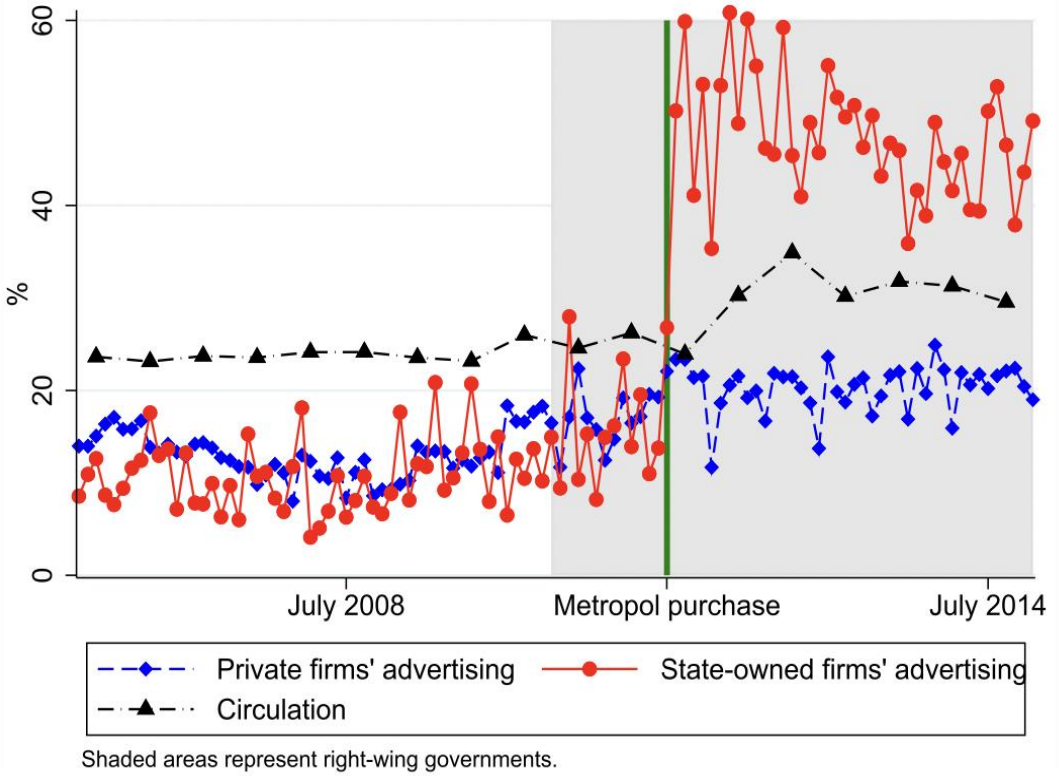

Figure 3.[67]

After his public fallout with Fidesz, state-owned firms' advertising for two of Simicska's dailies (Metropol and Magyar Nemzet) dropped more than 40%. This is shown in Figure 4. Notably, there was no change in private firms' advertising, thus cementing the fact that the government yielded its financial powers to punish Simicska.[68]

[67] Ibid.
[68] Szeidl, "Media Capture," 291.

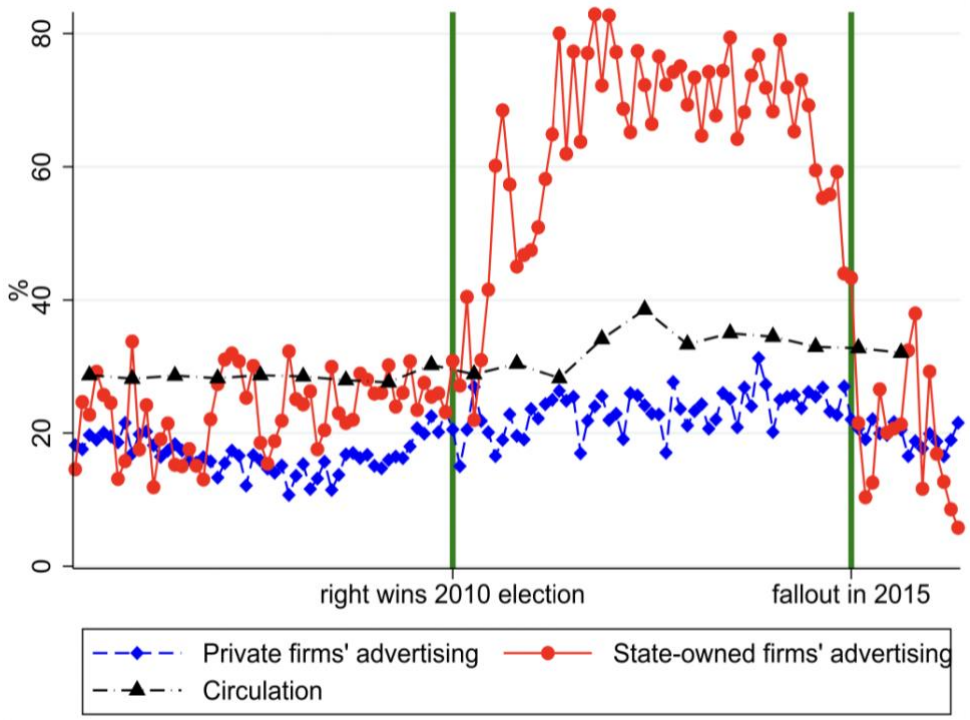

Figure 4.[69]

Legislation and Decrees

In 2011, a media law came into effect establishing the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH), a council of politically appointed members to oversee the media. Under this law, journalists could be fined for "imbalanced news coverage" or for publishing "immoral" content. In 2012, a court ruled that print and online media would be exempt from the oversight of the NMHH.[70] However, the prevailing presence of the NMHH has a chilling effect on journalists who fear repercussions for publishing honest yet controversial news.[71]

The Covid-19 pandemic is an excuse for the government to enact tighter restrictions on the media in the name of public health and safety. The government approved a "state of danger" during the first wave of the pandemic in 2020, which gave the government power to rule by decree. The Authorization Act was passed soon after, allowing the government to rule by decree on matters connected to the management of the pandemic. In addition to this, it also lifted the 15-day limit on decrees, meaning they can be upheld for as long as necessary. Predictably, the government seized the opportunity to pass decrees on matters unrelated to the pandemic.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Whitten-Woodring, *Historical Guide to World Media Freedom.*

[71] "Critics say the Media Commissioner's powers extend the Media Authority's regulatory scope and sanctioning powers to areas not defined in the media laws, which could have a "chilling effect" on the press. Opponents claim these powers enable the Media Authority to assert arbitrary and far-reaching control over the country's media landscape." See "Hungary's Media Authority: The Issue of Powers," CEU Democracy Institute, September 7, 2012.

One such decree was an amendment to the criminal code that made scaremongering and spreading false news about Covid-19 illegal. Journalists were not specifically targeted in this amendment; however, it had a chilling effect on reporters and many of their sources. Additionally, hospital workers have been barred from talking to journalists, making it nearly impossible for reporters to obtain crucial and honest information about the pandemic.[72]

Orbán's use of packing the courts is reflected in his most recent move to shut down Klubrádió, the last private broadcasting company. The outlet was known for criticizing Orbán and the Fidesz party, and the government had slowly but surely been stripping its national frequencies and pulling its advertising revenue over the years. On February 14, 2021, the government refused to renew Klubrádió's license due to "major regulatory infringements."[73]

Orbán also employs decrees to restrict the press without any obstacles. One of the major shifts in media freedoms came in 2018 when Orbán passed a decree that allowed the merging of more than 450 pro-government media outlets into one conglomerate. The decree overrode numerous bureaucratic steps for approval, with Orbán claiming that this conglomerate was "of strategic importance at a national level" and a matter of public interest.[74] The Central European Press and Media Foundation, known as KESMA, was created after 476 media outlets were handed over to the organization for free. As a result, "40 percent of the turnover from the news and public life segment of the Hungarian media market is now concentrated in KESMA."[75]

Social Media Manipulation

Aside from restrictions, the government is using the media as a tool to push its own ideology. It is doing so across a number of different mediums, with some of their most recent endeavors being through social media. Fidesz is expanding to social media, with the help of media organization Megafon. Megafon is offering free workshops to social media users that will "transform you into a professional Facebook warrior,"[76] according to its advertisement video. The goal is to amplify right-wing voices on social media[77] so as to target and gain support from the youth. A recent poll by Median, a Hungarian site, found that only 22% of those under 30 support the Fidesz Party.[78] Megafon claims to be independent from any political parties or organizations, yet the founder Istvan Kovacs has close ties to the Fidesz party. Kovacs once famously said it was time to stop the "left wing liberal tsunami of public opinion."[79] Orbán is not just restricting the press, but its using social media—a medium that is popular with journalists—to influence people and push Fidesz-centered ideology.

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[72] Justin Spike, "Hungarian Journalists Demand Access to Covid Wards," *Associated Press,* March 31, 2021.

[73] Teno, Lisa. "Hungary: Authoritarianism by Another Name?" *Geopolitical Monitor.* June 1, 2021.

[74] Jenei Miklós and Kovács Zoltán, "Orbán Exempts New Propaganda Conglomerate from Competition Law," *Index,* April 3, 2019.

[75] Gábor Medvegy, "Orbán's Media Empire Unlawfully given Green Light," *Liberties,* January 29, 2020.

[76] Stephan Ozsvath, "Hungary's Fidesz Party Seeks to Conquer Social Media" *DW,* June 2, 2021.

[77] Fruzsina, Előd, "Making Fidesz Hip, No Matter the Cost," *Telex,* November 10, 2020.

[78] Ozsvath, "Fidesz Seeks to Conquer Social Media."

[79] Ibid.

Discussion: Classifying Political Systems

Before discussing the correlation between the government and its treatment of the press, it is first necessary to classify each of these states.

This thesis emphasizes the difference between traditional and modern authoritarian regimes to demonstrate how modern regimes are co-opting and manipulating the press in more subtle ways than long-time authoritarian ones. But what is the difference between a traditional and modern authoritarian regime? Freedom House defines traditional authoritarianism as a state that "sought monopolistic control over political life, a one-party system organized around a strongman or military junta, and direct rule by the executive, sometimes through martial law, with little or no role for the parliament."[80] The use of force is common, especially in military dictatorships. This definition of traditional authoritarianism reflects the state of Egypt.

Modern authoritarian regimes, in contrast, are characterized by more subtle means of repression. Unlike traditional regimes, modern regimes do not strive to enact totalitarian control over every aspect of people's lives and beliefs. Freedom House explains, "The leaders of today's authoritarian systems devote full-time attention to the challenge of crippling the opposition without annihilating it and flouting the rule of law while maintaining a plausible veneer of order, legitimacy, and prosperity." Their strategy is to neutralize—not destroy—institutions that pose a threat to their leadership. Their methods include controlling elements of key sectors like the economy, "legalized political repression," secretive use of extralegal force or violence—usually against critics and opponents—and limiting the opposition's presence in elections. Turkey is an example of a modern authoritarian regime. And although Hungary is still classified as a democracy, it is nonetheless following the path to modern authoritarianism.

Egypt

Of the three case studies presented in this thesis, Egypt portrays a traditional authoritarian regime, per the definition above. Its government today can be classified as a military autocracy. Emphasis is placed on the military because Egypt's political history has long been entwined with its military history. The military replaced Mubarak during the Arab Spring, and Sisi replaced Morsi in power through a military coup. Autocracy is defined as a government controlled by one person. Autocracies can also be controlled by groups like the military. Egypt is a military autocracy because although Sisi has consolidated power solely under himself, the military plays a large role in society. Like Sisi, many of the people in his cabinet and in high-level government positions have ties to the military. This is the pattern that Egypt has always followed: "Every non-interim president of Egypt, with the exception of Morsi, has had a military background."[81] This close relationship between the head of state and the military, an entity that is inherently forceful and unabashed, suggests why the press is treated the way it is in Egypt. The military is a very powerful sector in Egypt and if Sisi's government has that power backing them, it is easy to employ the harsh methods they use and face little repercussions or opposition.

[80]Arch Puddington, "Breaking down Democracy," Freedom House, 2017.
[81] Al-Shamahi, Abubakr. "Egypt's Military Dominates 10 Years after Revolution." Al Jazeera, January 26, 2021.

Egypt's most common methods of press repression are legislation, censorship and intimidation. The government often uses antiterrorism and national security legislation to prevent journalists from critical reporting. The Muslim Brotherhood was banned and declared a terrorist organization after the 2013 coup. Journalists who report on anything even remotely related to the Muslim Brotherhood or other controversial topics can be accused of being part of a terrorist organization and prosecuted. The language included in Egypt's antiterror legislation is purposely vague and usually doesn't explicitly outline how or why a person is considered a terrorist or what specific actions are considered acts of terror, meaning the legislation can be used in a number of ways without much room for a defense from the accused.

Unlike other countries in this thesis, Egypt's censorship is significantly more straightforward and doesn't always require sound legislation or due process for content to be censored. Websites, specifically independent news sites, are often blocked in the country without any warning. There are examples of sites being blocked after reporters published stories that paint the government in a bad light.

Intimidation is the last major method of repression. There are reports of journalists being illegally detained and tortured. News offices have been subjected to raids without any sort of arrest. These reactionary measures almost always follow critical coverage of the government. These methods don't just create a chilling effect for journalists. They also put journalists at risk of physical harm. The government of Egypt is not afraid to send a message to reporters that critical or oppositional reporting is not permitted in the country. In Egypt, there are very few checks and balances in place to stop the government from carrying out these methods of repression. There is virtually no independent judiciary, and the legislature—which is not very influential to begin with—consists of a pro-government majority.[82] The government is not scared of backlash when employing these harsh methods, because there are very few, if any, consequences.

Turkey

Unlike Egypt, Turkey is a modern authoritarian regime. It can be classified as a competitive authoritarian regime. This term was coined in 2002 by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way. They explain, "In competitive authoritarian regimes, formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. Incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy."[83] It is not democracy, but it is not full-scale authoritarianism either. There are four criteria that are important in a liberal democracy: free and fair elections, universal suffrage, protection of political rights and civil liberties, and an independent legislature. These practices can be and are violated at times in democratic states; however, in authoritarian regimes, they are violated systematically and consistently enough that

[82] "The pro-government Nation's Future Party gained a majority [in parliament] by rocketing from 52 members to 316 in the 596-seat parliament." See Hassanein, Haisam. "Egypt's New Parliament: Reopening Political Life, but Only so Far." The Washington Institute, January 26, 2021.

[83] Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." Journal of Democracy 13, no. 2 (2002): 51–65. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0026.

they impede democratic gains. In other words, these violations "create an uneven playing field between government and opposition."[84]

These states fall short of full-scale authoritarianism because leaders do not fully eliminate democratic institutions and practices, even if they do manipulate them. Erdogan and the AKP use democratic means (elections) to secure a spot in the political realm, and from there manipulate the system from within. They use their majority in parliament to create constitutional amendments, smear the opposition and subordinate the judiciary. But even with this manipulation, the democratic institutions and practices in place still hold legitimacy and thus pose a real threat to leaders.[85]

Levitsky and Way identify four sectors that are in constant conflict with authoritarian leaders: the electoral process, legislature, judiciary, and media. Elections are competitive, yet still marred with biased media coverage and harassment of the opposition. As seen in Turkey, the judiciary's independence is at stake, and the AKP holds a majority in parliament. In the media, legislation, judicial bodies, and censorship are the main methods of repression. Turkey's anti-terror law is used to detain journalists who report on such controversial topics as the PKK and Syria, and the government also passed new legislation restricting social media platforms. These platforms, which are popular forms of communication for journalists, are now required to appoint a local representative to respond to content removal requests by the government. These requests are used to censor online content, and Turkey has one of the highest rates of removal requests in the world.

Turkey also censors online content—news sites and social media platforms alike—under Law 5561. This law gives the government the right to censor defamatory content and obscenity online. As with other legislation, the language in this law is vague and often used for unrelated content.

The use of seemingly independent judicial bodies to take down news outlets is also popular in Turkey. The TMSF has seized and resold various news outlets owned by groups who have gone against the AKP. The High Council for Broadcasting is a media regulation body with extensive ties to the AKP. This body is responsible for overseeing legislation like Law 5561 and thus has immense influence on censorship.

Erdogan also employs extralegal methods of manipulation. His rhetoric against the press is harsh and often paints them as "richmen's pawns". He also allegedly has a "safe" press list of journalists that he will talk to; unsurprisingly, most of these journalists are from state-owned or state-friendly outlets.

The Turkish government employs the use of both softer methods like the judiciary and rhetoric, and harsher methods like imprisoning journalists. These methods mirror its place as a

[84] Ibid.

[85] For example, the 2019 mayoral elections of Istanbul challenged the AKP's influence in the city. Opposition candidates won the election, ending the 25-year majority-rule of the AKP. Erdogan contested the results, but they were upheld. See "Erdogan's Party Suffers Blow after Istanbul Re-Run Poll Defeat." *BBC News*, June 24, 2019.

competitive authoritarian regime. It's not a traditional authoritarian regime, so although imprisonment is common, reports of torture and the use of force against journalists is less common. The use of the judiciary exemplifies a key characteristic of modern authoritarian regimes: manipulation of formal institutions from the inside. The press is subjected to arbitrary censorship and national security legislation that can only be upheld in a judiciary that is no longer independent.

Hungary

Hungary stands apart from the other two countries in this thesis because it is still widely classified as a democracy. However, the country is following the path of modern authoritarianism, and many of the tactics used by Orbán and Fidesz are similar to those of Erdogan and the AKP.

Hungary is currently classified as an illiberal democracy. The word democracy is usually equated with free elections, the rule of law and individual rights like free speech, assembly and more. However, these connotations are derived from the definition of a liberal democracy, or what most western countries model their democracy after. In the last half-century, the emergence of illiberal democracies has challenged this preconceived notion of democracy. Illiberal democracies are "countries that had initiated a transition away from authoritarian rule and had adopted free elections but had failed to build the liberal institutions that could guarantee individual rights."[86] The idea first came about in 1997 by Fareed Zakaria.[87] His article "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy" argues that constitutional liberalism does not equate to democracy, and the tension between these ideals is what leads to illiberal democracies. States often create democratic institutions and follow the model of democracy without implementing liberal institutions alongside it. This leads to a consolidation of power by the leader or party, who thinks that being democratically elected gives them the right to absolute sovereignty.[88]

Hungary is an illiberal democracy because of the erosion of its democratic institutions. The legislature is ruled by a Fidesz-led coalition supermajority. Orbán's government amended the constitution to consolidate judicial power under parliament. Democratic practices still exist in the country and maintain legitimacy, and Orbán's authoritarian nature is garnering attention by the public and the international community. Because of this, democratic practices are still respected, even if they are abused by those in power.

Freedom House's 2019 media freedom report[89] addresses what the author calls the "illiberal toolbox" for restricting and manipulating the media. The report explains, "This toolbox leaves

[86] Plattner, Marc F. "Illiberal Democracy and the Struggle on the Right." Journal of Democracy 30, no. 1 (2019): 9.

[87] Fareed Zakaria is a journalist, political commentator, and best-selling author. He has worked for CNN, The Washington Post and Newsweek. At the time of publishing "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," he was the managing editor of Foreign Affairs.

[88] "Constitutional liberalism argues that human beings have certain natural (or "inalienable") rights and that governments must accept a basic law, limiting its own powers, that secures them." See Zakaria, Fareed. "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy." Foreign Affairs 76, no. 6 (1997): 26.

[89] Cook, "Media Freedom 2019."

out tactics like censorship, force, or outright intimidation of journalists. Instead, it contains a collection of methods used to harness structural conditions. Once successful co-optation has taken place, media are incorporated into the system as building blocks that prop up those in power."[90] The report goes on to explain the different ways this co-optation takes place, seen in the graphics below:

[90] Ibid.

The findings in this report are supported by the government's treatment of the media. The Freedom House report identifies economic manipulation ("tilting the market") as one method of co-optation. The government uses financial and economic methods because it is more subtle than outright censorship or intimidation. As much as 80% of Hungary's media is owned by the government or pro-government allies. KESMA, a conglomerate of more than 400 media organizations, is an example of media capture and "exhibits in plain sight the astonishing domination of government-friendly media in Hungary." Hungary's government also uses advertising to reward and punish outlets, depending on their stance on the government; Freedom House found that "in 2018, state ad spending was five times more than under previous governments a decade earlier, with a whopping 85 percent of contracts awarded to government-friendly companies."

Wielding the law is another method identified in the report. Orbán uses decrees to pass questionable legislation. These decrees are attributed to national security and the Covid-19 has been used more recently to bypass the traditional methods of approving legislation.

In addition to restricting the media to keep it pro-government, Hungary also exemplifies the way it has created a "parallel reality" for discourse. The pro-government company Megafon has created workshops to teach right-wing social media users how to spread their ideology more effectively. Orbán is also known for using harsh rhetoric against the press, including calling stories fake news when they paint his government in a bad light.

These methods show the government's disrespect for democratic institutions, but also reveal the lack of accountability by the government for their treatment of the press. Many of the developments in Hungary are carefully crafted by the government yet are often attributed to relevant excuses—like the COVID-19 pandemic—or blamed as being out of the government's hands. This is evident in the use of economic methods. The government can "plausibly deny responsibility for this [strategy], as it relies on players on the market and in institutions supposedly outside the government's control." The government has purchased many news outlets, but even more are being bought by pro-government businesses, and it is this independent ownership that allows the government to evade blame for the lack of independent media.[91]

[91] Cook, "Media Freedom 2019."

Analysis

Egypt's methods of repression are much more straightforward and harsher than Hungary's main method of media capture and Turkey's preferred method of judicial action. Egypt's history and tradition of authoritarianism means the government is more comfortable employing these methods of repression because of a lack of checks and balances in the government.

For the most part, Egypt has always been an authoritarian regime or military dictatorship. Much of the power was consolidated under a single leader or the military under a single commander. Sisi staged a coup during protests against Morsi and went on to hold presidential elections (in which he won 96% of the vote) only after he was already in power. Sisi's government consists of a cabinet of close allies, and the 2019 referendum expanded his powers over the legislature and judiciary. Outside of himself and his cabinet, there are few institutions that hold legitimate power. This means there are virtually no checks and balances that Sisi must go through to pass arbitrary laws and justify illegal detainments, for example, thus making it easier for his government to employ the methods that it does.

In contrast, modern authoritarian regimes often still have checks and balances in place that prevent a government from fully dismantling democratic institutions. The main centers of power in Turkey and Hungary are the AKP and the Fidesz Party, respectively, because the legislature still holds legitimate power. Although Erdogan and Orbán are consolidating power in their respective roles as president and prime minister, they are using their parties' immense influence to wield this power. Erdogan needs the AKP and its majority in parliament to push legislation that consolidates his power and restrict liberties such as press freedoms. In Hungary, Orbán needs the Fidesz party and its coalition supermajority in parliament to pass decrees and push legislation through parliament so quickly. These leaders cannot do this alone. As democracies, these states still have the structures in place that guarantee—at least to some extent—checks and balances and room for pluralism. These leaders must use their ties with political parties to neutralize their countries' checks and balances and co-opt democratic institutions like the media from the inside.

It is evident that the presence of a working system of governmental checks and balances is key to the maintenance of any kind of freely functioning press. In Hungary, oppositional parties, the people and even the European Union are raising alarms about the state of government and the treatment of the press. The erosion of an independent press is still happening, but people are noticing. This is also happening in Egypt, and people are noticing, but there is no check in place to stop Sisi or investigate the issue further. This is an important difference because Egypt is using methods like censorship and intimidation against the press, which are much more obvious means of repression. There are reports of journalists being illegally detained and even tortured. Although Hungary and Turkey are still attacking the press, it has not—at least not yet—gotten to this point, and there seems to be enough attention drawn to it that it may never get to that point.

Conclusion

This research aimed to identify the correlation between state types and their treatment of the press. Through the evaluation of Turkey, Egypt, and Hungary's press freedoms it is evident that the more authoritarian leaning a regime is, the more it is going to restrict its press. Furthermore, the discussion of state classifications found that traditional authoritarian regimes are more likely to use harsh methods of repression while modern authoritarian regimes and illiberal democracies—which were proven to be states on the path to modern authoritarianism—use subtle or "softer" methods of repression. Egypt's long history of authoritarianism and political ties to the military show that it is more comfortable using forceful actions like detainment. In contrast, Turkey's newer version of authoritarianism means that its government is eroding the independence of its institutions from the inside and using them to restrict the press. In other words, it uses questionable co-optation of its institutions to create legal measures to erode press freedoms. In Hungary, a country on the brink of authoritarianism but still classified as an illiberal democracy, the government relies on secretive economic methods that allow it to evade blame for the erosion of press freedoms.

The discussion reveals and supports the theory that different authoritarian regimes use different levels of restrictions because of the prevalence and legitimacy of checks and balances in a government. Egypt's history as an authoritarian state means any checks or opposition are long gone or repressed enough that the government can use methods of force. In newer authoritarian regimes and illiberal democracies like Turkey and Hungary, respectively, the existence of legitimate democratic institutions and oppositional political parties means these governments have less power to use methods of force and instead must resort to restricting the press through legal and economic means.

This thesis has shown that the press transcends every sector of society and government. It acts as a watchdog of the government, and it is responsible for relaying information to the public—information that is then used to make informed decisions on laws and leaders. The press holds an immense amount of power; as such, a free and independent press can be dangerous to authoritarian regimes. Because of this, it is important to know the warning signs of an independent press at risk. This thesis has not only shown the way in which this independence can be eroded but has drawn a line of correlation between these methods and the types of regimes that use each method. To better identify these warning signs, future research should prioritize identifying the type of authoritarianism in a regime. This will allow for a deeper understanding of why a particular regime is using the methods of restriction and co-optation that they are, as well as provide a more personalized analysis of a democracy at risk.

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