

PHILOSOPHIES FOR MEDIA SYSTEMS

PRIMER QUESTIONS

1. What are some purposes that media serve for the government of the country in which you are living?
2. What are some purposes that media serve for the general population of the country in which you are living?
3. What are some purposes that media serve for the owners of media as well as media professionals in the country in which you are living?
4. How do purposes of media differ between poorer, smaller, or less stable countries versus richer, bigger, or more stable countries?
5. In what situations are freedoms for the media appropriate, and in what situations are freedoms of the media inappropriate?

Think about what kind of person you usually are when it comes to playing a game. Is it important to you to try to win at all costs, or are you happy just playing the game? Is it important to you that all the players follow the rules exactly as they are specified, or is it okay with you if some rules are modified? Is it important to you that you finish the game, or do you mind if the game gets called off because other things come up? How do your answers to these questions affect the effort you put into the game and the strategies you use? Though you may not think of your game-playing style as being guided by a particular philosophy, it probably is. For instance, perhaps you follow a philosophy that game playing is mainly for fun, which leads you not to have a “killer” instinct when you play a game. Perhaps you have a philosophy that most rules in life are bendable, which leads you to modify rules in a game depending on the situation. Perhaps you believe that just getting the chance to play a game is a nice treat, which leads you not to push to finish the entire game. The main point of laying out these simple scenarios of playing a game is to introduce the idea that your actions are often guided by a philosophy you hold, regardless of whether you are fully conscious of the philosophy while you are pursuing your actions.

Similarly, **philosophies for media systems** lie underneath the decisions that structure the operations of media systems. To refer back to the tree metaphor described in Chapter 3, the element of philosophies for media systems was likened to a root network that feeds the tree with nutrients from the soil but remains hidden from the naked eye. Similarly, a philosophy for a media system is perceived as a root network that feeds the media system with characteristics from the surrounding culture.

There is a large body of research in international media studies on philosophies for media systems. The research was largely initiated in 1956 by a seminal book, *Four Theories of the Press* (1963) by Frederick Siebert, Theodore Pederson, and Wilbur Schramm. That book has spawned decades of research into the provocative question: What is the overall purpose of media? As this area of research has evolved, so has the terminology. In the beginning stages, the research was called **normative theories of the press**. Then, as electronic media became more widespread, the word *press* was dropped in favor of *normative theories of media*.

But normative-theories research became problematic because of a growing recognition that such research was conceptually biased in ways that affected the usefulness of the findings. One bias from the outset was the use of the term *normative* to indicate that an evaluative standard could be developed to assess the relative worth of all of the theories. As Nerone et al. point out in *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press* (1995), the premise lurking in the background of normative-theories research was that certain theories (libertarian, social responsibility) of the media had ethical superiority over other theories (authoritarian, communist). This premise led to skewed evaluations of media systems, such as: government control of the media is never desirable whereas freedom from government control of media is always desirable. Adding to the bias in early normative theories was an assumed meaning of freedom of the media, defined exclusively as freedom from interference by government or the military. Left out of this definition, however, was the acknowledgment that defining freedom of media should also cover independence from corporations and peer pressure. For example, according to the April 2, 2003, *Guardian*, a reporter (Peter Arnett) was fired from NBC News in the USA for saying on Iraqi television during the 2003 Iraq War that the USA-led coalition's initial war plan had failed. Arnett's firing is an example of how media systems operating within a market-based system are also subject to restrictions on communicating values that are perceived to contradict values (patriotic values, in this case) of a media corporation, a government, or a society as a whole. Because of the tacit biases of early normative-theories research, conclusions of the research tended to focus on the dangers of government or military influences on the media, while ignoring dangers of corporate or populist influences on the media.

As a result, normative-theory research increasingly has been conceptualized into **philosophy** research, to better describe a more even line of inquiry into the purpose of media. As Edmund Lambeth explains in John Merrill's *Global Journalism* (1995), a philosophical inquiry helps to identify the values that cultivate the development of a media system. Moreover, by articulating philosophies for media systems instead of normative theories a shift is facilitated from analyzing standard (or normal) procedures for how media systems "should" operate, to analyzing values that guide assumptions about how a media system "might" operate. This transformed analysis of philosophies takes into account significant cultural characteristics that affect the development of a country's media system and presupposes that there are many valid options for setting up a media system given with an overall purpose in mind.

Below, six philosophies for media systems are listed. The first four are legacy philosophies that have histories extending back over decades or centuries. The other two are contemporary philosophies that are more recent. Each philosophy envisions a different overarching purpose for a media system.

Legacy Philosophies (Formerly Normative Theories)

1. Authoritarian
2. Libertarian
3. Communist
4. Social Responsibility

Contemporary Philosophies

5. Developmental
6. Democratic-Participant

Researching the purpose of a media system is only a starting point for discussing how media might serve a particular population. Philosophies for a media system are simply diagnostic, imperfect tools that nevertheless help us to understand how and why media systems appear to have different purposes across various countries.

AUTHORITARIAN PHILOSOPHY

Authoritarian philosophy holds that the head of the country is an all-knowing ruler who deserves obedience and acquiescence. The ordained right of this ruler is to protect the country and to provide discipline and order to its way of life. To this end, authoritarian philosophy often holds that traditional culture should be aggressively maintained against encroaching external or contemporary culture, both of which are seen as eroding sacred traditional values. Examples of encroaching culture that have been considered to be undesirable include revealing clothing, lackadaisical religious practices, and popular arts.

Sometimes the head of state asserts a claim as ruler by virtue of reality royalty, such as a king or queen. Sometimes the head of state asserts a claim to the position through hereditary peerage—that is, by virtue of family lineage, there are inherent rights to the position. Sometimes the head of state asserts a claim to the position as a direct liaison to a supreme being. Often the head of state is a former or current military officer. All of these lineages emphasize the head of state as being someone who has an intrinsic right to the ruler position.

The historical precedents for authoritarian philosophy can be found in ancient Greece and in sixteenth-century Europe. The core writings interpreted to advocate authoritarian philosophy include three works by Plato—*The Republic*, *Statesman*, and *The Laws*—and *The Prince* (1992) by Niccolò Machiavelli. Authoritarian philosophy views the head of a nation-state as exemplifying Plato's concept of a philosopher-king, and uses Plato's argument that it is a necessity for a nation-state to have a superior philosopher-king. Authoritarian philosophy draws on Machiavelli's justifications and strategies for heads of state to consolidate and exercise power in the name of bringing societal order where there might otherwise be chaos. Some of the ideals that guide authoritarian philosophy have been embraced by proponents of fascism.

Authoritarian philosophy tends to be adopted in countries where elite segments of society—such as those who are formally educated or those who come from wealthy backgrounds—perceive that society is vulnerable to severe internal or external threats. Perceived internal threats include factional conflicts, food supply shortages, disease outbreaks, and natural disasters. Perceived external threats include terrorism, conflicts with other countries, contaminated food imports, and culturally imperial media imports.

Authoritarian philosophy is commonly represented in the governance of society in three main areas. First is the **decree**. A decree is issued by a ruler, and then adhered to by

government agencies and citizens without much formal debate or acclamation by vote. Second is the **legislative process**. The process commonly involves the ruler submitting a policy to a deliberative body that debates the policy—perhaps only as a formality—and then enacts it into law. Third is interpretation of **religious doctrine**. Religious doctrines are interpreted from sacred texts by religious leaders and then formulated into policy or law by the government.

When a media system draws on the roots of authoritarian philosophy, at least three principles are commonly followed. First is the principle of **servicing the state**. Under this principle, media exist to disseminate information that only the state deems to be appropriate. All information—news, public-service information, entertainment, sports, culture, and so on—must serve the goals of the state. Therefore, any information that has the potential to deviate from state initiatives must be approved by state officials before it can be disseminated by the media.

Second is the principle of **immunity of the state**. Under this principle, media are not permitted to criticize the state. One reason given is that the state is morally superior; therefore, criticism from a morally inferior media organization would be inappropriate. In addition, any criticism of the state by the media may be detrimental to the fragile stability of a country if it causes internal divisions, leaving the country susceptible to anarchy or an invading country. Consequently, authoritarian philosophy holds that there should be no commentary, news reporting, political satire, comedy spoofing, or other kinds of media content that call into question the activities, policies, and laws of the state.

Third is the principle of **state control over the media**. Here, media are either privately or publicly owned, but in either case are controlled by the state. The control is deemed necessary because of a perception that media have too much potential power that could be used to unseat the state or destabilize the country. Therefore, media cannot operate independently of state control. In essence, media organizations function as extensions of the state bureaucracy.

Authoritarian media philosophy is commonly implemented through two procedures. First is the control of content, which can take the form of state censorship or self-censorship. **State censorship** is when a government agency reviews content prior to its dissemination in the media. If the content is judged by the agency to be contrary to state objectives, then the content is not approved for dissemination. **Self-censorship**, within this context, is when the media organization prevents content from being disseminated because it is perceived to be contrary to state objectives; though the media professionals involved may disagree with that categorization, they may also still choose not to disseminate the content because they are wary of retribution from the state.

The concern about retribution introduces a second procedure commonly undertaken to implement authoritarian media philosophy: **punishment**. Under authoritarian philosophy, the state has the right to penalize individuals and media organizations for **sedition** and **libel** (criticism of the state). Such penalties vary according to the perceived seriousness of the crime. At the more lenient end of the scale, punishments can include reprimands, dismissals, and fines. At the harsher end of the scale, punishments can include the closing of a facility, the incarceration of media professionals, and even torture or death. Such punishments may not even be legal, but are carried out nevertheless.

LIBERTARIAN PHILOSOPHY

Libertarian philosophy holds that the individual is responsible for civic participation and the discovery of truth. Central to this proposition is the belief that individuals take responsibility for their own actions. Libertarian philosophy argues that to provide the proper social structure for individuals to pursue their own self-determined destinies, the law must protect individuals from undue interference and retribution from the government. Libertarian philosophy argues that the proper role of government is to concern itself with defending the state against hostile countries or assisting the state during national disasters, rather than intervening in individuals' personal lives by attempting to regulate their morals and interests.

The historical precedent for libertarian philosophy can be found in seventeenth-century England. The core writings that spurred libertarian philosophy include *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) by John Locke, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) by Adam Smith, and *On Liberty* (1859) by John Stuart Mill. Libertarian philosophy arose out of a concern for the right of an individual to exist without intrusion from the state. As a response to monarchical oppression, libertarian philosophy sought to empower citizens to take control over their own lives. Some ideals that guide libertarian philosophy have been embraced by proponents of capitalism.

Libertarian philosophy tends to take root in societies in which there is heightened suspicion about the power of government. One area in particular in which libertarian philosophy has asserted a minimalist role for government is commerce—the buying and selling of goods and services. Libertarian philosophy holds that if government is too involved in regulating the commerce of the state, then the true needs of the people will be obviated in favor of what the government perceives to be the needs of the people. This assumption implies that there is too much temptation for a government involved in state commerce to pick and choose which makers and sellers of products and services are successful, and ultimately how people are served. Therefore, libertarian philosophy holds that commerce should be subjected not to government objectives but rather to a free marketplace of people—otherwise known as consumers.

Libertarian media philosophy is commonly represented in the governance of society through two main avenues. First is **constitutional law** that provides for the private ownership of property. The thinking is that if citizens can own their own property—which refers to land and housing—then citizens will use that property to chart their own destiny in a way that helps them satisfy a search for truth. In other words, if government owns the property that individuals use, there is little incentive for the individual to explore his or her true potential. The second is **legislative and judicial law** that stimulates a free market in which ideas and products can compete against each other. The assumption behind law of this kind is that in a free marketplace, the better ideas and better products will win out over those that are inferior. These two areas of law are seen as central to the ideal of curtailing the role of government so that it is engaged primarily in fostering the growth of individual liberty.

When a media system draws on the roots of libertarian philosophy, at least two principles are commonly followed. First, most media are **privately owned and operated**. This

principle establishes the right of media to operate as a commercial activity and to make a profit. The assumption is that profitable media are evidence of an approving marketplace of public opinion. In other words, if the public thinks highly enough of media content, they will vote for it through their habits of television viewing, radio listening, or newspaper reading. In so doing, the public is exercising individual liberty from government mandates or intentions.

Second, government can enter the marketplace only to maintain **fair competition**. Thus, it is appropriate for government to develop laws and policies ensuring that bigger players do not have unfair advantages over smaller players. Fairness extends to enforcing rules so that no media organizations are breaking the law to gain a competitive advantage. For example, **predatory pricing** is when a larger company or individual with multiple product lines temporarily offers an artificially low price on selected products until smaller competitors are driven out of business—after which the prices are raised again.

Third, according to libertarian philosophy, the media **regulate themselves** rather than be regulated by government. According to libertarian philosophy, when marketplace competition drives the development of media products and services, companies will automatically regulate themselves in order to satisfy the needs and interests of the marketplace.

Libertarian media philosophy is implemented through a balance between **rewards** and **punishments** designed to encourage individuals and organizations with media properties to engage in fair competition. As a reward for successful competitive behavior, individuals and companies are permitted to accumulate capital and profit. This financial incentive can extend to property acquisitions, material comfort, and investment. However, if individuals and companies pursue unfair competition, individuals and companies are punished for engaging in illegal activities. The punishment may consist of a government or court-ordered fine if the individual or company is successfully prosecuted.

COMMUNIST PHILOSOPHY

Communist philosophy holds that the role of the state is to be the caretaker for the well-being of society. To this end, a centralized government plans the distribution of both the necessities of sustenance and the pleasures of culture. The role of the individual in this process is to respect the state's objectives and methods for bettering society. In other words, the needs and interests of the individual are de-emphasized in favor of the needs and interests of society. Communist philosophy holds that if individuals work together as a collective whole, then it is possible to achieve an egalitarian society in which there are no wealthy classes and no poverty classes. Such a society would exhibit a roughly equal distribution of wealth across all segments of society.

The historical precedent for communist philosophy was established in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Germany. Primary writings that influenced communist philosophy include *Philosophy of Right* and *Philosophy of History* (1956) by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and *The Communist Manifesto* (1967) by Karl Marx. The contrast between the ideals of communism and the way in which it has been practiced by some governments has at times obscured a tempered study of communist philosophy as it relates to media systems.

Communist philosophy tends to arise out of a concern for the exploitation of laborers by business owners. This concern centers on the acknowledgment that owners of manufacturing facilities and farms are failing to spread the wealth of their industries to the laborers who produced the actual products. From the vantage point of communist philosophy, the wealth that is being accumulated from these industries causes an undesirable schism between wealthy classes of people (bourgeoisie) and poorer classes of people (proletariat).

Communist philosophy has particular appeal to agricultural societies undergoing rapid industrialization. Communist philosophy warns that the radical transformation from agriculture to industry creates challenges of protecting manual laborers from abusive working conditions created by wealthy industry owners. Such conditions involve the low pay of workers in unsafe conditions and the absence of easy access to health care and education. Communist philosophy also attempts to prevent the populace from succumbing to materialistic tastes and values that have been standardized for the masses. Materialism is seen by communist philosophy as an oppressive force driven by exploitative economic motives rather than by more culturally redeeming motives.

Communist philosophy is commonly represented in the governance of society through two main methods. First is the **decree**, which is issued by the communist party. Decrees may be voted on at the party level, but they normally are not subjected to a voting process participated in by the general population. Second is the **planning objective**. The planning objective is developed and administered by a central government committee. Planning objectives allocate resources to achieve economic targets for goods and services to be provided to the population at fair prices and without surplus waste. Planning objectives may be short term (immediate) or longer term (five years and beyond).

When a media system draws on the roots of communist philosophy, at least three principles are commonly followed. First is **state ownership of property**. Under communist philosophy, private property ownership and the profit motive are seen as unwelcome vices that lead to class division, greed, and the popularization of tastes in such a way as to demean culture. The assumption is that if media are privately owned and commercially driven, the result will be competition that produces content designed to pander to popular tastes—content with little educational or cultural value. Such a strategy is thought of as merely producing content that appeals to the lowest common denominator among people to attract the largest audience possible. In contrast, communist philosophy argues that if media are owned and operated by the government, content can be produced without acceding to a profit-making model—rather, content can edify the populace's knowledge of and appreciation for high arts.

A second, related principle of communist philosophy is the use of media to **elevate public tastes**. Communist philosophy holds that when the general population is left to *determine the content of media on their own, the result will inevitably be a dumbing down* of the content into primal or sensational themes that have limited societal value. Instead, communist philosophy calls for media to promote more tasteful and sophisticated content such as ballet, orchestral music, ice skating, and gymnastics.

Third, media are to be used as a tool for **teaching communist doctrine**. Using the media for this purpose is considered necessary to guard against the temptations of materialism, which is seen to foster self-interests, detachment from other human beings, and ultimately greater fissures between wealthier and poorer classes. Therefore, communist

philosophy holds that media should remind people about the importance of communal values that elevate society to more enlightened levels. Moreover, it is important for media to teach younger people about the virtues of communist philosophy.

Communist philosophy is implemented through two general procedures. First is the control of content through **ensorship**, which is administered by government agencies that review the content before it is distributed. Censorship agencies may be located within the government or within a media organization. Second is **punishment**. Under communist philosophy, the state has the right to punish individuals and media organizations for criticizing communist doctrine or for demeaning prescribed cultural values. The penalties range from dismissal from a position to detention in prison.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PHILOSOPHY

Social responsibility philosophy holds that government influence the media to provide fair and balanced information with a goal of effecting change for the better in society. Much of social responsibility philosophy focuses on news media, though the philosophy also applies to other media content and to media operations in general. According to social responsibility philosophy, government is envisioned as an indirect but persuasive influence in getting the media industry to set codes of conduct to which media professionals voluntarily adhere. Specifically, the role of government is to guarantee that society as a whole benefits from a vigorous and reasoned debate in an effort to achieve a greater public civility, but that the names of people, institutions, and ideas are not unnecessarily smeared in the process. Social responsibility philosophy requires media organizations to regulate themselves, and also required government to step in on behalf of the public when media organizations fail to regulate themselves adequately.

Thus, social responsibility philosophy positions media ownership as a public trust wherein media organizations have certain obligations to society and exist primarily to serve the public. Media are allowed to operate with relative freedom from government control, but the government, acting as a surrogate of the people, is allowed to place expectations on the conduct of media organizations. To facilitate this relationship, media are permitted to have access to government activities and records that not have been classified for national security purposes. In return, media are expected to refrain from promoting unnecessary cynicism and pessimism in public debates. This requires media professionals to approach their roles with great diligence and care.

The historical precedent for social responsibility philosophy was established in the 1940s in the USA, which makes this philosophy a relative newcomer to the typology of philosophies for media systems. The core writings for social responsibility philosophy include a report by a self-appointed public-interest committee called the Hutchins Commission; a book, *Freedom of the Press: A Framework of Principle*, by William Ernest Hocking; and a book some 30 years later, *Responsibility in Mass Communications* (1980), by William Rivers, Wilbur Schramm, and Clifford Christians. The Hutchins Commission was formed during World War II by Robert Maynard Hutchins, then president of the University of Chicago, to study the role of media in modern-day societies. As a result of its work, the commission issued a report, *A Free and Responsible Press* (1947), that incubated social

responsibility as a philosophy for a media system. Some ideals of social responsibility philosophy serve as the basis of socialism, whereas others serve as the basis of capitalism.

Social responsibility philosophy arose out of a concern about large newspaper companies during World War II that were publishing increasingly sensationalized stories about domestic corruption and overseas totalitarianism. From the vantage point of social responsibility philosophy, fierce competition among primarily large American newspaper companies had degenerated into a disproportionate amount of seedy journalism that was stirring up public fears about Nazism and Communism. Within this context, social responsibility philosophy questioned the proper role of journalism in disseminating information to society.

Social responsibility philosophy has particular appeal to societies that desire a proactive but nonintrusive role of government in the affairs of the people. In such societies, it is considered appropriate for government to intercede with coercive dialogue or laws in media operations gone awry. Although it is preferable that media professionals correct tonal problems on their own, government leaders retain the option of regulatory or legislative actions to rein in media organizations that exhibit egregiously irresponsible conduct.

Social responsibility philosophy is represented in the governance of society in two areas. First is the **bully pulpit**, wherein government leaders threaten government action, which puts pressure on media professionals to establish their own codes of conduct through professional associations. Second is **regulation**, wherein government enacts legally binding regulations that are designed to preserve a standard of quality to media content. Such regulations may be passed through legislation voted on by elected representatives or issued by government-related agencies.

When a media system draws on the roots of social responsibility philosophy, at least three principles are followed. First, news media routinely provide **factual coverage tempered with contextual information**. In news coverage, journalism is expected to provide an appropriate historical context that helps to put the information into perspective. By discussing related events from the past, news media help to guard against cynicism and sensationalism.

Second, media content contains **balanced opinion** and **commentary**. One level of balanced opinion has to do with maintaining equilibrium between the opinions that are presented. For instance, opinions on the political right should be balanced by political opinions on the left; negative news should be balanced by positive news; commentary in favor of a position should be balanced by commentary against a position; and so on. Another level of balanced opinion has to do with sampling a variety of backgrounds of people to voice opinions. Opinions should be solicited from media professionals, government officials, industry leaders, experts from education, common citizens, and other categories of people.

Third, editors and directors should **clarify societal goals and desires**. According to social responsibility philosophy, in addition to just reporting news events, news media are to provide analysis about whether the covered events indicate an adherence to socially redeeming values that are commonly exalted by society. The analysis of societal values can include on-air editorials on radio and television and letters to the editor in newspapers. Such guidelines, which normally are formally published or aired by media organizations, are ultimately meant to elevate the overall quality of media content.

Social responsibility philosophy is commonly implemented through two procedures. The first is **public accountability** through laws and regulations. Such laws stipulate that if

there is enough of a public outcry over the activities of a media organization, the government has a right to launch an investigation. If the investigation proves negligent on the part of the media organization, the government can levy a fine against the media organization or take away its right to operate. Second is the use of **public admonishment**. If a media organization engages in activities that the public determines to be at odds with widely held societal values, then the government can engage in a dialogue with the public through the media that effectively embarrasses the media organization and thereby causes it to modify the questionable content or activities.

DEVELOPMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Developmental philosophy holds that media are to improve the social conditions of developing nations. Such plans have sometimes been interpreted differently through differing ideological orientations. Non-Western thinking generally has envisioned the developmental role for media to be that of strengthening the capabilities of poorer countries to foster stability and autonomy. In contrast, Western thinking generally has envisioned the developmental role for media more specifically to be that of advancing democracy and free-market economics. This basic difference in interpretation has often led to conflicts in situations in which more affluent, Western countries are supplying financial and resource support for development efforts in poorer, non-Western countries.

Divisions in interpretations aside, developmental philosophy requires government to support the role of media as a stimulant for social change. In developing countries there is often little potential advertising revenue or private capital to build media infrastructure. To that end, government is expected to acquire media technology and to deploy it with the purpose of fixing situations that contribute to social hardships. Particular situations that proponents of developmental philosophy have in mind include financial corruption, public health crises, illiteracy, and factional conflict. Developmental philosophy envisions a relationship in which government provides funding for media to actively engage in eradicating such social problems through education. Such a relationship requires government and media to work together in the interests of strengthening each other and in ultimately improving the quality of life in a country.

Developmental philosophy was formulated out of a concern for why developing countries were not making more progress in achieving financial solvency for their governments and a better quality of life for their inhabitants. Previously, it was thought that once developing countries had invested in modern media systems that imported content from the outside world, profound and positive social changes would occur. However, this scenario had not played out as expected in many impoverished countries located mainly in Africa, Asia, and South America.

The historical precedent for developmental philosophy—also sometimes referred to as advancement philosophy—is difficult to pinpoint. Developmental philosophy culminated during the UNESCO debates (see Chapter 2) in a report by Sean MacBride called *Many Voices, One World* (1980). Though developmental philosophy was crystallized by the UNESCO debates, the primary writings for developmental philosophy actually precede the dialogue at the United Nations by about twenty-five years. These writings include

The Passing of Traditional Society (1958) by Daniel Lerner, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1971) by Walt W. Rostow, *Mass Media and National Development* by Wilbur Schramm, and *Agents of Power* (1984) by J. H. Altschull. Developmental philosophy remains in its nascent stages.

Developmental philosophy is represented in the governance of society in two main areas. First is the **legal establishment of media freedom**—that is, independence from government control. Because governments in developing countries often resist granting media freedom because of government officials wishing to avoid having their activities closely scrutinized, proponents of developmental philosophy call for international pressure to exert what is seen as the necessary leverage to establish freedom for the media to operate autonomously. Specifically, developmental philosophy calls for the legal establishment of media freedom to criticize the government so that governments will be less likely to engage in corruption that effectively stalls the easing of fundamental social problems. Second is the **government mandate**, which requires media to perform certain tasks in exchange for funding. Funding from government is seen as necessary because of a lack of available private investment capital. The government mandate also can be exercised as part of a trade with media, wherein media deploy resources and distribute content to address societal problems and in exchange are provided with access to government operations.

When a media system draws on the roots of developmental philosophy, three principles typically are followed. First, media serve as a **watchdog** on the activities of government, especially efforts to improve physical infrastructure (roads, bridges, water supply, food distribution, and health care). The chief means by which the watchdog function is fulfilled include the news report, the news article, and the documentary. It is argued that such content will lead to more accountability for government activities, as well as increasing aspirations of a country's residents.

Second, media pursue **cultural autonomy**. This principle assumes that for a developing country to remain or become established as an independent and viable nation, the country's media system promotes the country's distinctive culture. Cultural autonomy is seen as particularly important for developing countries that may be subject to overwhelming foreign cultural influences accompanying imported media content. Thus, it is important for media organizations to provide a means of access for indigenous peoples to produce media content for the purpose of passing on authentic cultural traditions such as specialized languages.

Third, media **export domestic media content** to other countries. This serves not only to make the rest of the world more aware of the developing country, but also reinforces the developing country as a sovereign and stable entity in the eyes of the international community. Governments of developing countries may need to fund the production of programs or the marketing of these programs to compete with wealthier countries that have advantages of economies of scale and prior name recognition. Also, developing countries may need to band together into regional alliances to share resources and to put together enough content with enough variety so that the offerings are lucrative to foreign markets.

Developmental philosophy generally is implemented in two main areas. The first is **international assistance**. Such assistance may take the form of World Bank loans, country-to-country loans, debt forgiveness, and equipment and software donations. Furthermore, the threat of withdrawing such assistance should serve as an incentive for

developing nations not to shirk from stimulating media development. Second is **public expectation**. Here the thinking is that if residents of a country are led to expect improvements in social conditions by being exposed through media content to a better quality of life in foreign countries, they will be more likely to rise up against their government or exercise what voting options they have to speed up the desired changes if improvement is proceeding too slowly.

DEMOCRATIC-PARTICIPANT PHILOSOPHY

Democratic-participant philosophy holds that citizen-created content is essential to all forms of government. Without the participation of citizens, democratic-participant philosophy sees social policy as unduly influenced by wealthy corporate executives or elitist government officials. Democratic-participant philosophy acknowledges that the role of the citizen in the formation of social policy is meant to vary according to the structure of a country's government. But democratic-participant philosophy argues that the citizen's voice is central to any government that seeks to successfully manage the affairs of its people. Consequently, democratic-participant philosophy proposes formulating media operations in such a way as to involve citizens in all phases of producing media content.

The historical precedent for democratic-participant philosophy—also sometimes known as public-advocacy philosophy—was established in the 1970s through the 1990s in the USA. Seminal writings on democratic-participant philosophy include “Constituents of a Theory of the Media” (1970) by H. M. Enzensberger in the *New Left Review*; *The New News v. The Old News* (1992) by Jay Rosen and Paul Taylor; *Getting the Connections Right: Public Journalism and the Troubles in the Press* (1996) by Jay Rosen; and *Public Journalism: Theory and Practice* (1994) by Jay Rosen and Davis Merritt. Democratic-participant philosophy is still emerging as a cohesive set of values.

The impetus for democratic-participant philosophy is the perception that disenfranchised groups have been excluded from media production processes otherwise dominated by corporations and governments. The disenfranchised groups include ethnic, religious, political, age, and gender minorities. Together these minorities are seen as common citizens lacking general access to media production, which instead is provided almost exclusively to media professionals.

Democratic-participant philosophy argues that two situations most often create disenfranchisement. One involves countries with media systems operated largely by transnational media conglomerates, which are seen as stultifying the involvement of common citizens in the process of creating content. In such an environment, decisions about media content are made according to highly regimented institutional formulas revolving around audience ratings, advertising pressures, government objectives, and corporate marketing strategies. Consequently, the media content that results from stale corporate formulas is predominantly uniform, commercial, and professional. These qualities of content stand in contrast to that of citizen-created media content, which tends to be heterogeneous, noncommercial, and amateurish. Such nonconformist, creative qualities are seen as desirable because they involve unadulterated creativity and self-expression. Though democratic-participant philosophy concedes that there is a proper place for corporate media content in the universe of social

discourse, it insists that there should also be a place for alternative content, including the right of citizens to reply to corporate media content with which they disagree.

A second situation creating disenfranchisement involves countries that have media systems administered largely by government agencies. In such countries, regular citizens typically are prevented from performing an integral role in the creation of media content unless that role supports government objectives. According to democratic-media philosophy, such an exclusionary system is counterproductive even to governments that are not based on democratic participation, because such governments cannot be responsive to their citizens without citizens participating in social discourse through the media.

Democratic-participant philosophy is represented in the governance of society in two main areas. First is **citizen-group pressure**. This entity is a collection of individuals, usually at the local level, that attempts to gain greater access for citizens in both the use of media production equipment and in the creation of institutional media content. Citizen pressure groups operate through letter- and email-writing campaigns as well as phone calls. Often, their successes at opening up media content to citizen input are achieved with media organizations that target local audiences. These media may be owned by larger parent companies, but the companies allow the local community to have a say in the determination of media content.

The second area in which democratic-participant philosophy is represented is through **alternative media start-ups**—that is, organizations formed with the express purpose of providing alternative voices and conventions for producing media content. The people who start up these organizations typically view themselves as outside the political or professional mainstream of content represented in the majority of media choices. Such people are producers, videographers, writers, editors, journalists, and others. Though adequate financing is often a problem, the people involved in alternative media start-ups find a way—usually through volunteer efforts—to produce alternative media based on their professional experience and their resourcefulness.

When a media system draws on the roots of democratic-participant philosophy, two principles are commonly followed. First, media organizations take exception to government-driven objectives and corporate profit motives to make room for **citizen-initiated media content**. This requires a modification in the usual model for creating media content, in that media must allow citizens to have a say in the content that is created by professionals of media organizations. Examples of putting this principle into practice include placing citizens on advisory boards and allowing citizens to write their own newspaper columns and to host radio and television shows. Second, **citizen groups are guaranteed the freedom to express opinions** without fear of retribution from the government or from corporate media. In essence, this boils down to allowing citizen groups to voice criticism without being harassed or imprisoned by government, without having the content censored or modified unnecessarily by the media organization, and without being denied access to the organization's media facilities in the future.

Democratic-participant philosophy is implemented in many ways, but three procedures are most common. First, media content includes **citizen viewpoints** that take on a number of forms depending on the particular medium. Examples include: internet web sites that can provide links for unedited citizen commentary; newspapers that provide space for citizen editorials (appearing as letters to the editor or as expanded articles placed in

other sections of the newspaper); radio and television stations providing time for citizen editorials; radio and television stations incorporating citizen voices into talk-oriented programming; and radio and television stations casting citizens alongside stars in selected programs. Proponents of democratic-participant philosophy argue that citizen viewpoints are essential to media content that covers politics—especially campaign coverage. Media are expected to survey citizen opinions to help generate the issues that candidates and elected officials are expected to address.

Second, media organizations allow **citizens to participate in the process of producing content**. In one form of participation, citizens hold seats on advisory boards set up by media organizations to solicit ideas for content. Elsewhere, media organizations provide mechanisms for obtaining citizen feedback that can influence the production process. These mechanisms can include email and post-mail addresses and voicemail phone numbers.

Third, **citizens are provided with access to media facilities** to produce and distribute their own content. This means that corporate or government media must provide funding for citizens to purchase equipment and related resources or provide training programs that certify citizens to use existing equipment and related resources. Several media outlets are thought to provide natural venues for such citizen access, including community radio stations, low-power television stations, community cable channels, community newspapers, and community web sites or user groups.

COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

Philosophies provide a root system of assumptions and values for media systems. Just as a tree's roots mingle with the roots of other trees, so do the philosophies of one country's media system mingle with philosophies of other countries' media systems. Philosophies at work in any given country are increasingly being influenced by philosophies at work in other countries' media systems, because the forces of globalization are facilitating greater connectedness between media industries, governments, and citizens. Table 5.1 presents a summary grid that helps to highlight the main features of the six philosophies for media systems that have been presented in this chapter.

Though no country fits exclusively into one particular philosophy for media operations, every country exhibits attributes that suggest an adherence to one or more philosophy. Think about the country you are living in right now. What laws, rules, procedures, and practices can you identify that illustrate one or more philosophies at work in the country's media system? What does the prevailing philosophy appear to be? What is a secondary philosophy? What is a trace philosophy? Answering these questions can help you draw conclusions about some of the purposes and values of the media system of the country in which you are living.

In France, Sweden, and the UK, the prevailing philosophy influencing media policy has been social responsibility. The main focus of the governments in these countries is to use the power of the state to stimulate cultural content, even if the media content is not commercially profitable. Under this directive, the government provides the financing for electronic and print media content specifically to promote culture and/or education. Libertarianism is present in these three European countries as a secondary philosophy, insofar as

TABLE 5.1 Summary of Philosophies for Media Systems

	AUTHORITARIAN	LIBERTARIAN	COMMUNIST	SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	DEVELOPMENT	DEMOCRATIC-PARTICIPANT
Authors	Plato Machiavelli	Locke Mill Smith	Hegel Marx	Hutchins Commission Hocking, Rivers, Schramm, Christians	Lerner Rostow Schramm	Rosen, Taylor, Merrit, Enzensberger
Precedents Leading to Philosophy	Perceived Vulnerability of the State	Freedom from Government Interference	Agricultural to Industrial Society	Sensational Journalism	Stalled Development	Corporate and Government Dominance
Codification of Philosophy	Decree Legislation Religious Doctrine	Constitutional Law Legislative Law Judicial Law	Decree Party Planning Objective	Bully Pulpit Regulation	Government Mandate Legal Right of Media Freedom	Citizen Pressure Groups Alternative Media Start-ups
Principles In Media Operations	Serve the State Immunity of State State Control of Media	Private Ownership of Media Fair Competition Self-Regulation	State Ownership of Property Elevate Cultural Tastes Teach Communist Doctrine	Factual and Contextual Information Balanced Opinion and Commentary Clarified Editorial Goals	Government Watchdog Cultural Autonomy Exported Media Content	Citizen Media Content Freedom of Criticism
Implements of Philosophy	Censorship Prior Restraint Physical or Professional Punishment	Financial Reward Financial Punishment	Censorship Physical or Professional Punishment	Accountability to Public Admonishment in Front of Public	International Assistance Public Expectation	Citizen Viewpoints Citizen Production Citizen Access

Source: Robert McKenzie.

news media have freedoms in a number of content areas, including news reporting and nudity/profanity. Authoritarianism is present in these three countries as a trace philosophy, particularly in regulations stipulating that certain kinds of television content must be delivered (e.g., in France, French-language programming) or regulations that alternatively prohibit certain kinds of television content from being delivered (e.g., in Sweden, advertisements aimed at children).

In the USA, the prevailing philosophy influencing media policy has been libertarianism. The main approach of the USA government toward media policies is to avoid excessive government oversight. This means that the USA government generally is predisposed to allowing the marketplace to determine media policies, preferring to ensure only fair play between media organizations and consumers. Social responsibility is present in the USA as a secondary philosophy, particularly through the licensing process for radio and television stations, which requires broadcasters to serve the interest, convenience, and necessity of the public. Authoritarianism is present in the USA as a trace philosophy, particularly in regulations prohibiting obscenity.

In México, traditionally the prevailing philosophy influencing media policy has been authoritarianism. In the past, the Mexican government has monitored criticism of the government and sought retribution for violations in this area. Increasingly, however, media policy is influenced by libertarianism as a prevailing philosophy, insofar as the Mexican government is allowing the marketplace to play a larger role in the development of media policy and legislation. In addition, developmentalism is present in México as a trace philosophy, insofar as the federal government and state governments pay newspapers, radio stations, and television stations to deliver content that publicizes government efforts to develop the infrastructure of the country.

In China, the prevailing philosophy influencing media policy has been communism, particularly in the state ownership of media. The largest and most prominent media organizations—Central China Television (CCTV), the *People's Daily* newspaper, and the Xinhua News Agency—all are agencies of the government. Authoritarianism is present in China as a secondary philosophy, manifested by heavy government involvement in prohibiting media content that is critical of the government or of the Communist Party. However, a kind of contained libertarianism is increasingly present in China as a trace philosophy because the government now encourages discussion on social and economic issues, as long as it occurs within the parameters set by authorities—which includes no criticism of the government or discussion of state secrets. Accordingly, although the government continues to issue directives to the media and thus maintain some semblance of its previously strong propaganda and control modalities, increasingly the main focus has been to encourage media outlets to compete for viewers and commercial advertising.

In Ghana, the prevailing philosophy influencing media policy since 2000 has been libertarianism. Prior to 1992, all media were state owned. Subsequent to 1992, private print and electronic media began to develop and were instrumental in advocating in favor of democratic rule and against the authoritarian rule that existed until the 2000 elections. Since 2000, the main focus of the government's media policies has been to foster an independent media industry that delivers content that stimulates the democratic discussion of ideas. Developmentalism is present in Ghana as a secondary philosophy, insofar as the government encourages media to

contribute to stabilizing democracy and the economy by delivering tolerance and diversity of political opinions. Social responsibility is present in Ghana as a trace philosophy to the extent that regulatory bodies have limited powers of enforcement and instead rely on the goodwill of media organizations to adhere to professional standards of serving the public.

In Lebanon, the philosophies influencing media policy are difficult to identify because of fallout from the civil war and the subsequent political situation in which the central government is weaker than sectarian and ethnic bosses. Authoritarianism is a prevailing philosophy in the government's ownership of an official radio station and the government's restrictions on media ownership and some media content (in particular, potentially inflammatory religious content). Developmentalism is present in Lebanon as a secondary philosophy insofar as the government looks the other way when media violate certain regulations, partly because the government does not have the power to enforce regulations, partly because some media are owned by members of the government, and partly because the government wants media industries to contribute to the country's developing infrastructure and economy. Libertarianism is present in Lebanon as a trace philosophy insofar as newspapers and some radio and television stations are privately owned and are permitted to develop their own standards for producing media content.