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Political Influence Index Pilot Study Results

A Report of an 8-nation Pilot Study of the Political Influence Index
measuring the influence of media on politics/government and the
influence of politics/government on media

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Section I: Introduction and overall results

Political Influence Index Pilot Study Results

Introduction

This report reviews the results of an 8-nation pilot test of the Political Influence Index that has been developed at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, based at the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford.

The Political Influence Index pilot project created the method and assessment instrument for use in comparative national measurements of the influence of media on politics/government and the influence of politics/government on media. This index is designed to capture the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. The pilot study assessed 8 nations with varying media, political, and political communication research settings: Germany, France, Hungary, India, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Index description

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics/government and the influence of politics/government on media. The index is composed of two sub-indices measuring those influences and then a single index that combines the two. This index captures the relationships and interactions between media and political/governmental actors/institutions and the distribution of power between media and political/governmental actors/institutions.

Media are defined as news/journalistic/public affairs content producers/distributors operating in print, broadcast, and digital services. Politics/government is understood to mean political actors and institutions engaged in political activities, party activities, and government activities. The scores and rankings thus reflect the degree of politicisation of the media/political system and the extent to which the two are intertwined. Media and politics are inextricably entwined in all countries, but the degree depends upon political-economic systems, political cultures, and other functions.

The index differs from media freedom indices, such as the Freedom House Press Freedom Index, the IREX Media Sustainability Index, and the Reporters Sans Frontières/ Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index, because it focuses on *influence* rather than independence. Influence involves factors that affects the behaviour of another actor.

The Political Influence Index is a perception index. Perception indices are based on perceptions of knowledgeable observers and are typically employed in research when valid and reliable objective indicators are unavailable. Perception indices are used in many social science and business research settings. Perhaps the most widely known is Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, but there are many others including the Brand Perception Index and the Corporate Governance Index.

Perception indices are typically based on assessments of panels of reputable experts in the topic. Evaluations for the Political influence Index are made by expert national assessments by teams comprised of political scientists, media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists, with teams for each nation. They created the scores used in the two separate sub-indices, by scoring 20 questions for each sub-index using a 7- point scale. The index questions and scale are found in Appendix 1.

The process yielded separate scores for each sub-index for each country.

Interpreting results and rankings

Results of two sub-indices can be considered jointly, as well as separately, because there are interdependencies between them. Questions can also be independently compared across nations.

The questions were designed to provide a high degree of granularity about the nature of influence in each country and the factors that create this influence. The results provide significant explanatory power about influence in the countries studied.

In considering the overall results, one cannot consider the overall score or the score on each sub-index as good or bad per se, but rather as indicating the degree of influence from factors in each sub-index and the degree of politicisation overall.

A country with commercially oriented, politically independent media would be expected to produce a lower score on the media influence sub-index than a country with pluralistic political media aligned with political parties. A high score on the media sub-index could also result from manipulation, especially if the score on the political/government influence is high.

High scores on the political/government influence can indicate that media have lost independence and become instrumentalised as a tool for the state or dominant political actors.

The index results are reported in several different ways:

- 1) Aggregate national score and ranking of countries – this is the sum of a country’s scores on the two sub-indices and reveals the degree of politicisation of media/political system and permits comparison of politicisation among countries.
- 2) Country scores of the two sub-indexes and rankings for each sub-index.
- 3) Ratios based on the sub-index score for each country that reveal divergence or parity between the two indicators.

Political influence aggregate indexes and rankings

The aggregate index reveals degree of overall politicization of country’s media/political system. It is created by summing a country’s scores on both sub-indices and the nations are then ranked from high to low score.

In the pilot study, Hungary received the highest ranking and the United States the lowest ranking.

Table 1: Aggregate ranking of nations in the Political Influence Index

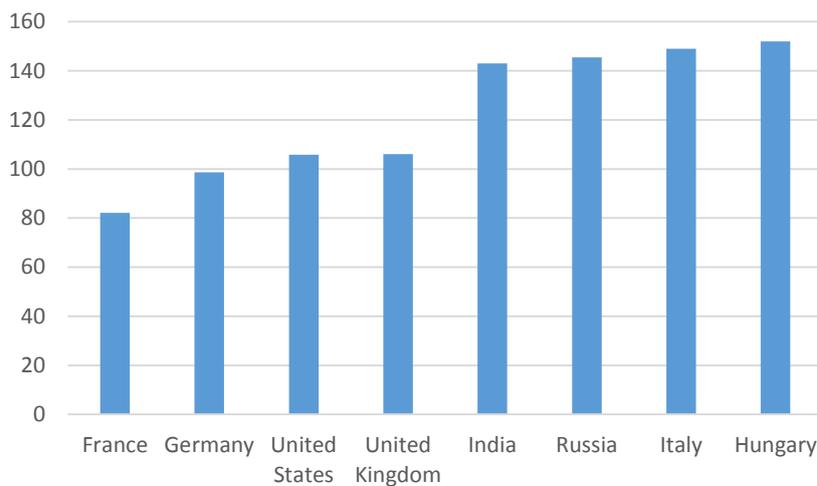
Rank	Country	Aggregate Score
1	Hungary	152
2	Italy	149
3	Russia	145.5
4	India	143
5	United Kingdom	106
6	United States	105.8
7	Germany	98.7
8	France	82.1

In itself, the ranking of a country is neither negative or positive because as it only reveals that political influences play a larger role in countries with higher rankings, a lower role in countries with lower ranking, and the relative positions of different countries.

A highly politicised media/political system could exist in a country with an active, pluralistic, and politically affiliated press or a country in which the media had been instrumentalised by the state or dominant political actors.

The relative differences of the countries in the aggregate index of this pilot study thus reveals that politicisation of media in Italy is significantly higher than that of the United Kingdom.

Figure 1. Relative politicisation of the media/political system



Understanding the dynamics of the politicisation requires considering the separate sub-scores for each country on the sub-indices.

Political influence sub-indices and rankings

On the index of media influence on politics/government, Italy ranked highest and France received the lowest ranking.

Table 2: Ranking of the influence of media on politics/government

Rank	Country	Score
1	Italy	81
2	India	77
3	United Kingdom	75.2
4	Hungary	75
5	United States	69
6	Germany	65.5
7	Russia	60.5
8	France	52.3

The ranking of a country here is also neither negative nor positive in itself, but the rankings indicate a relative position of influence such that media in France and Russia have relatively lower influence on politics/government while a greater influence is evident in India and Italy. These results are

interpreted based on one’s normative position of the proper role of media in the political system. If one holds the belief that the role of the press is to be a mechanism of independent information and to hold politics/government to account, for example, one might interpret the ranking to indicate French media perform poorer at influencing politics/governed in France than in United Kingdom. If one holds the normative belief that media should act as an agent of politics/government, one might interpret the rankings in reverse and argue that media perform better in Russia than in India.

Because media and politics/government are intertwined in all countries, the ranking of countries based on media influence cannot be fully interpreted without considering the ranking of countries based on the influence of politics/government on media.

On the sub-index of politics/government influence on media, Russia ranked first and France ranked last among countries examined in the pilot study.

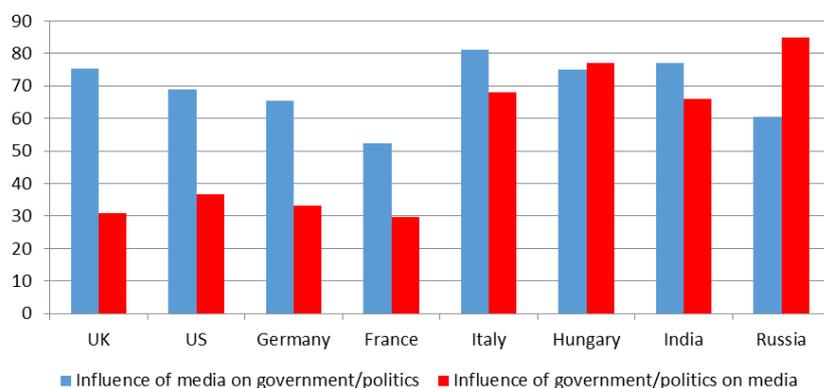
Table 3: Ranking of the influence of politics/government on media

Rank	Country	Score
1	Russia	85
2	Hungary	77
3	Italy	68
4	India	66
5	United States	36.8
6	Germany	33.2
7	United Kingdom	30.8
8	France	29.8

Again, the position of a country in this ranking is neither positive or negative in itself, but the rankings indicate a relative position of influence in which politics/government in France and United Kingdom have relatively little influence on media and politics/government have far greater influence in Russia and Hungary. Again these results are interpreted based on one’s normative position of the proper role of politics/government in the social system.

Interpretation of the results is best undertaken using both sub-indices simultaneously. As Figure 2 shows, national scores can be equal for both subindices or higher for one.

Figure 2: National scores on media influence on government/politics and government/politics influence on media



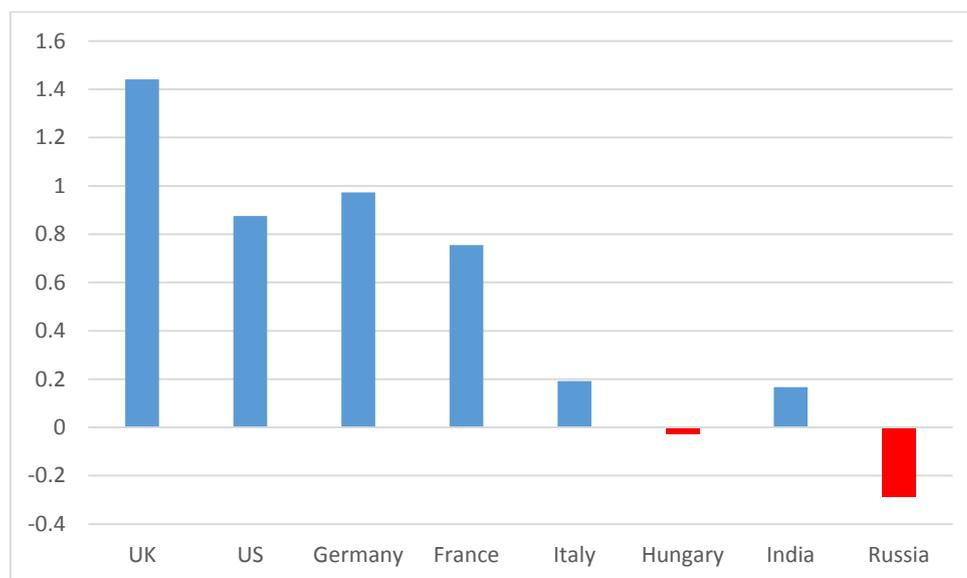
These results in the pilot study seem to indicate that media tend to have significant influence over government/politics in locations where the influence of government/politics on media is lower. Cases in which the influences may be more equal may signal a more politicised media and cases in which government influence is higher may indicate conditions in which the state has co-opted media.

Index ratios

Additional understanding of the results is provided by calculating results on the two sub-indices as ratios. This is done by dividing each country's scores on one sub-index by the other and then subtracting that number from one — which would indicate parity between the scores. This produces a score that indicates divergence from equilibrium between the scores that can be either positive or negative.

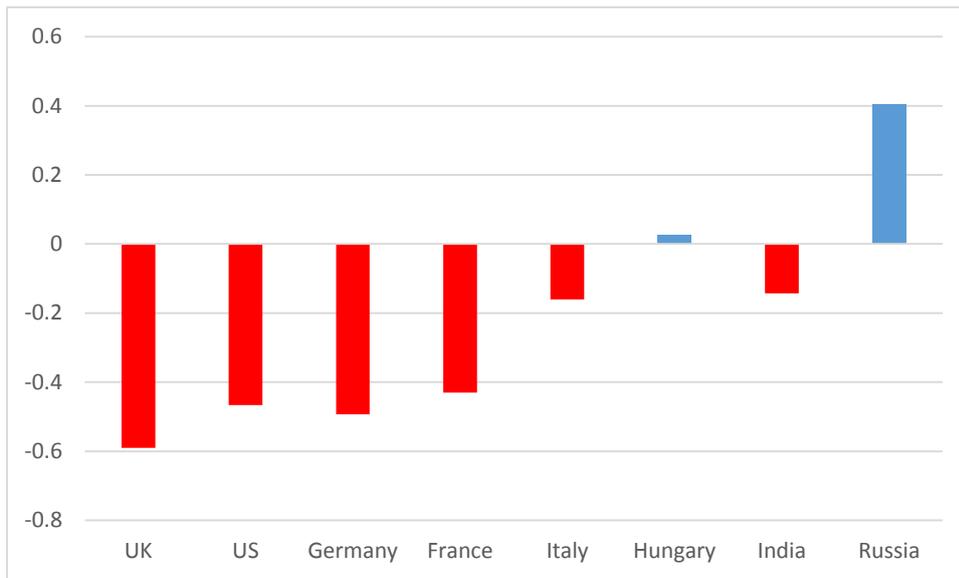
Based on the research in the pilot study, media in the United Kingdom have about 1.4 times more influence on politics/government than politics/government have on media (Figure 3). And that ratio is far higher than those found in other European countries, such as Germany, France, and Italy. In Russia, however, media influence is lower than that of the influence of politics/government.

Figure 3. Media – government/politics influence ratio



When the ratio is calculated in reverse it shows the influence of government/politics compared to the influence of media. The results (Figure 4) indicate that the Russian government holds significant influence over media compared to other nations in the study and that the Hungarian government has significantly more influence on media than in other EU countries.

Figure 4: government/politics – media influence ratio



Topical comparison

In addition to overall comparison on of countries, the dataset produced in the PII research will allow researchers to explore differences among nations on individual indicators used in the research. This section presents two examples of how focusing on specific issues reveals differences (Figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5: Country scores on M7 “Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office”

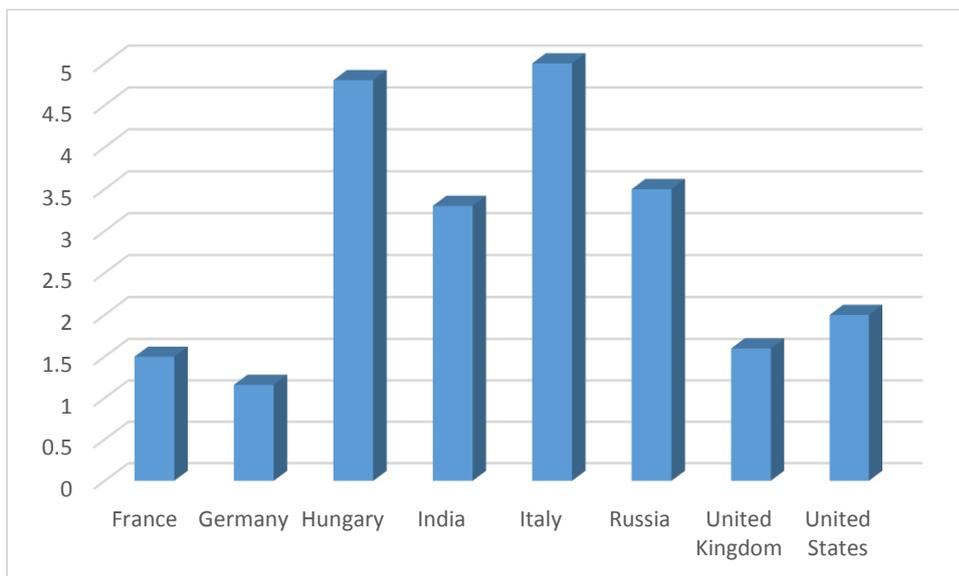
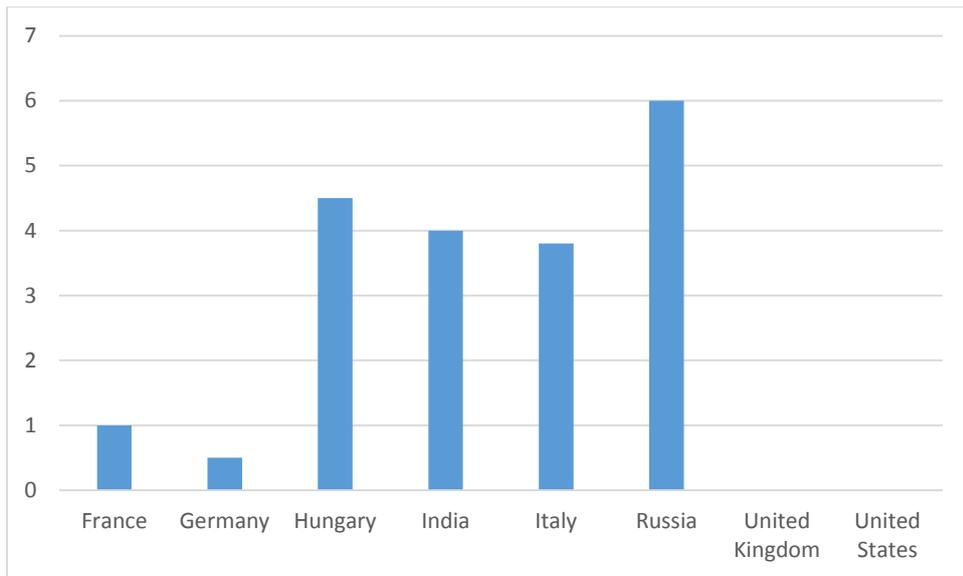


Figure 6: Country scores on P12 “Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government”



The index thus provides researchers interested in particular topics within the index with the ability to disaggregate the data and focus upon those issues.

Section II: Individual national reports



Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: FRANCE

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics and government and the influence of politics and government on media. This index captures the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. Indicators assess a wide variety of factors including the amount of media partisanship, the degree of mediatisation of politics, ownership of media by political actors, perceptions of journalism, position of journalists in society, punitive actions against journalists/news organisations, incentives for media to support political actors, position of media in politics, and political actors' perceptions of media. Countries were evaluated by panels of national expert political scientists, political communication and media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists.

Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 2.6

Influence of politics and government on media: 1.5

Narrative summary

There is no excessive politicisation of the French media system. No major news media are either owned by or have close links with a political party or organisation and while media ownership confers status and social influence, there are no media tycoons powerful enough to wield undue political influence. Contrary to many other countries, the relationship between media and politics is not influenced centrally by financial factors, such as media ownership by politicians or government advertising concentrated within partisan media. Press in France receive state subsidies, and while some external observers question whether this constitutes indirect control of the media through economy pressure, all print media have equal right to these subsidies irrespective of their editorial approach with no undue interference from government. This is evident in the fact that those receiving most assistance in 2014 were conservative and populist newspapers and magazines.

While there is no undue political influence within the media, there are close relationships between the two as a result of the common social and educational background of most politicians and journalists, who consequently espouse similar values and views. This enables politicians easily to access the media and coverage of French politics tend to focus on the activities of politicians and the

electoral strategies of parties, with insufficient analysis of the making and implementation of public policies, including the influence of lobbies on government. However, this interdependence between politicians and journalists has softened in recent years and while government remains a primary source for journalists, it does not always succeed in getting its preferred interpretation of events published. The electoral unpopularity of President Hollande and his Socialist Party during 2014 was accompanied – though but not caused – by strong media criticism. There are also a number of popular political satire programmes, notably *Le Petit Journal* on Canal +.

French media rarely identify too closely with a particular political party. Within print media this is the most apparent for regional newspapers, which have larger readerships than the national dailies. In order to retain this wide readership, they generally avoid too marked a political stance and focus on institutionalised politics and the activities of elected officials. National dailies and news magazines are more politicised and have a strong tradition of commentary and opinion. Generally, though, partisanship is more frequently expressed through support for certain values than for particular parties or candidates. Political pluralism in broadcasting is based on what is known as the principle of reference, and is monitored by the broadcasting regulator, Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA). According to this principle, politicians from the parliamentary opposition should receive at least half the time given to government and politicians from the parliamentary majority outside of election campaigns. However, this approach has been criticised for being too quantitative. Further, there are no obligations regarding coverage for political parties not represented in Parliament. About a decade ago, this became a contested issue with respect to the far-right National Front which was inadequately represented in the media relative to its electoral results. French media have since adjusted their approach and provide the required coverage in quantitative terms, although in qualitative terms this is not generally favourable. The required coverage of the National Front remains a controversial issue among journalists, with many of the view that the media should not be required to cover the party in the same way as other major political parties.

In recent years, the media's most significant influence on politics in France has been to intensify and accelerate the political information cycle. This generalised influence is more important than the impact of any particular news story on the political process or the media framing of a political event or policy issue, where evidence of powerful media influence is patchy at best. An increase in the availability and popularity of digital and online media platforms has had a powerful impact on the political communication environment and on politicians and journalists. This includes news websites such as *Mediapart*, *Rue 89* and *Huffington Post* as well as 24-hour free-to-air digital terrestrial television news channels, such as *i-Télé* and *BFM TV*. With 10-million viewers daily, *BFM TV* boasts a market share in France greater than any equivalent news channel around the world. The resulting competition among journalists for exclusive editorial is immense. One notable response has been a significant increase in high-profile investigative exposes about personal scandals of politicians which are of public interest, if not necessarily in the public interest. No political party is spared from intrusive exposés: for example, both President François Hollande and the National Front's Deputy President, Florian Philippot were subjects of much discussed sex "scandals" during 2014. These exposés have sometimes had substantial political consequences, including resignations by ministers and party leaders.

There is no code of ethics recognised by law, and no press council to monitor ethical breaches. While France has a tradition of strong legislation protecting individual privacy, there has been a shift since 2008, influenced by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, to give increasing consideration to the public interest and the right of individuals to receive and impart important information. This debate about the right to and extent of privacy extends from the personal lives of

politicians to discussions about surveillance and national security issues. New anti-terrorism legislation pertaining to online communication has the potential to significantly constrain the right to privacy as well as freedom of expression. Legislation on the confidentiality of sources has improved, but a law reinforcing the protection of journalists is still under discussion and some commentators are sceptical that it will be passed.

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	2
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	2.7
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	3.7
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	3.2
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	1.8
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	1.7
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	1.5
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	0.7
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	2.8
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	3.8
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	0.8
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	3.3
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	3.8
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	2.7
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	3.3
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	2.3
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	1.7
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	3.3
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	3
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	4.2
	Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)	2.6

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	1.5
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	0.2
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	0.7
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	0
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	0.2
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	1
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	0.3
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	1.3
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	1.2
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	1.3
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	0.2
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	1
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	0.7
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	1.3
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	3.7
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	2.2
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	3.3
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	2.3
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	3.7
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	3.8
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	1.5



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Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: GERMANY

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics and government and the influence of politics and government on media. This index captures the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. Indicators assess a wide variety of factors including the amount of media partisanship, the degree of mediatisation of politics, ownership of media by political actors, perceptions of journalism, position of journalists in society, punitive actions against journalists/news organisations, incentives for media to support political actors, position of media in politics, and political actors' perceptions of media. Countries were evaluated by panels of national expert political scientists, political communication and media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists.

Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 3.3

Influence of politics and government on media: 1.7

Narrative summary

The relationship between media and politics in Germany is characterised by a high level of professionalism and a corporatist culture of elite consensus. Partisan alignment of the media is based on ideological alliances rather than party affiliations and explicit endorsements by the media are very uncommon during elections. While recent years have seen the generally close relationship between media and politics weakened at the federal level, due to the shift from the “two-and-a-half” party system into a multiple party system, the relationship remains less antagonistic than in most other countries, with some analysts wary of the strong relationships between leading journalists and politicians.

Generally, German media enjoy a large degree of autonomy, which is honoured by political actors who value the role of the media in informing the public about government policy and performance. Routine interactions between government and media are regulated by the rules of the press corps which holds weekly meetings to inform the press. Opinions and unofficial information about parties and policies are exchanged in informal meetings, which politicians use to frame media coverage and

test public responses. However, attempts to unduly influence media coverage would rapidly cause popular outrage and solidarity among journalists. German legislation tries to improve the financial conditions of media (for example, by supporting a reduced rate of VAT on the European level), but this support is not linked to favourable media coverage. Further, the commercialisation of news production which further intensified in 2014, means that journalists primarily meet the needs of their audiences, rather than those of particular political actors.

There is strong legal regulation regarding the fair placement of government advertising to avoid political influence being exerted through financial pressures and incentives. While German politics has adopted techniques of professional media management and political public relations, these are less central than in many other countries. Notably two of the most successful Chancellors – Helmut Kohl and Angela Merkel – have been largely resistant to building a sophisticated media image. In contrast, Gerhard Schroeder's power was much more vulnerable as a result of its heavy reliance on the media rather than rooted in party support. Thus, "party logic" remains a strong force in German political communication besides, often above "media logic".

Political influence on media is strongest in public radio and television, where party politicians sit on the boards and leading editorial positions are filled by journalists who represent the largest parties and their interests. Civil society representatives also occupy several board positions to ensure that any open attempt at undue political influence is confronted with strong public protest. This has not been without precedent. For example, then editor-in-chief of public broadcaster ZDF was dismissed in 2009 to immense public outcry in what was widely considered undue political interference and an incursion on broadcasting independence for party political interests, with conservative board members linked to the two main political camps voting against renewing his contract. In 2014, the German Constitutional Court ruled that the composition and the selection process of board members of ZDF be changed in order to reduce the share of politicians and other persons related to the government. Furthermore, the court underlined the necessity to ensure more transparency in the system.

Legislative interventions are rare and one recent attempt has been ill-advised. In 2013, Germany passed an ancillary copyright law (dubbed a Google tax) requiring news aggregators and search engines to pay a fee to German publishers for the use of snippets of text to link to news articles. This law was heavily critiqued by legal scholars but was nonetheless ratified under what was perceived by many as heavy lobbying by the Springer media conglomerate. This backfired, with publishers willingly forfeiting payment from Google when it threatened to remove articles from its aggregation, but with smaller competitors to Google forced to follow the law.

The nature of German politics as a consensus democracy with strong political parties limits the power of media to significantly influence the logic and content of political negotiations and processes within the parties. This is especially true in times of the grand coalition, as is currently the case at the federal level. The past year has shown that both parties of the German grand coalition try to effect compromises behind the scenes rather than through public discourse, pre-emptively seeking to avoid enabling media effects within political process. Moreover, the past year has been characterised by international political constraints and commitments (such as support for Greece and solidarity with Ukraine) that reduce the potential for media impact on policy changes. Major German media outlets therefore showed little partisan coverage, but rather cautious support for the government policy. However, certain media outlets have considerable agenda setting power, particularly when the main opinion leading media all report an issue in a consistent and cumulative way.

Media influence on politics has been seen most visibly in recent years in exposés that have led to several high-profile political resignations. Among the most prominent examples is the case brought against former German president Christian Wulff in 2011-2 who was accused of corruption by dubious businessmen among his friends. While the case was led by a civil court, the media – spear-headed by the Germany’s most influential tabloid, the *Bild* – made it the subject of prominent and often forceful coverage. The president made many errors in his media management, such as calling the CEO of the *Bild* to stop reporting the case. After months of pressure through a series of purported revelations Wulff was eventually forced to resign. Last year, however, he was cleared of virtually all accusations, criticising what he called a smear-campaign in the guise of investigative journalism. The role of the media in this, and several other political scandals – has been heavily criticised as “pack journalism” and has eroded public trust in the media.

Journalists have faced rising aggression from Neo-Nazi groups and, in 2014, also from the right-wing Pegida movement in East Germany. Labelling legacy media as “lügenpresse” (press of lies), Pegida demonstrators accused them of a bias toward political correctness, covering the EU financial crisis with a strong pro-EURO bias, migration and gender politics with a strong left-wing bias, and the Ukraine crisis with a strong pro-American bias. This general attitude, and strong pro-Russian activity in public comment feeds of media sites have led media to become more vocal in claiming a central role in the structuring of political discourse, to become more restrictive in their management of online comment sections, and has increased fears that the internet would lead to a dangerous fracturing of the public sphere.

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	3.7
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	3.8
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	4.3
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	4
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	2
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	1.8
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	1.2
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	1
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.7
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	4.3
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	2.3
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	3.8
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	2.2
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	2.2
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	4.2
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	3
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	3.7
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	5.7
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	3.7
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	4
	Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)	3.3

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	1.2
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	0.3
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	0.7
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	0.2
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	0.3
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	1
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	2.3
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	1.5
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	1.7
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	0.3
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	0.5
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	0.5
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	0.7
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	0.7
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	4.8
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	2
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	3.2
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	2
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	4.5
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	4.8
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	1.7



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Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: HUNGARY

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics and government and the influence of politics and government on media. This index captures the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. Indicators assess a wide variety of factors including the amount of media partisanship, the degree of mediatisation of politics, ownership of media by political actors, perceptions of journalism, position of journalists in society, punitive actions against journalists/news organisations, incentives for media to support political actors, position of media in politics, and political actors' perceptions of media. Countries were evaluated by panels of national expert political scientists, political communication and media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists.

Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 3.8

Influence of politics and government on media: 3.9

Narrative summary

Media freedom and pluralism have been under increasing attack since Viktor Orbán and his Fidesz party won an overwhelming majority in the Hungarian parliament in 2010. Although undue political interference in public broadcasting, polarised partisan media, and poor journalistic professionalism precede this government, a new and more and more authoritarian media regime has been constructed since as the government has attempted to bring the media under its control. This intention has not been fully achieved: the European institutions, the Hungarian Constitutional Court (in some cases) and civil society actors, including journalists, have successfully blocked total government control of the sector. This resistance grew significantly in 2014.

Nonetheless, stifling media laws have a significant impact in decreasing the level of media freedom: restrictive over-regulation of broadcast, print and digital journalism; the public media broadcasting is

a tool for state propaganda; and the monopolistic Hungarian News Agency routinely fabricates information for media outlets. The chilling effect of self-censorship has been emphasised in the analyses of the Hungarian Mérték Monitor and in the mission reports of international observers.

The media's relationship with government was turbulent during 2014. The first half of the year saw a seeming acceptance of the record of the Orbán regime in the media, including in the run-up to, during, and in the early months following the general elections in April. The media provided unusually little and tepid coverage of Hungary's general elections in April 2014, compared to previously election periods. This shift was a result of several factors: a ban on political advertising passed as an amendment to the Constitution; the refusal by Fidesz to hold televised debates during this election cycle; and a general climate of non-critical reporting among broadcasting outlets hoping not to fall foul of government following the election. Monitoring of media coverage of the elections by both national and international organisations showed that a majority of media outlets provided significantly more airtime and more favourable coverage to Fidesz candidates than to opposition candidates.

However, this coverage gave way to a new and widespread wave of criticism of the government by diverse elements of the country's media during the second half of the year. In most cases, this increasingly critical media coverage of government did not result in policy changes or in resignations or dismissals of public officials involved in corruption or bribery scandals. Yet it has had some impact on public opinion: Fidesz has suffered a significant decline in public support since the party's re-election in April 2014, losing an estimated 900,000 supporters (around a quarter of Fidesz voters) according to recent polls. Much of this increased criticism was as a reaction to increased government interference with and pressure on the media.

In addition to record-high VAT on newspapers and the absence of subsidy systems for commercial media, the government significantly increased economic pressures on independent media outlets in 2014 while increasing the budgets of already comparatively over-financed public media. The government, as the largest media advertiser, withdrew advertising from media critical of its performance which also led to a concomitant decline in private advertising revenue for independent media, as companies feared foregoing government contracts.

Further, parliament passed a media advertising tax in June 2014 targeting private media companies, with tax rates on advertising revenue of up to 40%. Media were united in protest against the tax, printing newspapers with blank pages and halting broadcasts. The tax is informally referred to as "Lex RTL Klub", and is widely regarded as aimed largely destabilising RTL Klub, a private television with the largest audience share and net revenue in the Hungarian media market and the only company charged the 40% tax rate category is the tax. Prior to this, RTL Klub engaged in gentle criticism of government policies, including during the election when the electorate could have benefited from more forthright investigative coverage. In response, RTL Klub has become increasingly oppositional since, with its nightly newscast expanded from 30 minutes to an hour and regularly cross-reporting breaking stories on government corruption by digital news organisations that previously had limited reach beyond younger, online audiences. This has resulted in considerable antagonism with government but also immense growth in popularity, with viewership of the evening news broadcast increasing by almost 200,000. RTL Klub's primary competitor, TV2, has avoided having to pay this tax due to earlier losses. Purchased in late 2013 by investors close to the ruling party, TV2 has since become aggressively pro-government, attacking opposition candidates and policies during the April 2014 election cycle and violating the Constitutional ban on political advertising.

The advertising tax is also perceived in part as an attempt to destabilise key right-wing media oligarchs who have grown increasingly powerful under Orbán's government. As one example, the previously strong friendship and covert co-operation between media mogul Lajos Simicska and Prime Minister Orbán unravelled into a relatively open power struggle in 2014 as Orbán increasingly favoured new government loyalists. In response, more distanced coverage of the government had developed in many parts of the right-wing media by the end of 2014.

In addition, the media authority (all of whose members are deployed by government) has used frequency tendering to restructure the radio market significantly, with most independent stations forced to shut. The big winners of the tendering process have been investors loyal to the government and the church, which is a strategic ally of the government. Klubrádió, the only influential opposition radio station, has lost all its frequencies outside of Budapest.

While digital media have continued to enjoy greater independence from political pressure (in part as a result of being perceived as less influential than legacy media), several high-profile events in 2014 suggest this is changing. Gergő Sáling, the editor-in-chief of influential independent online news site Origo, was fired in June 2014 after publishing an article exposing improper business expenses of János Lázár, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office. Large numbers of editorial staff resigned in protest and a former editor later published a letter detailing stifling government pressure on the website, including repeated attempts by the Prime Minister's office to influence editorial content. Many observers link Sáling's dismissal – and the subsequent change from independent coverage to largely government-friendly news – to a lucrative government telecommunications tender awarded to Origo's owners.

A few months later, on 22 October 2014, the government announced its intention to levy the world's first tax on the use of the internet, proposing a charge of 150 forints (0,48 Euros) per gigabyte of data. The Facebook page "100,000 against the internet tax" quickly garnered more than a quarter of a million likes, and two days later mass demonstrators took to the streets. Nine days later, the Prime Minister was forced to announce his withdrawal of this plan.

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	1.7
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	2.2
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	2.3
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	4
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	4.3
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	3.7
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	4.8
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	5.5
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.5
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	4.5
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	4.5
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.5
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	5
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	5.3
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	5.7
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	2.5
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	2
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	2.5
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	2.8
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	2.7
	Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)	3.8

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	4.7
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	1.3
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	2.5
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	2
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	3.2
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	4.2
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	3.5
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	4.2
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	4.3
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	2.5
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	4.7
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	5.5
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	4
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	4.5
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	5
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	4.7
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	3.7
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	4.8
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	3.8
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	4.2
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	3.9



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Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: INDIA

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics and government and the influence of politics and government on media. This index captures the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. Indicators assess a wide variety of factors including the amount of media partisanship, the degree of mediatisation of politics, ownership of media by political actors, perceptions of journalism, position of journalists in society, punitive actions against journalists/news organisations, incentives for media to support political actors, position of media in politics, and political actors' perceptions of media. Countries were evaluated by panels of national expert political scientists, political communication and media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists.

Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 3.9

Influence of politics and government on media: 3.3

Narrative summary

The May 2014 general election in India exemplifies the media's influence in politics and how political parties use the media to propagate both their political and personal agendas. The election saw the Indian National Congress ousted from government by the unlikely Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Narendra Modi. As late as December 2013, virtually no political commentators predicted a BJP majority. The media is widely acknowledged to have played a significant role in this victory.

In the run-up to the election, print and broadcast media, showed initiative and courage in reporting a series of corruption scandals in which several ministers of the Congress government were embroiled and which had paralysed the government. Indeed, the Congress party attributed its defeat in part to the "negative media coverage" that it felt overshadowed its achievements including delivering a high growth of around eight percent annually during its 10-year rule, its pro-poor measures including a rural employment guarantee programme, improvements in education and public health care, enacting a right to information law and bringing in protective measures for

farmers whose lands were being acquired compulsorily and for tribal people. However, the popular mood against the Congress party had manifested itself earlier in elections for several state legislatures, and the media read the trend correctly. In the changing milieu, the Bharatiya Janata Party sought to frame the debate in terms of development, promising to get the government delivering and to push the economy on to a higher growth path.

BJP's media campaign was bank-rolled by powerful corporate interests. In the past, there had been complaints of some newspapers passing off advertisements paid for by candidates contesting elections as news reports – a phenomenon that has been described as “paid news.” In this election, the National Election Commission set up monitoring committees in each of India's 542 constituencies to analyse news reports. The committees identified 787 news reports as “paid news” and required the contesting candidates to declare the payments as part of their campaign expenditure. According to the submissions made with the National Election Commission, the BJP spent Rs 714.28 crore (about \$115 million) on the campaign, which was Rs 200 crore more than the election expenditure of the Congress. Almost half of the BJP's campaign spending was on media advertisements.

Not only was BJP able to buy more advertising space in the media than its rivals, the party's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi got significantly greater editorial airtime on five television news channels in the two key months of elections, as shown by detailed content analysis done by the Centre of Media Studies. Media focused on the paralysis of the Congress government and on the BJP's promise of better and more effective governance, putting aside concerns over Narendra Modi's and the BJP's record of promoting Hindu nationalism and targeting minorities, with no negative stories about the party or its leaders, or even small-time cadres, finding proper space, mention or display in the media. Many commentators have attributed Narendra Modi's victory in the election to his masterful use of and favourable treatment by the media, in particular his success at creating a mythology around his term as the chief minister of the state of Gujarat. Around India, people came to believe that Gujarat saw miraculous growth during Modi's rule while that data does not support these claims.

Those media or editor that attempted to buck this trend paid a heavy price. One prominent example is *The Indian Express*, which attracted almost no government advertisements as a result of the strong stand it took against the BJP-ruled Gujarat government for its role during the 2002 riots in Ahmedabad and its adjoining areas. The newspaper's group editor Shekhar Gupta was ousted from his position soon after BJP formed its central government. Another high-profile event was the ouster of senior journalist Hartosh Singh Bal of *Open* magazine. According to reports the magazine's owner, Sanjiv Goenka, eased Bal out of his position because his outspoken critique of political personalities had earned the industrialist owner a number of “enemies” in influential political circles. Similarly, the acquisition of CNN-IBN by one of the country's largest conglomerates after the election was followed closely by the resignation of the editor, Rajdeep Sardesai, who was perceived as antagonistic to Narendra Modi.

This immense overlap of influence between the media and politics is in significant part the result of the radical commercialisation and proliferation of the media industry in recent years. The rapid liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation of media industries in India, coupled with the increasing availability of digital delivery and distribution mechanisms, has transformed journalism in India, creating a new market for 24/7 news. Television, in particular, has grown exponentially in the past decade: from Doordarshan – a state monopoly until 1991 – to more than 800 channels, including more than 300 dedicated privately owned news networks, making it home to the world's most competitive news arena. This unprecedented growth has been spurred on by an increase in

advertising revenue as Western-based media conglomerates tap into the growing market of 300 million burgeoning middle class with enhanced and demonstrable purchasing power and media-induced aspirations to a consumerist lifestyle. Relaxed cross-media ownership rules have enabled greater concentration of media power, with large corporate conglomerates investing heavily in vast sections of the Indian media. While television news outlets have proliferated in such a liberalised and privatised new economy, there is intense and growing competition for audiences and, crucially, advertising revenue – advertising revenues which overwhelmingly comes from government and big business.

The result is that there is a clear collusion emerging between big business and politics, with media output heavily skewed towards commercial and business interests and the political parties and politicians with whom they ally. This The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recently warned of the deleterious effects “of ‘non-media corporate’ funds in the media space”.¹ Similarly, the Press Council of India has the phenomenon of “paid news” has moved beyond the corruption of individual journalists and media companies regarding individual stories and has transformed into a pervasive, structured and highly organised nexus between corporate media and political class in India. The Press Council emphasised that this pattern is undermining democracy and media independence in India.²

¹ Sandeep Bhushan, “‘Regulation’ and ‘Non-Media’ Money in Media”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol - L No. 7, February 14, 2015.

² Full report at <http://presscouncil.nic.in/OldWebsite/CouncilReport.pdf>

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	3
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	3.8
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	4.3
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	4.5
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	3.2
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	3.2
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	3.3
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	2.8
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.3
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	3.8
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	4.2
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.5
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	4.3
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	4
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	5.7
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	4
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	3.5
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	3.7
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	3.7
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	3.2
	Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)	3.9

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	3
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	2.5
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	2.3
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	1.7
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	1.8
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	2.5
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	2
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	3.5
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	3.8
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	2.7
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	4
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	4
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	3.5
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	4
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	4
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	4.5
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	4.2
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	3.3
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	4.3
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	5.2
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	3.3



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Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: ITALY

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics and government and the influence of politics and government on media. This index captures the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. Indicators assess a wide variety of factors including the amount of media partisanship, the degree of mediatisation of politics, ownership of media by political actors, perceptions of journalism, position of journalists in society, punitive actions against journalists/news organisations, incentives for media to support political actors, position of media in politics, and political actors' perceptions of media. Countries were evaluated by panels of national expert political scientists, political communication and media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists.

Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 4.1

Influence of politics and government on media: 3.4

Narrative summary

The relationship between the media and politics in Italy has been dominated, in recent years, by the enormous influence of the figure of Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister three times between 1994 and 2011 and owner of Italy's biggest media empire, Mediaset, which operates the country's three largest private television stations, and which played an enormous role in enabling him to gain and maintain political power. During his time in power, this influence was bolstered by the three national channels operated by public service broadcaster (RAI), which is controlled by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Together, RAI and Mediaset comprise 85-90% of total television viewership and advertising revenue. This extraordinary overlap of media and politics was unprecedented in a democratic state.

2014 has thus marked a significant shift, with Matteo Renzi becoming Prime Minister in February 2014. While Berlusconi remains the head of an important opposition party and his television channels and family's newspaper, *Il Giornale*, continue to affect and be affected by his political involvement, his influence is fading. This is gradually changing the relationship between media and politics. For example, while Berlusconi was Prime Minister, journalists were generally cautious of criticising him in fear of the potential consequences for their careers given his outsized influence in the media sector. This is not relevant to Prime Minister Renzi and Berlusconi has fallen from favour, making greater political accountability by the media possible.

However, there are limitations to this change. With the prominent figure of Berlusconi no longer dominating the relationship between the media and power, it has become evident that, rather than representing a complete anomaly, he exacerbated and exploited underlying issues that preceded and supersede his influence. Indeed, the relationship between media and politics in Italy remains a close one. While Renzi's approach to the media is more modern and media-savvy, relying on retaining media favour rather than on Berlusconi's direct control and/or confrontation, he nonetheless also attempts to influence editorial. There are widespread rumours, for example, that he regularly calls editors of leading newspapers to suggest an editorial line. While this has long-since been the approach of Italian Prime Ministers, Berlusconi's power extended beyond the limited elite readership of newspapers, to the massive majority of television viewers. Renzi's spokesman and spin doctor, Filippo Sensi, has an unprecedentedly influential role in the current government and is adept at using social media to get across its message. Further, public service broadcasting remains under the control of government as a result of the regulatory framework, adjusting its partisanship to the politics of the new ruling party. While there has not been undue pressure exerted as it was when Berlusconi complained about the work of prominent journalists who were later dismissed, potential for political interference still remains.

Italian news media are lively but polarised along partisan lines. For example, coverage of the political agreement signed between Matteo Renzi and Silvio Berlusconi on January 18, 2014 to implement a series of constitutional reforms was sharply divided along partisan lines: there was little critical coverage by newspapers aligned to the centre-left, while right-leaning *Liberio* and *il Giornale*, in particular, have sharply attacked the agreement and later policy choices of the Renzi government, such as the Jobs Act passed by the Italian Senate in December 2014.

It is very common that journalists become politicians, as members of Parliament, representatives within EU Parliament, or in key administrative positions. Many return to their careers in journalism without their partisanship becoming an issue of concern or controversy. Many journalists started their careers by writing for party newspapers. As such, much of the media remains obsequious to political power and holding them to account is not a systematic central aim of reporting. This is evident in the daily newspapers, where a culture of co-operation with politicians ensures. If a politician is offended by aggressive interview questioning, for example, he/she may well complain to the editor, who may in turn tell a senior executive to warn the journalist to be less forceful in future. Similarly, it is not unusual for reporters to be called off investigations that become politically sensitive. The lack of investigative journalism is particularly felt in economic and financial journalism and it is the sector in which a real lack of freedom of the press is felt. While there are exceptions – the left-leaning daily *Il Fatto Quotidiano* and a feisty investigative programme on RAI – Italian media generally rely on the country's assertive prosecutors to investigate political scandals.

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	2.2
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	3.5
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	2.5
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	4
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	4.5
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	3.7
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	5
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	4.3
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.7
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	5.7
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	2.8
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.3
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	4.7
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	4.5
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	5.5
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	4
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	3
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	3.3
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	4.5
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	4.7
	Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)	4.1

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	4
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	1.7
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	1.8
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	1.3
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	2.8
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	2.2
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	2.8
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	5
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	5.7
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	3.5
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	2
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	3.8
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	2.8
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	3.8
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	4.2
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	3
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	4.2
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	4.5
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	4.7
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	4.2
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	3.4



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Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: RUSSIA

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics and government and the influence of politics and government on media. This index captures the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. Indicators assess a wide variety of factors including the amount of media partisanship, the degree of mediatisation of politics, ownership of media by political actors, perceptions of journalism, position of journalists in society, punitive actions against journalists/news organisations, incentives for media to support political actors, position of media in politics, and political actors' perceptions of media. Countries were evaluated by panels of national expert political scientists, political communication and media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists.

Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 3
Influence of politics and government on media: 4.3

Narrative summary

Politics has been tightly controlled by the Kremlin since the early 2000s, shortly after Putin first came to power. This political environment has constituted a radical constraint on media freedom, particularly since 2012, as the Kremlin ensured that independent media are politically irrelevant and deprived of any real capacity to influence policy-making or hold the government to account. Yet 2014 marked a substantive shift, as Russia shifted from “soft authoritarianism” to a harder version. The political system has become highly centralised and personalist, with public institutions radically eviscerated, political opposition directly attacked, and Putin’s personal authority approximating that of an absolute monarch. Foreign policy has become increasingly isolationist and more radically anti-Western.

State-owned media are managed directly by political appointments and resource allocation. Major private media to varying degrees belong to state companies or media tycoons within Putin's innermost circle, have state representatives on their boards of directors, and are subject to politically strategic economic pressures. Oppositional opinions are incorporated into mainstream media content when they concern issues that are not politically salient or when ignoring them could prove counterproductive for the elite.

The Kremlin openly used state television as its central tool for the control of national public opinion, with spin, propaganda and direct falsifications especially pronounced in 2014, as Russia's politics became increasingly isolationist and more radically anti-Western.

The central example is the crisis in Ukraine from late 2013 and the subsequent annexation of Crimea and armed conflict in Ukraine's east. While this crisis has not fundamentally changed the system, it has crucially intensified its components. State television has led an aggressive campaign of jingoistic propaganda, portraying the revolution in Kiev as a Western-backed fascist coup and the government in Kiev as illegitimate Nazis (paradoxically largely composed by Jews), with the eventual aim being regime change in Russia. This coverage has fuelled among the Russian population the belief that Russia is again a "fortress", encircled by enemies who want to destroy it.

In broadcasts to eastern Ukraine, Russian state television fomented violence in Crimea through incendiary disinformation about atrocities committed by Ukrainian forces, framed as descendants of WWII fascist collaborators. This fabricated coverage successfully provoked the local population and Russian volunteers into an armed conflict, which it initiated through military and security involvement. In Russia, state television led an aggressive campaign against liberal and pro-Western opposition, portraying them as national traitors and "fifth column" and proposing their Russian citizenship be revoked. The term "sixth column" was used to describe members of Russian elite not demonstrating sufficient enthusiasm in supporting the official policy and thus indirectly support the enemy.

This role of television in shaping public perceptions was immense, with 2014 seeing a sharp rise in anti-liberal, anti-Western, xenophobic sentiment. With the exception of Moscow, the state's annexation of Crimea produced near-total support, with the vast majority of the public believing Russia to be under siege. 85% of the population support Putin and accept the official line that Ukrainian fascists and their American sponsors plan to exterminate all Russian Donbas population. Public demand for independent sources of information is extremely low and has declined further since the annexation of Crimea. As the media context has become chillingly uniform and a more direct tool of state control, the quality of journalism is considered high and journalism is perceived as a "solid and prestigious profession". In 2014 over 90% of the public "most often" rely on national television as their source of news; over 80% regularly watch government news shows and a strong majority trusts them, with over 70% seeing no problem with the media withholding information in the interests of the state and over 50% not minding if information is distorted in the interests of the state. Only a small minority (5%-10%) of the population publicly expresses disapproval of Russian media coverage of current events.

The space for independent voices all but disappeared at national and regional level. Journalists featured prominently on official lists of "foreign agents" and "enemies of Russia" whose names, faces and even personal addresses are widely circulated on social media and in street advertising in the capital. In its campaign against alternative media voices the Kremlin drew on a vast toolkit of administrative, legislative, and financial measures as well as imprisonment on spurious charges, physical attacks and even murder. Parliament played a crucial role in 2014, rapidly approving

numerous laws that come into effect in 2015, particularly around ownership, advertising and protean insult laws.

Some media were closed down, including the oldest and most professional regional television station in the country – TV2 in Tomsk, Siberia – which was shut down on December 31, 2014. Others adjusted their approach to align with the new political environment, with numerous journalists and editors losing their jobs to make way for more obsequious editorial. For the first time in post-Communist Russia, a group of Russian journalists left Russia to launch a political publication abroad (Medusa.io is a political website operating in Riga, Latvia).

The few remaining independent national media outlets are under constant threat (radio station Echo of Moscow, the cable network Rain TV, the weekly publication *New Times*, and investigative newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*). However, these media are consumed mainly by liberal elite and cannot reach the broader public, which receives 90% of its information from television. As such, they are tolerated as “evidence” of freedom of speech, although subject to ongoing intimidation and attack. Those that are owned by non-Russians, such as business daily *Vedomosti* and the Russian edition of *Forbes* magazine are particularly vulnerable. A law adopted in September 2014 mandates that foreign stakes in the Russian media holdings be reduced to 20 percent and there is little doubt that the Kremlin will ensure that ownership changes result in editorial content more favourable to the state.

Online news organisations and social media continued to play an important role in fostering an alternative debate to this uniform picture in 2014, albeit among a small minority of the public. However, the online public has polarised with the oppositional minority becoming smaller, still more oppositional, and the content becoming more aggressive on both sides.

The Internet is not technically filtered and its control is fragmentary, with relatively free communication still possible on social media. Government control of digital media continued to rely primarily on intimidation, with widespread job losses and selective criminal punishment of the most active bloggers creating a culture of fear and self-censorship. For example, Galina Timchenko, the editor-in-chief of the post popular online site, Lenta, was fired in March 2014 along with almost half of all employees, after the Russian media regulator issued the website with a warning for publishing material of an “extremist nature” citing an interview with a fair-right Ukrainian activist. She was replaced by a staunchly pro-Kremlin editor. A statement issued by 69 editorial staff noted the direct political pressure placed on them and a “dramatic decline” in the capacity for free journalism. 2014 also saw several new legal norms passed to tighten control of online communication, such as the non-judicial blocking of websites. The government aims to create a form of Russian “sovereign internet” emulating the Chinese model and is taking steps to force global digital intermediaries, such as Google and Facebook, to register as Russian legal entities. While this is unlikely to succeed, the record of these foreign digital intermediaries in protecting user information from government intrusion is mixed, with Google, for example, giving the authorities information on opposition figure Alexei Navalny.

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	1.3
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	1.2
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	0.5
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	3.3
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	5.8
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	2.7
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	3.5
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	0.8
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	4
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	4.3
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	3.5
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.7
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	3.8
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	6
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	5.2
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	3
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	2.8
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	0.7
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	0.2
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	3.2
Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)		3

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	5
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	4
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	5.3
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	5.3
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	5.2
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	5.3
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	3.2
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	4.3
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	4.7
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	3
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	3.5
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	6
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	2.2
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	3
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	3.2
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	3.7
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	4.3
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	5.2
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	3.3
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	5.3
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	4.3



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Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: UNITED KINGDOM

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Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 3.8

Influence of politics and government on media: 1.6

Narrative summary

The relationship between media and politics in the United Kingdom continued to be dominated in 2014 by media responses to the proceedings and aftermath of the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the British press, which presented its findings in November 2012.

Since 2011, more than 100 journalists have been arrested and/or interviewed under caution. 13 journalists have been convicted to date, the trials or retrials of an additional 12 defendants are currently underway, and more than 16 journalists await decisions as to whether they will be charged. Charges have included phone hacking, corruption, and conspiring with a public official to commit misconduct in a public office. While Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and the UK's Mirror Group Newspapers are the Leveson Report found serious ethical infringements to have been committed on an industry-wide level by numerous and diverse press organisations.

The reaction to, and coverage of, the Leveson Inquiry and its aftermath offers helpful insights into the power relationship between press and politics in the United Kingdom. Most leading national press organisations chose to reject the recommendations of the year-long independent inquiry, with many newspapers challenging, undermining and even distorting post-Leveson proceedings. This rejection – of both the Inquiry and its subsequent implementation through Royal Charter – came despite the recommendations of the judge to that Inquiry, the subsequent agreement of all main political parties and Parliament, the support of representatives of victims of press abuse as well as leading names from literature, the arts, science, academia, design, human rights, business and the law, and the endorsement of the public as reflected in numerous public opinion polls commissioned during and after the Inquiry. A comprehensive analysis of press coverage between November 2012 and November 2013 shows that the press were overwhelmingly negative about the Leveson Report and its implementation (Ramsay, 2014). For example, the ratio of negative to positive articles was 33:1 in the *Daily Mail* and 29:1 in *The Sun*. As such, the rejection of the Leveson Report is a helpful indication of the balance of power between the media and politics in the United Kingdom.

There have also been revelations into the ways in which politicians tried to use the Leveson Inquiry to exert influence over the media. One high-profile instance is that of Minister of Culture, Maria Miller, who tried to block legitimate investigation by *The Daily Telegraph* of her expenses claims. The newspaper published a telephone transcript in which Miller's adviser mentions the Minister's connection with the Leveson Inquiry as a warning. Then editor, Tony Gallagher, claims that this was followed by a call to him from the Prime Minister's director of communications, Craig Oliver, in which the spectre of Leveson was again raised in relation to the timing of the investigation. Oliver denies this. Miller was found culpable by a Parliamentary committee of over-claiming expenses on her London home, and of failing to co-operate with the committee's inquiry.

2014 saw the Press Recognition Panel, recommended by the Leveson Inquiry and created under Royal Charter, formally established. This independent body is charged with checking whether press self-regulators meet the basic standards of independence and effectiveness needed to give citizens cheap, swift and appropriate redress when they suffer press abuses. In addition, the Independent Press Standards Organisation was set up by the dominant newspaper groups promising in an advertisement that it would "deliver all the key elements Leveson called for in his report". The Advertising Standards Authority subsequently ruled this to be misleading. *The Guardian*, which originally exposed phone hacking practices, rejected IPSO outright on the grounds that it would not be independent, that it gave the big newspaper groups too much power, that its investigations and fines system was flawed and that it failed to deliver arbitration. Nonetheless, an IPSO chair and board were appointed and a written commitment that the appointments panel would itself be appointed in an open and fair way was ultimately not honoured. An appointments committee was duly created in which a veto was given to two press representatives, one a senior Murdoch editor and both with past associations with and advocacy for the Press Complaints Commission. Finally, Impress – an alternative press self-regulator not owned or dominated by the big newspaper groups – has been established as an alternative to IPSO.

Murdoch still enjoys a substantial degree of political power, with politicians eager to placate him ahead of the 2015 General Election. In the run up to the next election the media focus upon politicians has been increasingly important as a means of persuading the public how they should view political leaders and thereby vote. The predominantly Conservative supporting press has been relentless in attacking the Labour party and, in particular, its leader Ed Miliband, who has consistently criticised the degree of power Murdoch has over public life and has called for new

media ownership laws that would cut his market share. Miliband has since been widely criticised by much of the British press, particularly by the News Corporation titles.

Despite the uncertain regulatory environment and sustained financial strain, broadsheet newspapers continue to lead in investigative journalism. High-profile examples from the past year include, among others, the Snowden revelations published by the *Guardian* and child abuse scandals exposed by *The Times*. In particular, the revelations about global surveillance carried out by the United States National Security Agency, with the help of the British Government Communications Headquarters GCHQ, dominated much of the global conversation in 2014. But while the United States has stated the possibility of reviewing its surveillance procedures (though it has shown no intention of halting its pursuit of whistle-blower Edward Snowden), the British government has, for the most part, avoided confronting the issue of surveillance, while targeting the media for publishing leaked materials.

Prime Minister Cameron warned the *Guardian* to stop publishing revelations or face legal action. *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger was summoned before Parliament and accused of deliberately endangering British security. Security officials visited the *Guardian* offices and demanded that hard drives containing leaked material be destroyed in front of them, despite being aware that the data was also held elsewhere. David Miranda, the partner of Rio-based journalist Glenn Greenwald, was stopped at Heathrow Airport under anti-terrorism legislation with the clear intention to confiscate source material. The case raises serious questions about protection of journalists' materials and sources, which has become an increasingly important political issue. For example, there is ongoing concern the misuse of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) against individual journalists for this purpose. In addition, as part of the Deregulation Bill, proposed in 2014, the government proposed establishing a new system enabling authorities to compel journalists to submit materials and information about sources. If passed without amendment, this would have stripped safeguards for journalists faced with police demands for their materials, removing the requirement for judicial scrutiny of such demands. After significant pressure by the media and civil society groups, this clause was amended before being passed to enable the continued protection of the confidentiality of sources.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has also come under considerable attack over the past year by politicians ahead of the next Charter renewal. Several senior politicians have been critical of BBC output, such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Today programme. The BBC has responded vigorously with a more aggressive public relations strategy. Several have suggested that the license fee system of funding is no longer viable in a multi-channel era and should be reconsidered and possibly abolished. This criticism has been bolstered by News Corporation newspapers (both tabloid and broadsheet) whose coverage of the BBC (one of the biggest competitors to the company's television channels) has been largely negative. Some commentators have questioned whether this criticism has resulted in the BBC minimising coverage of certain controversial issues such as climate change, in fear that it will be accused of bias.

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	4.3
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	4.3
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	4.2
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	4.3
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	4.3
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	4.5
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	1.7
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	0.7
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	5.5
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	5.2
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	1.8
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	5.4
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	4.2
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	2.2
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	3.5
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	2.7
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	2.8
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	6
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	3.3
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	4.3
	Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)	3.8

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	2
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	0.2
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	1
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	0.2
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	1
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	0.5
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	0.5
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	0.7
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	0.3
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	0.7
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	0
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	0
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	0.5
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	0.8
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	4.8
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	2.2
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	4.2
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	1.7
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	4.5
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	5.2
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	1.6



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Political Influence Index 2015 Country Report: UNITED STATES

The Political Influence Index measures the influence of media on politics and government and the influence of politics and government on media. This index captures the relationships and interactions of media and politics and the distribution of power between media and political actors. Indicators assess a wide variety of factors including the amount of media partisanship, the degree of mediatisation of politics, ownership of media by political actors, perceptions of journalism, position of journalists in society, punitive actions against journalists/news organisations, incentives for media to support political actors, position of media in politics, and political actors' perceptions of media. Countries were evaluated by panels of national expert political scientists, political communication and media scholars, civil society representatives, and journalists.

Combined index scores

Influence of media on politics and government: 3.5

Influence of politics and government on media: 1.9

Narrative summary

Media are central to politics in the United States, as illustrated by their role in covering and interpreting elections as well as in discussions of national security, the use of torture, and many other important issues. Among the most salient aspects of media and politics in the United States in 2014 were the mid-term Congressional elections. While election results reflected the tepid economy, a relatively unpopular president, the tendency for midterm elections to see a decline in the share of the Congress enjoyed by the president's party, and different turnout patterns in midterms versus general elections, the media also factored in several ways. First, while there is little evidence that newspaper endorsements had any measurable electoral effects, television advertising was important, especially in the close Senate and governor races. Second, candidates for office had extensive operations designed to attract coverage from news outlets, and news organisations sponsored candidate debates in most state elections. Third, media coverage of the campaigns was generally judged to be fair, but contests for lower level offices, including House of Representatives

and state legislature, received scant media attention. In these races, paid advertising and direct campaigning were the predominant forms of communication. There is continuing debate about recent Supreme Court decisions that eliminate restrictions on campaign finance, which heighten the importance of money for political advertising.

This latter point relates, in part, to the significant issue of the economics of a free press, with news organisations facing enormous financial pressure because of a shift of advertising to the Internet. This has contributed to a general decline in the quality of news coverage, as newspapers have continued to downsize newsrooms and lose enormous reporting capacity, leaving local television stations, which have high reach but limited editorial muscle, as the main local and regional news organisations covering local politics. An additional consequence of this weakened financial position and absence of any clear path to profitability is that influential print news media increasingly depend on owners whose motives are less predictable than the previously dominant profit motive: whether it is to retain and protect public interest media or the desire for greater political and ideological influence. Recent prominent ownership changes include the 2014 purchase of *The Washington Post* by the owner of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, as well as recent controversies surrounding editorial changes to *The New Republic* since its 2012 purchase by a founder of Facebook, Chris Hughes. The implications of these ownership changes are not yet clear.

America's media system operates mostly on an objective model, in which objectivity is defined as a kind of non-partisan detachment typified by the phrase "he-said-she-said journalism." However, several factors are leading to an increase in partisan content. First, commercial incentives are driving online and cable news organisations towards partisan coverage in order to target particular audiences. Most discussed are the two partisan cable news channels: the liberal MSNBC and, in particular, the conservative Fox News Channel. While the influence of these channels is frequently overstated, they do have some impact on political debate in certain circles. For example, the national rollout of conservative cable channel Fox News has been shown by two new peer-reviewed studies to have shifted the ideological position of the US Congress to the right. This was found true among both Republican and Democratic members of Congress. Further, this shift was found to be stronger when elections were proximate and when Fox News was available in their district. Second, the increasing partisan polarisation in Washington, D.C. – driven by changes in the make-up of the political parties, especially the right wing of the Republican party, as well as by the growth of advocacy groups, interest groups, think tanks and other actors – challenges impartial journalism as the broad middle ground in many political conversations continues to erode. This is forcing journalists and editors to either seek "balance" simply by citing "both sides" or to take a stronger stance against what the public editor of the *New York Times* termed "truth vigilantes", challenging self-serving misrepresentations and outright lies. A growing number of fact-checking organisations try to hold both politicians and media to account in this respect.

Politicians do not generally have much direct influence on the media. Rather, they influence the media indirectly by investing increasing resources in a broad swath of political communication tools, by developing and maintaining good media relations, and by using press releases and policy memos to shape what issues the media cover. In practice, there is significant variation between the intense scrutiny to which the President and key players in Congress and in gubernatorial offices around the country are subject relative to the dwindling coverage of many other parts of politics and, especially, policy. Niche media exist for many areas but popular media rarely cover the policy process unless it is explicitly politicised. Media aggressively pursue stories focused on individual events and politicians. Event-driven media coverage can help put issues on the policy agenda, but as is evident in the example of debates around gun control following tragic school shootings, such coverage is

ultimately insufficient if political elites lack the will to take action. On the other hand, as an example of how coverage of events can stimulate policy decisions, coverage of the beheading of two Americans appears to have accelerated the administration's decision to adopt a more bellicose strategy in Iraq and Syria, and may have pushed them in the direction of a more interventionist strategy.

The relationship between government and journalism has grown increasingly contentious as government secrecy has become an issue of increasing political salience among the public. As a corollary to this, the aggressive posture of the federal government toward prosecuting whistleblowers and pushing back forcefully against investigative journalism has led some to accuse the federal government and the Obama administration of waging a "war on journalism". Over the past year, former CIA officer Jeffrey Sterling was convicted on of nine felony counts related to leaking national security information, although the administration finally declining to compel *New York Times* reporter James Risen from testifying, after a seven-year struggle to compel him to reveal his sources. Such leaks can probably be said to have increased over the past year or two, both as tensions have arisen over government secrecy and surveillance, and as digital media have created new technological means of leaking.

Influence of media on politics and government

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Media on Politics/Government		
No.	Question	Score
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation	1.5
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes	4
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability	5
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes	5
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections	1
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy	1
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	2
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office	0.2
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel	4.8
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes	5.3
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising	5.5
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel	5.7
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions	2.2
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations	1.5
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations	2.8
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public	3.5
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public	3
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism	5.5
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government	4.3
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar	5.2
	Combined index score on the influence of media on politics and government (average of the 20 indicators)	3.5

Influence of politics and government on media

These scores are the average of scores of the evaluators for the country using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 being the middle point).

Influence of Politics/Government on Media		
No.	Question	Score
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist	1.3
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties	0.2
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved	0.5
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties	0
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences	0.2
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting	0.8
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations	0.3
P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers	1
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels	1
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services	1.2
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.	0
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government	0
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties	0.7
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government	1
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors	5
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections	5.7
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters	5.2
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media	2.8
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government	5.3
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion	4.7
	Combined index score of the influence of politics and government on media (average of the 20 indicators)	1.9

Appendix 1: Indicators in the Political Influence Index

Evaluators scored the country for which they were select on each question using a 7-point scale from 0=No/never to 6=always (3 is the middle point).

A. Indicators of Media Influence on Politics/Government

Influence of Media on Politics/Government	
No.	Question
M1	Criticism of major political figures by media can result in their dismissal or resignation
M2	Media coverage of issues or developments can lead to legislative or policy changes
M3	Media play an important role in promoting government transparency and accountability
M4	Media coverage of elections is generally perceived as playing an important role in their outcomes
M5	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence elections
M6	Most media carry out partisan campaigns designed to influence law and policy
M7	Private broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office
M8	Public service broadcasters express support for particular policies, parties, or candidates for office
M9	It is impossible to lead political parties and campaigns without a strong media strategy and personnel
M10	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on appearance of candidates in news and on media programmes
M11	Electoral campaigns depend heavily on media advertising
M12	The head of government cannot be effective without a strong media strategy and personnel
M13	Elites operate media to further their political ambitions
M14	Governments are successful in influencing regulators over who can operate private broadcast stations
M15	Governments are successful in influencing who sits on governing boards of public service broadcast stations
M16	Journalism is generally perceived as a valuable and worthy profession by the public
M17	The overall quality of journalism in all media is generally perceived to be high by the public
M18	There are widely available media outlets that provide high quality journalism
M19	Journalists believe they can strongly influence politics/government
M20	The social and educational backgrounds of journalists and political actors are similar

B. Indicators of the Influence of Politics/Government on Media

Influence of Politics/Government on Media	
No.	Question
P1	Criticisms of media by major political figures can result in the removal/firing of an editor or journalist
P2	Journalists have been physically attacked for criticism of political figures or parties
P3	The press is constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of prosecution even when clear national security issues are not involved
P4	Media organizations have been shut down or their websites blocked for criticisms of political figures or parties
P5	Broadcasters are constrained from investigating and disclosing information about state activities for fear of losing licences
P6	Journalists are denied access to state institutions or officials' press conferences because of previous reporting
P7	Governments use press and media councils to influence the reporting and behaviour of news organizations

P8	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular newspapers
P9	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of particular radio/TV broadcast stations/channels
P10	Many political actors have significant influence on the editorial stances of websites, social media, mobile services
P11	Payments made to media owners, editors, and journalists by politicians or parties influence support for their policies or elections.
P12	Advertising by state enterprises is denied to media that do not support the government
P13	Media endorsements and positions are influenced by political advertising from candidates and parties
P14	'Friendly' media owners or executives are likely to gain positions in government
P15	Media advisors are valued and important to political actors
P16	Raising large amounts of money for media advertising (television, print, outdoor, direct mail) is crucial in elections
P17	Political actors use websites, blogs, e-mails, and social media and other digital platforms to go around media to directly address voters
P18	Political actors believe they can strongly influence and control media
P19	Political actors believe that the media have an important influence on politics/government
P20	Political actors fear the effects of the media on public opinion