

## **Assignment 5: Global Risk Management**

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## **1. Introduction**

The paper outlines a formal risk analysis of press freedom in a global context. The risk analysis will build upon the Reporters without Borders' annual World Press Freedom Index that ranks 180 countries according to the freedom afforded to journalists.

## **2. Background**

Reporters without borders (RSF) is an independent NGO whose mission statement is the defence and promotion of freedom of information. It is regarded as one of the world's leading NGOs and each year publishes the World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2021a)

The *World Press Freedom Index* has been published every year since 2002 and is defined by RSF as "an important advocacy tool based on the principle of emulation between states." By emulation, RSF aims to use the index as a tool by which nations aim to match or surpass other nations on the index.

The index is a snapshot of the media freedom situation based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country and region.

The index is created using the responses of experts, who include media professionals, lawyers and sociologists, to RSFs questionnaire that consists of 87 questions covering the following areas:

<i>Pluralism [indicator scorePlur]</i>	<i>Measures the degree to which opinions are represented in the media.</i>
<i>Media independence [indicator scorePlur]</i>	<i>Measures the degree to which the media are able to function independently of sources of political, governmental, business and religious power and influence.</i>
<i>Environment and self-censorship [indicator scoreEA]</i>	<i>Analyses the environment in which news and information providers operate.</i>
<i>Legislative framework [indicator scoreCL]</i>	<i>Measures the impact of the legislative framework governing news and information activities.</i>
<i>Transparency [indicator scoreTra]</i>	<i>Measures the transparency of the institutions and procedures that affect the production of news and information.</i>
<i>Infrastructure [indicator scoreInf]</i>	<i>Measures the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information. A seventh indicator based on data gathered about abuses and acts of violence against journalists and media during the period evaluated is also factored into the calculation.</i>
<i>Infrastructure [indicator scoreInf]</i>	<i>Measures the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information. A seventh indicator based on data gathered about abuses and acts of violence against journalists and media during the period evaluated is also factored into the calculation.</i>
<i>Abuses [indicator scoreExa]</i>	<i>Measures the level of abuse and violence.</i>

*Table 2.1 Criteria categories and indicators (RSF, 2021b).*

A seventh indicator (abuses) based on data gathered about abuses and acts of violence against journalists and media during the period evaluated is also factored into the calculation.

Each indicator is given a score between 0 and 100.

$$SCOA = \frac{1}{3} \cdot \text{scorePlur} + \frac{1}{6} \cdot (\text{scoreInd} + \text{scoreEA} + \text{scoreCL}) + \frac{1}{12} \cdot (\text{scoreTra} + \text{scoreInf})$$

$$SCOB = \frac{1}{5} \cdot \text{scoreExa} + \frac{4}{15} \cdot \text{scorePlur} + \frac{2}{15} \cdot (\text{scoreInd} + \text{scoreEA} + \text{scoreCL}) + \frac{1}{15} \cdot (\text{scoreTra} + \text{scoreInf})$$

*Figure 2.1 Scores used in calculating the World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2021b).*

The final score is the greater of the two scores. The method prevents a low score (high ranking) in a country where few or no acts of violence against journalists take place because the provision of news and information is tightly controlled.

The abuses score (scoreExa) is calculated as:

$$scoreExa = 10 * \log(90 * nbreMorts + Coeff_i * nbreEmprisonnés_i + 10 * nbreEnlevés + 5 * nbreMédiassaccagés + 3 * nbreExilés + nbreArrestations + nbreAgressions)$$

Figure 2.2 Calculation of abuses score (RSF, 2021b)

In cases where journalists are imprisoned in a country, the length of imprisonment penalizes the country using a weighting coefficient as follows:

<i>i</i>	1 -	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10 +
<i>Coeff<sub>i</sub></i>	10	20	35	60	80	85	87	88	89	89,5	$\lim_{\infty} Coeff_i = 90$

Figure 2.3 Weighted coefficient where journalists are imprisoned (RSF, 2021b).

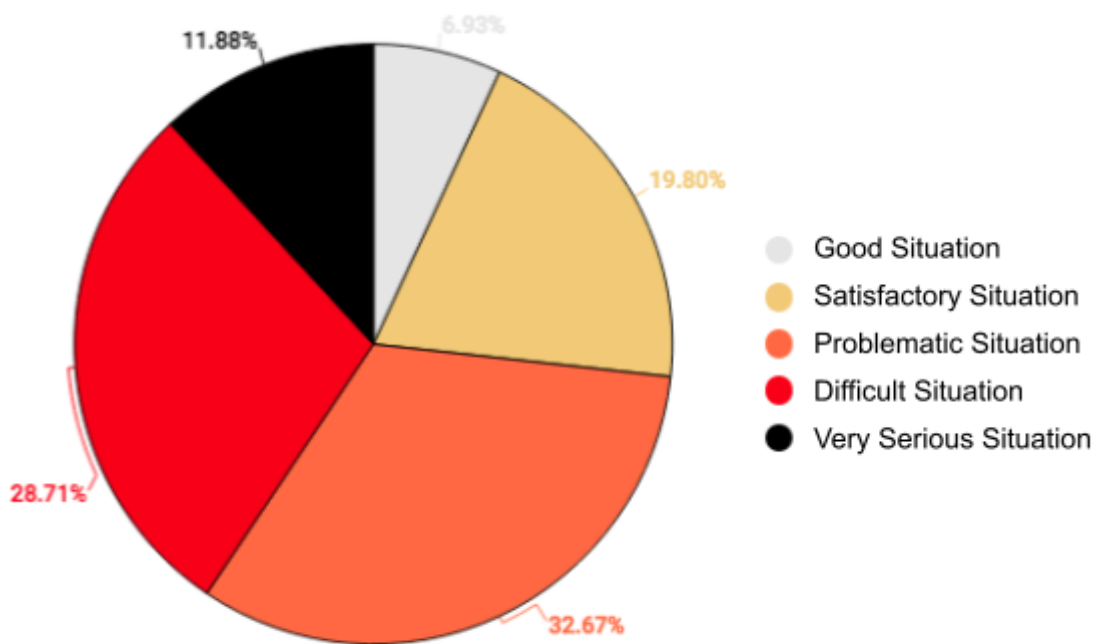
The scores are finally represented on a geographical map using the following groupings:

<b>From 0 to 15 points:</b>	Good situation (white)
<b>From 15.01 to 25 points:</b>	Satisfactory situation (yellow)
<b>From 25.01 to 35 points:</b>	Problematic situation (orange)
<b>From 35.01 to 55 points:</b>	Difficult situation (red)
<b>From 55.01 to 100 points:</b>	Very serious situation (black)

Figure 2.4 World press freedom index groupings (RSF, 2021b).

### 3. Context

RSFs analysis paints a dire picture of the global environment in which the press operates, with journalism entirely or partly blocked in 73% of the 180 countries ranked by the organisation. Examples include the denial of Covid-19 cases in North Korea and Turkmenistan, controls in Iran to limit the media's ability to scrutinise the country's Covid-19 death toll, and Egypt, which banned reporting any pandemic statistics that did not come from the health ministry (RSF, 2021).



*Figure 4.1 The World Press Freedom Index Classification of Countries (RSF, 2021a)*

As shown by RSF's analysis, only 6.93% of countries are rated "good", with 73.26% of the ranked countries presenting problems that are at the very least problematic. The written analysis of each country generally presents an impression of eroding media freedoms. Even in the case of Finland, which is ranked 2nd on the index, their media is described by NSF as threatened by social media platforms that host false information and undermine funding methods. This seems strange to be identified in Finland's analysis as this is undoubtedly a problem for any country with access to social media.

#### **4. Risk Analysis of the Risks/Threats to Press Freedom**

The PESTLE model is the most suitable risk classification system in highlighting and providing controls to the risks to press freedom. Hopkin (2018, p137) defines the PESTLE model as political, economic, sociological, technological, legal and ethical risks, and it is most relevant to the analysis of external risks. Given that the risks affecting journalism relate to the environment/countries in which journalists operate, these are considered within the external context of risk management and will be analysed accordingly. The risks affecting press freedom are voluminous and a selection of risks are used in the analysis.

## 4.1 Classification of Risks/Threats to Press Freedom

Risk Index	Risk Category	Risk	Description	Short Term Effect	Long Term Effect
1.1	Political	Government denial of access	Governments use tactics to deny access to documents and events that the public has a legal right to see. Denial of access can thwart efforts to increase government transparency and accountability and, in other cases, be the response against individual reporters whose coverage is perceived as unfavourable. (Protect press freedom, 2021)	Journalists are unable to investigate and accurately report the actions of a government.	The erosion of a society's democratic rights and an increase in government corruption due to a lack of accountability.
1.2	Political	Government threats	Government officials use their power of the office to intimidate members of the media.	Suppression of journalism, diminished transparency.	A reduction in public trust of the press.
2.1	Economic	Lack of funding	Proposed legislation requiring tech companies to reimburse the media for content posted on social media platforms resulted in Facebook banning Australian media from publishing or sharing journalistic content within their network (RSF, 2021).	A reduction in the opportunities for investigative journalism. A reduction in the number of people pursuing careers in journalism.	A reduction in the number of news outlets, particularly local news sources, causing an increase in media concentration.
2.2	Economic	The concentration of the media	The top four newspaper owners in the UK command 75% revenues and 71% of the readership (Dzakula, 2016). This in turn, creates serious issues with commercial and owner influence over editorial content. (Dzakula, 2016)	A lack of diversity of opinion.	Serious issues with commercial and owner influence over editorial content.
3	Sociological	Physical Violence	RSF (2021) states that there has been a rise in violence against journalists, with examples ranging from the United States where there was a record number of assaults against journalists, increases in attacks against journalists in countries such as Germany, France and Italy, and Brasil where President Bolsonaro has vilified and publically humiliated journalists. RSF also states that at the time of writing, 23 journalists were killed in 2021.	Physical attacks on journalists.	Journalists leaving the profession for fear of safety.

4.1	Technological	Changes in media consumption	The rise of social media has fundamentally changed many business models in the media. The widespread availability has negatively affected revenue streams in favour of platform hosts (Twitter, Facebook, Google)	A reduction in ad revenue for established media sources.	Reduced funding. Articles are written to get views rather than inform. Increase in "clickbait journalism."
4.1	Technological	Social Media Control	Social media companies control the media narrative using algorithmic filtering based on user history.	Siloed consumption of news stories that confirm a person's worldview.	The growth of political polarisation and societal divisions.
5.1	Legal	Legal Intimidation and Retaliation	Defined as the threat of legal action targeting journalists, sources of news outlets to silence reporting (Protect Press Freedom, 2021).	The imprisonment of journalists. As of writing, 348 journalists are currently imprisoned. (RSF, 2021).	An increase in media censorship through intimidation.
5.2	Legal	Changes to legislation	The Chinese government adopted the national security law in June 2020, allowing it to intervene directly in Hong Kong to arbitrarily punish what it regards as "crimes against the state," which is especially dangerous for journalists. (RSF, Hong Kong).	Increased government control through restrictive legislation.	Erosion of democratic freedoms.
6	Ethical	Censoring of the media	Censorship is defined as "the ability to control what people express in speech or writing, and to prohibit certain content." The media is often incorporated within authoritarian regimes' political systems, which has traditionally been throughout history. In recent years, the promotion of "fake news" and "alternative facts" in countries such as Russia and the United States has gone beyond censorship and challenged relationships between governments and the media. (Birkner, 2021)."	The limited access to information.	The publication of propaganda and covering up of human rights violations and atrocities.



## **4.2 Risk Responses**

Responses to the highlighted risks can be proposed; however, it is evident through RSFs reporting of press freedom that the successful implementation of any proposal is a highly complex issue. Many of the proposals will be at odds with the aims of many governments, particularly totalitarian regimes, and contradict even the actions of countries rated satisfactory on the World Press Freedom Index. The identified risks all lie in the upper right quadrant of the risk matrix, yet the ability to tolerate, treat, transfer and terminate risks in a traditional sense is limited. Through awareness, lobbying and the circulation of high quality, impartial media, risks can be treated and reduced. The magnitude and likelihood also vary from country to country depending on the strength of a country's institutions and protections in place for access to information.

#### 4.2.1 Risk Register

Risk Index	Current Level of Risk			Risk Response	Proposed Action
	Magnitude	Likelihood	Overall Rating		
1.1,1.2	High	Medium	High	Treat	The limiting of government manipulation and control of threats stems from a country's independent judicial system. An independent judicial system can constrain government through the interrogation of proposed law changes whilst also providing a system for the public to challenge policy. An independent judiciary also provides recourse if a government denies access to legally accessible documents.
2.1,2.2	Medium	High	High	Treat	<p>RSF (2019) proposes competition to promote diversity of news and information by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulating online platforms that present a danger to the integrity of news and information.</li> <li>• Preventing acquisitions of large corporations which could create conflicts in the field of news and information.</li> </ul> <p>Limits on the ownership of multiple media companies or regulation of market share would also reduce the concentration of the media and encourage competition.</p>
3	High	Medium	High	Treat	The control of physical violence towards the press should be controlled through a country's independent legal system. However, the defence of press freedoms needs to be considered at an intercountry level where countries can punish acts of violence towards the press. An example is the Magnitsky Act, which can punish individuals and entities that flout human rights anywhere in the world through visa bans and the freezing of assets (RSF, 2019). Freedom House (2021) also recommends strengthening public support for democratic principles by investing in civic education to empower citizens to defend democratic rights.

4.1, 4.2	Medium	High	High	Tolerate/treat	The introduction of legislation that governs how social media companies operate and to increase accountability for disinformation found on their platforms is recommended. Social media companies are also in a unique position to protect the access and accuracy of the information. However, there has been, at the time of writing, little progress made by the organisations.
5.1, 5.2	High	High	High	Treat	Separation of government and judicial functions. It would appear that the close relationship between governments and the judiciary is part of the issue relating to the legal intimidation of journalists. The clear difference between countries at the top of the World Press Freedom Index and those lower down is the independence of their institutions and political pluralism.
6	High	High	High	Treat	The controlling of censorship should be implemented through policies that encourage a free and open internet whilst restricting a government's ability to restrict or shut down internet connectivity. This could be through the development of independent organisations that manage a country's internet access.

## **5. Conclusion**

The controlling of risks to press freedom is challenging due to the external context of the problem. The implementation of policy to protect press freedom is often at odds with the interests of a governing organisation, which could be argued explains many of the criticisms highlighted by RSF. Their role in classifying a country's access to information or lack thereof is essential in raising awareness of violations to democratic principles, or in many cases, the absence of free access to information. By analysing the risks to press freedom using a PESTLE analysis, risks can be classified, and proposals for the subsequent treatment outlined.

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