

1. PREFACE

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called the ability to measure democracy in a country one of the most important preconditions for development. This consideration highlights the importance of understanding how democratic processes really work in the framework of a global strategy against underdevelopment, political arbitrariness and totalitarianism. Free elections are vital but not sufficient. Democracy needs more.

The notion of democracy cannot therefore be limited to the formal procedures of political decision-making. On the contrary, as a basic political principle it has to become an all-pervasive, structural characteristic of society. Democracy is thus a multi-dimensional phenomenon, further complicating the quest for comparative standards.

Democracy means more than 'majority rules'. It has many ingredients and components: free and fair elections, the separation of powers, the rule of law, party competition, human rights and civil liberties – such as the freedoms of opinion, of information, of assembly and association, equality before the law and the freedom of religion. An additional crucial ingredient for democracy – some would even say: the spice of democratic life – is the presence of free and responsible media.

Through the bitter experience of dictatorship and oppression, Germany learned how central the role of free media is in building democratic and legal structures. Censorship and harassment of the media during the Third Reich taught us that free media are an absolute precondition for a qualified democracy. The effective ban on free media therefore amounted to the annulment of an universal human right, which is why Article 5 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany prominently states the fundamental human right to freedom of opinion and of information as well as to a free press.

The relationship between media and democracy is one of interdependence, with free media leading to informed decisions and to qualified political participation. Conversely, a democracy as a free expression of political convictions of a people rests on the firm foundation of a free media.

Also, an increase in freedom – not least in press freedom – can lead to an increase in development. The Indian Nobel laureate for economic sciences, Amartya Sen, describes this interrelation as ‘Development as Freedom’, explicitly not confining his discussion to the economic sphere. The higher the level of individual freedom is the higher usually is the level of development. Repressive regimes do not only take away people’s personal freedom but also hold back the individual and societal development. This makes free media and press so central to human as well as political development.

For many years now, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) has been committed to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, a social market economy and human rights. To this end, the Foundation combines a broad and experienced presence abroad with a high quality network with academia, politics and the public. It is this diverse network that allows us to not only participate in the process of democratic development at a local level but also to search for new democratic impulses from a wider and comparative perspective.

After all, it is exactly this perspective that in times of globalisation and borderless foreign policy poses an opportunity to look beyond the national framework, to realise synergies, to transmit lessons and experiences into other societal and cultural contexts as well as to develop new ideas for the international cooperation. This is the objective the KAF Democracy Report shall serve.

The KAF Democracy Report will be published annually, analysing the state and the perspectives of democracy in selected developing and transforming countries from a comparative perspective. This year’s report, the first in a series, focuses on ‘media’. Subsequent KAF Democracy Reports will examine ‘the rule of law’ and ‘political parties’.

This conceptual framework already points to the fact that the KAF Democracy Report does not want to be a purely scientific collection of data. We strive for a wide angle snapshot with the ambition of information and political consulting. We aim for a study that provides concrete clues for the actual development work on the ground. That is why we sought to develop a report that upholds the highest scientific research standards while being comprehensible and useful for practitioners as well.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the multitude of dedicated colleagues at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and also to the external experts who all contributed to this project. I especially want to thank Professor Karl-Rudolf Korte and his team at Duisburg-Essen University for their immensely valuable scientific accompaniment of this Democracy Report.

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