

Media development in Latin America

How the U.S. Government should redirect its efforts

By Ricardo Trotti
Fellow (2012 – 2013)
Weatherhead Center for International Affairs
Harvard University
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The U.S. government, in its historical relation with Latin America - marked by agreements and disagreements regarding both policy and economy in the last 100 years - never seriously included media development and media literacy as part of its strategy to promote democracy in the region.

Since the creation of the Voice of America (VOA) in the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, to the Alliance for Progress and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the administration of John Kennedy; to the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) during Ronald Reagan's term, to the National Security Strategy of George W. Bush; American governments had nuances in their tactics to promote democracy, guided by pragmatism, the defense of its national interests and maintaining leadership in the world.

The strategy on the promotion of democracy was changing over time according to the interests of each government. Many times it was about humanitarian, as well as electoral training, and empowerment of civil society. Other times, it was part of the U.S. Doctrine of National Security to fight communism, imposing friendly governments through military interventions, coups, economic pressures and covert operations by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Media development programs (donor support for strengthening the quality, independence and sustainability of the news media) were always small components within the overall strategy of promoting democracy. These programs often served to further the interests of the U.S. Government rather than help develop media in a country, as with Chile and Nicaragua in past decades.

According to scholar Abraham F. Lowenthal, based on the U.S. Senate's Chile Report, the U.S. spent about \$8 million on covert interventions in Chilean politics from 1970 through 1973, among other things-- "propaganda; planted news," stories and editorials in Chilean newspapers and magazines, as well as inspiration and subsequent diffusion of articles on Chile by CIA-subsidized "journalists" from other countries.¹

Author William I. Robinson, in his book "Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention and Hegemony", describes how the U.S. government shifts from promoting "military and highly unpopular dictatorships, such as Somoza in Nicaragua, the Shah in Iran, Marcos in the Philippines, the Duvaliers in Haiti, and Pinochet in Chile," to promoting polyarchy, a "lengthy process drawn out over several Decades."

Robinson says that this reorientation "entailed the expansion of what is known as political operations in U.S. foreign policy," which included "a new foreign-policy instrument, political aid, which has come to supplement the two main tools of U.S. foreign policy since World War II, military and economic aid programs."²

Media development has generally followed the focus of U.S. and European foreign policy, as stated in the 2004 report, "The Media Missionaries", by John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. "In the 1980s, for example, when the U.S. military was involved in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama, Florida International University won a large government contract to help Central American journalists."³

In this regard, several valuable U.S. initiatives, both by the government through USAID and the State Department, and by foundations and private universities in support of on-site programs of monitoring, defense of press freedom, training and academic exchange, were always focused on revitalizing the press but not on making the public aware of the value of freedom of expression.

Rarely, media development strategies have included media literacy programs in order to educate people about the role of the media in a democracy, as well as to empower people about their rights to access information freely and actively participate in the governance process.

STRATEGIC COMMITMENT

The promotion of democracy - which includes media freedom, assistance, development, and literacy as part of major programs to empower civil society - was a strategic commitment of various administrations, but with different nuances.

Authors Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, stated that “the details of U.S. foreign policy have differed from administration to administration, including the emphasis placed on democracy promotion and humanitarian goals, but for over 60 years, every president has agreed on the fundamental decision to remain deeply engaged in the world, even as the rationale for that strategy has shifted.”⁴

Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, Roberta S. Jacobson, on a trip to Spain in January this year, said freedom of expression “is one of the three challenges of Latin American strategy towards the government of the United States,” in addition to education and energy.⁵

Nevertheless, there is no mention about specific media assistance programs for Latin America in the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan Addendum for the U.S. Department of State and the USAID, although the plan states “mutual efforts focus on developing proactive outreach strategies to inform, inspire and persuade audiences... reaching out from behind the podium to use new media and engagement tools.”⁶

Although this report does not describe any specific programs, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)⁷, of the Department of State, organizes several activities on media freedom, such as holding World Press Freedom Day on May 3, this year, in San Jose, Costa Rica.

The same objective was also included in the September 2002 National Security Strategy as part of the post September 11 strategic vision, during the presidency of George W. Bush. On the definition of that strategy, Paula J. Dobriansky, former Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, said: “In pursuit of our goals ... America must stand firmly for... the rule of law, limits on the absolute power of the state, free speech, freedom of worship, equal justice, respect for women, religious and ethnic tolerance, and respect for private property.”⁸

In the Strategic Plan of the Department of State and USAID, 2007-2012, under the goal of consolidating democracy under the Western Hemisphere, it mentions the U.S. Government will help media as a way to “strengthen institutions of representative democracy”. In addition to democracy education, election monitoring and good governance, the Strategic Plan indicates that the United States will promote free press and the free flow of ideas in the region.⁹

The most recent contribution on promoting democracy was expressed by President Barack Obama. In his inaugural address of his second term on January 21, Obama said: “We will support democracy from Asia to Africa; from the Americas to the Middle East, because our interests and our conscience compel us to act on behalf of those who long for freedom.”¹⁰

Perhaps Obama chose to focus on the perfection of democracy in the U.S., as he said in his inaugural speech, knowing that a good example can be a cheaper and more efficient marketing tool when instilling freedom and free markets.

Obama’s speech sought that discipline and internal prosperity can be the best ambassadors of democracy. Maybe it was a way to leave the past interventionist policies in Latin America.

Michael Mandelbaum, a foreign policy expert, said that success inspires imitation and countries are like individuals, they learn what they see.¹¹

Due to poor appreciation that the U.S. government have had in the region, analyst Abraham F. Lowenthal, observes that strategic changes have to be made, saying that funding for promoting democracy should be refocused. He states that “after 9/11, Washington mainly viewed the region through the prism of international terrorism -- and therefore mostly as a low priority -- instead of focusing on the issues that were, and still are, the most important to people there: poverty, education, income distribution, and citizens' security from street and gang violence and organized crime.”¹²

Lowenthal assures “what the U.S. government did in Chile climaxed an extended era of U.S. interventions in Latin America.”, citing some examples such as the US intervention in Argentina in 1945, the invasion of Guatemala in 1954, the involvement in Bolivia during the 1950s and 1960s, extensive attempts in Cuba to

oust Fidel Castro's regime, the invasion of Dominican Republic in 1965, and most recently the invasions of Panama, Granada and Haiti.

Evidently, U.S. interests were not perceived as a country's aspiration to instill freedom and free markets, but rather as the intervention of a foreign power to establish governments defend their strategic interests.

SUPPORT REDUCTION

Despite announcements and good intentions, budgets and resources for media development programs and media literacy, under the aegis of the National Endowment for Democracy, USAID and the Department of State, have been reduced over the last administrations.

In comparison to other regions such as Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Middle East, the most significant reduction affects programs in Latin America. They've received only \$1.15 million in 2012 for media development programs, according to State Department sources, compiled by the Foreign Assistance Dashboard.¹³

According to a new report issued last March by the Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA)¹⁴, an initiative of the NED, "U.S. government support for international media development is declining. Spending by the Department of State and USAID for media freedom and freedom of information programs has dropped 43.5 percent in the past five years—from \$135 million in Fiscal Year 2008 to approximately \$76.3 million in FY 2012".

The "U.S. Government Funding for Media: Trends and Strategies"¹⁵ report, revealed that "media assistance and development work after the fall of the Berlin Wall was concentrated in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. It continues to focus on hot spots of foreign policy attention: Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Eurasia."

Media development funding associated with the U.S. drawdowns in Iraq, and especially Afghanistan, had a decrease of \$28 million from 2010 to 2012 in South and Central Asia and \$17.7 million in Near East, despite the Arab Spring.

Europe and Eurasia received the greatest amount of financial support in media development programs, with more than \$126 million between 2007 and 2012. Latin America received the least, \$24 million, while the near East received \$119 million, South and Central Asia received \$104 million and Africa received \$72 million.

However, in 2012, the trend shows that support for the East Asia Pacific region is growing, as they received \$4 million; meanwhile Latin America is declining, receiving only \$1.15 million.

The study also distinguishes between programs specifically designed to support media development and others that use media for development issues, such as public service media campaigns to raise awareness about social issues such as hunger, poverty and AIDS. These programs are the ones receiving more financial support.

The funding, along with the number of projects, has declined. In 2012, USAID supported only seven media development programs of 18 in 2011. Only one of those seven projects was executed in Latin America, which supported independent journalists in Cuba.

Moreover, within the Department of State the DRL is the office receiving more funding from Congress, with approximately \$60-\$70 million per year, but that money doesn't only go to media development; it also goes to human rights projects. Most of the funds go to countries that are considered "high priority for democracy." Projects for media and internet freedom are priced between \$500,000 and \$3 million.

NED figures indicate that the organization provided \$11.7 million in Independent Media Development in 2006. Some projects were in Latin America, including one in Mexico to promote the abolition of criminal defamation laws. The DRL also supported the Trust for the Americas, of the Organization of American States, to create a training program for journalists on ethics, access to information and electoral coverage in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.

Other funding for the region was provided by the U.S. Institute of Peace, with \$1.5 million in 2006 and the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) responsible

for the operations of the Voice of America, Radio and TV Marti, which spent \$ 1.5 million for training of journalists in Bolivia and Argentina.

Although it is difficult to find specific data compiled by the U.S. government prior to 2000 on media development, the "The Media Missionaries" report says that "U.S.-based sources devoted at least \$600 million and probably much more to the cause of independent media over the past decade."¹⁶ The report establishes that most of the money came from the USAID (\$275 million from 1991 to 2001), the former U.S. Information Service (USIS) and the Open Society Institute.

Previously, according to the report between 1988 and 1997, USAID provided nearly \$14 million for the Latin America Journalism Project (LAJP) in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama. Florida International University launched the Project in Miami, and then in 1996 ceded its operations to the Center for Latin American Journalism (CELAP) in Panama.¹⁷

PRIVATE FUNDING

The private funds for media freedom in Latin America also declined. Many journalism foundations, such as John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Robert McCormick Foundation, The Freedom Forum, Ford Foundation, among many others, stopped contributing due to the economic crisis that affected the entire industry.

Because of the crisis, many foundations reduced the amount of funds in general and refocused on the domestic market with smaller projects. The Freedom Forum, for example, a foundation dedicated to promoting "Free Press, Free Speech and Free Spirit for all people", closed its libraries on press freedom in cities around the world, such as Buenos Aires, London, Hong Kong and Johannesburg.

The reducing of the private funding had a direct effect on many organizations working in Latin America, especially those who cannot receive donations from governments. One of those affected was Inter-American Press Association (IAPA)¹⁸. This organization received nearly \$8 million from the Knight Foundation between 1995 and 2011 for its "Unpunished Crimes Against Journalists" project, which promoted justice, and \$2 million from the McCormick Foundation between

1994 and 2006 for its "Chapultepec Project". IAPA also received support from the Freedom Forum for its library.

According to the 2007 report "U.S. Public and Private Funding of Independent Media Development Abroad," by CIMA, of the \$142 million provided in 2006 for media development at an international level, \$82 million was provided by the U.S. government (\$13 million by the NED and the U.S. Institute of Peace) and the rest by private U.S. foundations.¹⁹

Countries of the European Union, along with some European political organizations such as the German foundation known as Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the Danish Agency for Development, also gave numerous donations to Latin America NGOs for journalists training, research and media legal advice.

Moreover, several intergovernmental organizations, such as UNESCO, have donated funds through its Program for the Development of Communication. Among these organizations are the World Bank, through the World Bank Institute, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Andean Development Corporation.

While the provision of financial resources, both private and governmental, declined to support media development programs in Latin America, the needs did not decrease.

At all times, authoritarian or democratic, journalism and the media were never free from pressures and state regulations. The media always had to endure pressure mechanisms.

CONSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Because of the lack of concise statements, such as the First Amendment in Latin America, coupled with years of political ostracism because of dictatorships, one still sees a weak philosophical conception of the importance that these freedoms have for the daily life of citizens. Indeed, these are not appreciated as social values but rather as the prerogative of those in government and journalists, and in eternal dispute between the two groups.

Awareness by the people and clear governmental policies concerning the positive consequences that freedom of expression and freedom of the press may have in a democratic life are non-existent. Moreover, the ongoing reforms to the constitution, almost a national sport, rarely focus on those disciplines, so freedom of expression and press freedom could never be established as cultural values of society.

The assessment of the freedoms of speech and the press as constitutional principles is the main difference between the U.S. and Latin American cultures. The First Amendment of the U.S. as created in 1791 as part of the Bill of Rights, is not only a legislative prohibition against freedom of speech and the press, but has also served to build a culture of respect and tolerance for people's opinion and for the exercising of journalism.

In Latin America it was never possible to install that culture, despite great advances in recent decades with the enactment of new laws on access to public information, the decriminalization of defamation laws and the elimination of insult laws.

Latin American constitutions contain similar provisions to the First Amendment. However, they have many contradictions, as the figure of contempt, which protects and privileges public authorities over ordinary citizens.

In Latin America, more than a dozen nations, with the exception of Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, still provide for contempt by insult laws that criminally punish criticism of senior officials. Beyond that, in 1994, the Human Rights Commission concluded that those laws were inconsistent with Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights.

The importance of the First Amendment lies not only in itself, but in its interpretation by the Supreme Court. It was established by Court rulings like *New York Times v. Sullivan* (1964), which originated the doctrine of actual malice, instituting that it is not injurious than media accuse a public officer of wrongdoing, even if the fact could be false, as long as the media did not have the intention to cause harm.

In his book "Losing the News", author Alex Jones, professor at Harvard University, the most important ruling was after the *Near v. Minnesota* (1931) case. The Supreme Court rejected the censorship applied to the newspaper *The Saturday Press*, owned by Jay Near, for publishing content against Jews, Catholics and blacks. A Minnesota Court, followed by the Supreme Court of that state, based their sentences on laws against malicious and defamatory content, establishing that the contents attacked public morality and social peace.

The Federal Supreme Court ruled that the press may be subject only to subsequent liability, but prior censorship, with few exceptions, is contrary to the First Amendment. This ruling not only allowed the press to inform and monitor the government, but also gives it the right to challenge the law to do so.

The publications of the so-called Pentagon Papers, carried out by the *New York Times* in 1971, and the Watergate, carried out by the *Washington Post* in 1972, were made under this legal background, although the government placed legal obstacles and threats against these newspapers under espionage laws to maintain these as secrets. With that ruling in 1931, the press could derail the government's lies about the war in Vietnam in the first case, and the spying activities from the Presidency, in the second.

Jones, former reporter of *The New York Times*, says that "a free press as it is understood today began with a Supreme Court decision in 1931 involving a rabble-rousing bigot in Minneapolis. Until that time-for nearly two-thirds of our history- the First Amendment was either ignored or overruled when it came to assuring all citizens the free speech we now take for granted."²⁰

"Make no mistake. American law provides far more protection for free speech than that accorded anywhere else in the world. We have a near total ban on prior restraint, which would prevent news from being reported... We significantly limit the government's power to punish speech,"²¹ says Professor Jones.

PRIVATE MEDIA AND FREEDOM

The difference between the two systems - the U.S. and Latin America - imposes a disadvantage for Latin American journalism. There is no guarantee that the

legislator will comply with the Constitution, avoiding to legislate on press freedom issues.

Media legislation in Latin America always involves all media, without distinction, including radio, digital, print, TV, private, commercial, public and community. Although many governments justify legislating to order and make the spectrum more plural and diverse, they inevitably end up legislating on all media, including newspapers, which – as the internet – for its unlimited quality should not be subject to any type of license.

Freedom of the press would only be guaranteed when diversity and plurality would not be at the expense of limiting the number of private media in society.

In recent years, leftist, progressive and neo populists governments rescued the old concept of the “democratization of communication”, which was included in the political discussion of the 80’s after the establishment of the failed New World Communication Order, proposed by the UNESCO through the MacBride Report, Sean MacBride.²²

But unlike that concept, which focused on the information imbalance between developed and developing countries – a scheme that eventually vanished due to the advancement and technological development - the current neo populists governments misrepresented that proposal, appropriating the term “media democratization” in order to control and discipline the media.

The “democratization” movement, in cases that has been applied by law or practice, has enabled governments to create government media and redistribute licenses between allied groups, press and close media that could not be bowed. This way, the governments were able to control and manipulate private media and its content, and create a set of media using them for propaganda and their interests.

Currently, this is happening in Ecuador and Honduras. Presidents Rafael Correa and Porfirio Lobo are leading legislative reforms to control the media and communication in general in order to benefit their own interests. The bills provide that in each country the government will distribute in equal amounts - 33 percent – licenses to private, state and community media. In addition, these laws create

government control agencies, which largely depend on the executive, without any autonomy, aiming to implement heavy sanctions.

Both laws allow the government to have as much control as the government of Hugo Chavez did, former Venezuelan president, in 2004 with the Law of Social Responsibility, bringing RCTV to an end and Globovision to its knees.

If the Communication Bill passes in Ecuador, it would not be the first time that the government attacked private property. Rafael Correa has already passed a law that prohibits any person or entity – except from the government – having or buying a media outlet, while his work is also devoted to other businesses or industries. The excuse to avoid concentration, preventing bankers, media owners or owners of other business of having a media conglomerate, had nothing to do with achieving greater plurality and diversity, but rather to avoid having to deal with a strong and critic media.

The concept of “democratizing” media is nothing more than dividing and weakening power. In fact, the real democratization has little to do with this type of political distribution of the media, and more with the development and innovation of information technology.

It is the freedom of the private sector, the market expansion, its needs and competition - with minimal state regulation - and the new technologies, which allows democratizing communication, as demonstrated by the arrival of the internet and social networks.

Private commercial media, news agencies and the Internet and social networks were essential to create democracies in countries as the communist Poland, among others, and to generate the “Arab Spring” in the Middle East.

TRADITIONAL PROBLEMS AND RESISTANCE

Despite some progress, press freedom continues to suffer setbacks, as indicated by the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) meeting in Puebla, Mexico, last March.

The SIP concluded that “press freedom in the Americas continues hacked by authoritarian and intolerant governments that multiply and reinvent their harassment of journalists, as well as for the violence that seems boundless.”²³

Regarding the worst problems, the IAPA stressed economic pressures, propaganda through media owned by governments, and defamation and attacks against critics and independent journalists.

The IAPA reported that “there have been approved or are in the process of being approved several laws that will hinder the work of independent media, which will interfere in journalistic content, in countries such as Ecuador, Chile, Honduras and Costa Rica. With these legal tools, as proved in Argentina and Venezuela, governments seek to multiply the space of state-dependent media and reduce the number of independent voices.”

There exist full coincidences on this topic among national and international organizations dedicated to defending press freedom. The Freedom House annual report “Freedom in the World 2013,”²⁴ cited that the Americas region saw no substantial improvements, but “notable declines” in Ecuador, Paraguay, and Suriname. Particularly, on Venezuela, it said that Hugo Chávez’s reelection in October 2012 “was ensured by the massive abuse of state resources”.

The governments of Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia - among other countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) - often accuse the U.S. government of using the assistance and support of civil society and media development programs as the excuse and strategy of imperialist propaganda and destabilizing interference in sovereign affairs.

For the left, there are many incidents caused by the U.S. Government that have awakened these feelings; among them, the failed invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961 to overthrow Fidel Castro, the support of the 1973 military coup in Chile to oust Salvador Allende and the armed support in the 80’s to groups opposing the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

According to William I. Robinson, in “Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony,” the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* “had been a major recipient of CIA funds in the 1960s and had played a key role, through its

psychological operations, in the anti-Allende destabilization activities, but after the coup it refused to switch loyalties from Pinochet to the opposition.”

Meanwhile, years later when Chile was in the brink of democracy, Robinson says that “NED provided support to La Epoca, a newspaper launched by the Christian Democrats in 1987 which quickly became one of the country’s main dailies. La Epoca proved to be a refreshing alternative to the tightly censored media outlets that functioned under the dictatorship, including El Mercurio.”²⁵

Moreover, Robinson explains that in order to combat the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in power in Nicaragua, many U.S. government agencies such as the CIA, NED, Department of State, the Office of Public Diplomacy, and the former USIA, were involved in communications and advertising activities, both in Nicaragua and in the U.S., with the goal of creating an unfavorable image of the Sandinistas and a favorable of the Contras, a revolutionary group funded by the U.S. government.²⁶

The USIA and CIA created several anti-Sandinista radio stations in Nicaragua and in neighboring countries and expanded the transmissions of the Voice of America from the Caribbean countries in order to flood Nicaragua with antigovernment information. Meanwhile, the Contras established several short wave radios with the same objective. Both the NED and Freedom House funded print media in Costa Rica, but targeted Nicaraguan audiences.

Robinson states that the newspaper La Prensa in Managua, owned by the Chamorro family, “began to receive covert CIA subsidies (through third-party “cutouts”) as early as 1979 to enable it to play a counterrevolutionary role, particularly through psychological warfare, just as El Mercurio had done in Chile under Allende.” Robinson adds that in addition La Prensa received “overt funding in 1984” from NED, and that in 1986, the NED placed La Prensa operation under supervision of Delphi.

In addition, “the NED launched a Nicaraguan Independent Media Program under Delphi supervision, involving a huge expansion of both funding and direct political guidance for the creation and expansion of the opposition media, including La Prensa and several radio stations. In 1998, Delphi initiated an Independent Radios Project with the objective of equipping and advising opposition radio. The

program funded four radio stations during the campaign, including training radio journalists and programmers, and coordinating opposition radio programming with the UNO²⁷ and the youth, women's, civic, and other groups.”²⁸

According to authors Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way in “Competitive Authoritarianism: hybrid regimes after the Cold War”, the U.S government “developed strong ties to the opposition, providing assistance to numerous opposition politicians, as well as church, business, and civic groups and the newspaper La Prensa.”²⁹

Levitsky and Way say that “UNO benefited from considerable US assistance. A \$ 7.7 million grant channeled through the NED, together with \$ 5 million in CIA housekeeping money,” which allowed UNO to purchase 62 campaign vehicles open office across the country. The “linkage helped to level the playing field in three ways. First, it provided the opposition with critical resources. Second, induced the FSLN to underutilize its coercive capacity. Third, linkage shaped voter preferences in ways that favored UNO.”³⁰

RESISTANCE

Because of these types of incidents in the political memory of Latin America, in spite of the good intentions, the U.S. government's support for democracy always produced resistance. While this should not deter the U.S. government from providing aid, it should channel more effectively and efficiently to avoid suspicion.

President Evo Morales, for example, always questioned any U.S. aid, which is why in 2008 he expelled agents of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) and, shortly after, the U.S. ambassador. Former President Hugo Chavez broke diplomatic relations with U.S. in 2010, while the President in charge of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, after the death of Hugo Chavez on March 5, expelled two U.S. diplomats after stating that there was a conspiracy to murder him and that Chavez's cancer has been “inoculated” by the U.S.

The U.S. government's support of media development initiatives in Latin America generates resistance with a boomerang effect, whether it's a direct aid to governments, or indirect through NGOs and media.

This problem is sometimes generated because of the confusion that exists between “media development programs with public relations, expecting assisted media to support U.S. foreign policy,” as stated by “The Media Missionaries”³¹ report, quoting the 1999 report by USAID “The Role of Media in Democracy: A Strategic Approach.”

“Such dilemmas – said the USAID report - highlight the need for clear distinctions between media assistance and public information campaigns that promote U.S. policies and viewpoints. Democratic transitions may not be strengthened through the creation of a media which, while free from its own government control, espouses views of foreign governments and reflects their interests. An outlet's credibility depends on its ability to report news freely.”³²

This assistance creates problems. On one side of appearances, many would argue that it is foreign intervention. On the other hand, more importantly, is that such support often compromises the independence that each organization must maintain in order to operate more freely.

On the danger about democracy promotion policies, analyst of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Thomas Carothers, said that “elected officials have begun to publicly denounce Western democracy assistance as illegitimate political meddling. They have started expelling or harassing Western NGOs and prohibiting local groups from taking foreign funds. Some autocratic governments have won substantial public sympathy by arguing that opposition to Western democracy promotion is resistance not to democracy itself, but to American interventionism.”³³

REJECTION OF AID AND ASSISTANCE

In Latin America, former president Hugo Chávez, who continuously denounced the U.S. democracy's promotion programs as a campaign to oust him, has followed Cuba's rejection of the US Interest Section Office programs to support dissidents. Other countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Argentina have threatened with legislation to forbid US and other countries assistance to local human right and democracy oriented ONGs, as in 2006 that kind of legislation was passed by Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

Other than Russia, countries such as Uzbekistan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Eritrea, China, Nepal and other Asian countries rejected democracy assistance

Weeks before the Venezuelan Presidential election in October, 2012, former president Hugo Chávez complained against the US Government interventionism, accusing legislator María Corina Machado, founder of the NGO Sumate, and pre candidate for the opposition, of receiving thousands of dollars in support from USAID and NED.

This type of interference in internal affairs was the excuse used by President Rafael Correa to seek reform of the Inter-American Human Rights System, arguing that the Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression acted as arms of propaganda of the U.S. Government.

Correa was upset that the Commission has intervened in their country, favoring journalists from Guayaquil's El Universo newspaper, with whom he maintained a lawsuit.

Correa influenced other governments to apply for a drastic reform of the Inter-American Human Rights System. Among many things, he requested that the IACHR headquarters should move from Washington, because it could not be in a country that has not ratified the American Convention on Human Rights.

Correa also wanted to financially weaken the Commission, especially the Special Rapporteur Office, which gets its money outside of the Inter-American system, through donations from foreign governments and U.S. foundations. It also requested that the Special Rapporteur could not do country by country reports. All these reforms tended to take away the autonomy and weaken the human rights work. Finally, at a meeting of the OAS last March, these reforms were rejected.

These anti-American speeches are often fed by carelessness in official speeches of the U.S. government. For example, on May 3, 2012, World Press Freedom Day, President Obama spoke of the threats and harassment against press freedom in the world, calling "on all Governments to protect the ability of journalists, bloggers, and dissidents to write and speak freely,"³⁴ but when he mentioned

Latin America, he only cited the cases of Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez and the Ecuadorian journalist Cesar Ricaurte of Fundamedios.

While his speech was coherent with the help that the U.S. government gave that year to media development in Cuba and Ecuador, Obama should have chosen more cases of violations of press freedom in other Latin American countries, such as violence against journalists in Mexico, Honduras and Brazil or economic constraints in Colombia and Argentina.

With greater diversity and impartiality, naming cases in friendly and distant countries, Obama would have had more credibility, showing that the support of his government is on freedom of the press and of expression regardless where the violations take place.

NEW CHALLENGES: ADVERTISING AND PROPAGANDA

The governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela have similar communication strategies. They are composed by a costly propaganda apparatus, a huge state-own media, and an arbitrary control of public information.

None of the presidents of these governments provide press conferences. Ministers have also banned interacting with journalists. All official communication is done through public events, Twitter or through compulsory national chains on radio and television, having ceased from its original purpose to report on matters of national urgency.

Also, these three communication components are used to discredit the independent press, insult private media and accusing journalists and media them of maintaining a political opposition role.

Chavez was the most prolific president on national TV broadcasts, breaking all records that kept Alfredo Stroessner and other right-wing dictators. Since taking office in 1999 until June 2012, Venezuelan radio and television stations were forced to broadcast 2,334 of his speeches. Meanwhile, Correa, from 2007 until mid-2012, created over a thousand radio and television networks and almost 300

broadcasts of “citizens links”, a program that airs Saturday mornings, which devotes a special space to criticize and insulting media and journalists.

In addition to the broadcasting chains, Cristina Kirchner’s most effective propaganda strategy is through Football for All, a free transmission plan of soccer games, whose huge investment exceeds the social assistance projects dedicated to health, school or homes.

According to the National Budget Office of Argentina, in 2012 the government used more than \$1.4 billion in the area of communications. More than a quarter of that figure was spent on Football for All.

These strategies have served to limit the functions of the private press, and justified the creation of government owned media and of news programs addicted to government. These strategies have created greater ideological polarization and class confrontation.

Moreover, the problem is that curtailing freedom of the press; governments spoil other important social objectives pursued, such as the fight against poverty.

James Wolfenshon, former president of the World Bank, highlighted the need of a free press for a development strategy, along with the importance of knowledge transmission and transparency. “To reduce poverty, we must liberate access to information and improve the quality of information. People with more information are empowered to make better choices. For these reasons, I have long argued that a free press is not a luxury. It is at the core of equitable development.”³⁵

GOVERNMENT MEDIA CONCENTRATION

These governments have also created a huge network of state media, claiming to make communication more democratic, accusing private media, indistinctively, of being monopolies, which manipulate and distort the information for their own benefits. This tactic, which previously had affections between Alberto Fujimori in Peru and Carlos Menem in Argentina, is now common practice of these governments.

The worst of state owned media and of state news agencies is that they are not used as public media, but as a means of propaganda to defend and promote government interests.

In Nicaragua, the government owns radios Ya, Sandino, Top and Nicaragua; web pages as the 19th Digital, Nicaragua Triumphs and TV channels, 4, 8, 91 and 13.

According to IAPA and their report on freedom of the press of Nicaragua,³⁶ there is a duopoly of radio and television, owned by Angel Gonzalez Mexican entrepreneur and the family group of President Ortega, “who, with money from Venezuela has been buying or neutralizing all electronic media, either in the capital Managua or in all departments of the country. Just a TV and a few radio stations are outside the direct influence of the ruling family. A Chinese company and a son of President Ortega advertised a project for a communications satellite that will cover Central America, although they did not give details about the cost or the specific role of this project.”

In Venezuela the government created Telesur and the Bolivarian News Agency, owns 238 radio stations, 28 television stations, 340 periodicals and more than 125 websites. In addition has closed RCTV in 2007, and 32 radio stations, forcing several journalists, editors, and publishers to flee the country.

In Argentina, according to the IAPA, the discretionary use of public resources and intimidation by officials or supervisory bodies “have prompted a series of media sales, purchases by state contractors and turns in their editorial policies that continue modifying the media map. Numerous journalists were fired and resignations occurred in recent months due to these changes.”³⁷

The National Budget Office in Argentina cited that “about \$ 180 million was allocated to the maintenance of public media,” which still contain programs that systematically discredit the Government unaligned journalism.

The government of Ecuador owns Radio Nacional, Ecuador TV, El Telégrafo, The PP (a tabloid newspaper), El Ciudadano website, and the ANDES, a news agency. The government also manages TV channels that expropriated, TC Televisión, Gama TV, Americavisión and Cablevision.

According to the newspaper El Universo, a report of 2011 on media concentration, established that “for 40 years and until 2007, the state had a single medium: the Ecuador National Radio (AM), but in January 2011 the picture changed. Now it owns 19”.³⁸

The problem did not diminish, but it is expanding. In early June 2011, the Latin American Union of State News Agencies (ULAN), was created. It was composed of nine official national entities: Telam (Argentina), ABI (Bolivia), AB (Brazil), Prensa Latina (Cuba), Andes (Ecuador), AGN (Guatemala), Notimex (Mexico), IP (Paraguay), and AVN (Venezuela).

It does not matter its legitimate alliance, but knowing that in their history and way of operating, state news agencies in Latin America have always been used as operational arms of government. From this standpoint, the ULAN should be more loyal to the taxpayers, the true owners of the state news agencies. It may have drawn more professional goals than propaganda-- for example, training of journalists, exchange of information and experiences to reduce costs, improve customer service, and discuss the advantages of transforming state owned media in public media, for the benefit of democracy.

However, ULAN’s first step was to send its journalists to train in Cuba.

WITHOUT PUBLIC MEDIA

In Latin American countries, excluding a couple, a culture that promotes the creation of autonomous public media and whose goal is to provide plural and diverse space to all sectors of society does not exist.

Beyond the continuing complaint against these practices made by national and international press freedom organizations, governments have installed the idea that media and journalists are driven by their own interests, that they represent a political opposition and are guided by their inexhaustible economic thirst.

These communication hegemonic policies have fueled public confusion, making it more illiterate in matters on media and journalism and, in particular, on the value of freedom of speech and press in a democratic context.

No efforts were made in media literacy programs, to educate on the importance of having a critical mass, in any country in the region. Many citizens and authorities do not know the differences between good and poor journalism. They do not differ if the media or journalists report objectively, if they use plural or anonymous sources, if they have ethical standards, or if they are in the presence of privately or state owned media.

Little is known about the evolution of journalism as an activity. Since the middle of the last century, with the rise of the private media and information consumption, journalism took a more professional role, whose primary task is to monitor governments' actions and to serve as intermediaries between the public and authorities.

In this more professional climate, the mission of commercial and private journalism was based on the principle of independence, in the value of a free press to tell the truth. That independence also requires a reasonable level of profitability which will maintain the costly and complex operation to produce quality news and research.

This vision - according to Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Alex Jones - has a larger dimension, which serves as a counterweight to refute many Latin American leaders when they say that in their countries there is a high level of press freedom, because everyone says what they crave.

“For some, democracy is safe in a country with freedom of expression, but journalism is based on the premise that it is necessary that it be informed freedom of expression”, says Jones in his book *Losing the News*. He thinks that is not enough for the public to have the right of expression to express its views, but that the public could be properly informed so it can do it properly.³⁹

THE WRONG STRATEGY

It's just a small amount of money that the U.S. government gives to media development, with only 0.5 percent of all aid given to developing countries. Even worse, Latin America receives only a fraction of that percentage.

Moreover, considering that these programs are essential to not only promote the development of media but also economic development and good governance in general, these funds are not well spent.

Contrary to the needs in Latin America, the U.S. government not only reduced the amount of money for media development programs, but gave the most in countries like Cuba, where the results cannot be easily evaluated. Not to mention that the biggest funds were devoted to Radio and TV Marti, being that their transmissions are often blocked by the Cuban government and it is unknown how effective they are and the impact they may have on the population.

The problem is that unlike the press support in Eastern Europe, whose governments accepted after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the regime in Cuba still maintains control of all institutions and blocks attempts from independent media to promote a more pluralistic vision of the country. The government continues to prohibit or authorize journalists from traveling inside and outside of the country, and as the case of the independent blogger, Yoani Sanchez, she was authorized a 80-day journey abroad, and after many years she was banned from leaving the country.

Cuba received \$9.09 million of a total of \$24.6 million received by Latin America in the period 2007-2012, according to data compiled by CIMA.

In Cuba, the program for “Independent Media / Breaking the Information Blockade” received \$4.45 million in 2008, the “Project on information technology training” received \$445,000 in 2010, the “Project to help journalists network and Improve their professionalism” (which also support writers, bloggers, artists and musicians in their quest for more freedom of expression,) received \$1.2 million in 2011.

In addition, USAID donated \$3 million for a project to run for up to three years with the purpose “to spread across the island the work of a small cadre of independent Cuban journalists who are normally published only overseas”, which adds up a total of \$12.09 million for Cuba, or 50% of the aid to Latin America.

According to the 2007 CIMA report, “Funding of Independent Media Development”,⁴⁰ most official U.S. government funds were devoted to

“communications for development” to convey to the public service campaigns on health, environment and poverty.

The lack of funding for Latin America is not only because the U.S. government has other priorities in other regions of the world, but because of two other factors. First, Cuba is benefiting from the U.S. Congress having representatives and senators of Cuban-American origin, a majority among Hispanics.

Second, according to the last March report by CIMA, there are only five media experts at USAID; one works in the Europe and Eurasia Bureau, two in the Office for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and two in the Office of Transition Initiatives, but no one in the Western Hemisphere Bureau, which includes Latin America and the Caribbean. This would undermine the chances of there being more media development projects in the region.

Moreover, the case of Cuba is open to inconsistencies due to the historical relations between the two countries. U.S. government programs to promote democracy clash with the prohibitions related to the government embargo to Cuba, as showed during the trip of singer Beyoncé to Cuba and of the Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez to the U.S. last April.

The Cuban press, elated by Beyoncé’s visit, showed that Beyoncé and her husband, Jay-Z, were celebrating their fifth wedding anniversary in Cuba, instead of paying an educational visit as the visa was granted. It is a usual mockery among Americans, who can only travel for humanitarian or academic reasons, as well as journalistic grounds or for family reunification, but considered useful by the Obama administration to promote democracy.

It is fine for Beyoncé to prove the reason for her trip; she should comply with the law as everyone else. But what is wrong is the embargo itself, being out of touch with U.S. policy aspirations to fight a dictatorship. Cuba is no longer a geopolitical threat as the embargo justified in 1962, nor has the strength to spread Marxism as in the 70s.

At this point, the embargo is an issue of principles - freedom v. despotism - since it did not attract democratic changes on the island. It is clear, moreover, that it does not comply with the ideals and objectives of the post-Cold War diplomacy,

more focused on promoting democracy through economic aid and humanitarian assistance, than imposing sanctions, coups and covert operations of the CIA.

Today, Cuba is a country in ruins that survives due to the help of Venezuela, which replaced the Soviet aid, as well as because of a strong authoritarianism to control the popular discontent. But one economic blow will weaken the political spectrum, either because the “chavismo” will abandon its political philanthropy or leave power, or because Cuba would be flooded with dollars thanks to trade and tourism, now the only viable activity in the country.

The flood of dollars, because of the lift of the embargo, will not only benefit the regime economically, but will also weaken it politically, taking away all its excuses. The good economy always spread major changes in the habits of the population, which will demand greater freedoms for channeling other priorities, including better health, more education, social welfare and above all, greater freedom of expression and the right to choose who best may represent the new priorities.

Analyst Michael Mandelbaum says that “many studies have found that the higher a country's per capita output, the more likely that country is to protect liberty and choose its government through free and fair elections. The key to establishing a working democracy, and in particular the institutions of liberty, has been the free-market economy. The institutions, skills, and values needed to operate a free-market economy are those that, in the political sphere, constitute democracy.”⁴¹

The authorization for Yoani to travel abroad is still a sign of the Cuban government, perhaps influenced by the technical and millionaire assistance of the U.S. government, which provides aid to communication projects for independent journalism, seeking to open more spaces of freedom in the island.

But even with all of that help, including information transmitted by Radio and TV Marti, they can hardly promote a “democratic spring” like in Arab countries, because those governments were not as closed or authoritarian as Cuba, which has the monopoly of the politics and the media, blocks access to mobile technologies and bans social networks and internet.

In its 54 years, the Castro regime proved to be intransigent and will not tolerate political changes, which may only be possible by the economic pressure of citizenship.

That is precisely the coincident point with the American diplomacy. The strategic objectives of the Department of State indicate that for the promotion of democracy, the key is to help increasing the per capita income of the population because the skills and values that are created to manage more wealth and less inequality inevitably lead to political freedom.

Analyst Mark P. Logan said that “notwithstanding the global financial turbulence of the past three years, democracy’s elements facilitate long-term economic growth. These elements include above all freedom of expression and learning to promote innovation, and rule of law to foster predictability for investors and stop corruption from stunting growth. Those who argue that economic development will eventually yield political freedoms may be reversing the order of influences—or at least discounting the reciprocal relationship between political and economic liberalization.”⁴²

Tim Carrington, in the World Bank Institute book, *The Right to Tell: The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development*, said that “development economists are increasingly recognizing the media as a “development good” capable of contributing to improved accountability, more efficient markets, and more information-rich societies. At the same time, one must recognize that all these beneficial outcomes derive from the media’s financial independence.”⁴³

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The U.S. government has an excellent narrative about media development, providing direct assistance to initiatives to strengthen independent media. These programs include training for journalists and media managers to achieve sustainability and acquire development methods to help media organizations, whose mission is to support independent media.

Precisely, in its May 3 statement of 2012, the U.S. Department of State and USAID’s, on efforts to support press and media freedom, indicated that “foreign assistance supports the development of local and independent print, TV, radio,

and online media; advocacy for legal and regulatory reform in support of media freedom and the free flow of information; general and issue-specific journalism training, including for women, youth, and marginalized groups; and security training and emergency assistance for journalists and bloggers.”

But the problem is that investments are not done properly, especially in a region with autocratic governments, where they do not respect freedom of the press and media independence.

Freedom House, in its last report, urged the “U.S. government and other democracies to demonstrate leadership in the struggle for freedom. It criticizes both the Obama administration and the Republican opposition for a reluctance to provide that leadership.”

Lawrence J. Haas, former Communications Director and Press Secretary for Vice President Al Gore, said that “the dissidents are struggling, the autocrats are digging in, and freedom’s future is on the line. No nation is more important to the outcome than the United States. Here’s hoping that, in a second term, Obama steps up.”⁴⁴

In addition, according to the October 2012 report by CIMA, “Making Media Development More Effective,” most “stakeholders in international development have never even heard of media development.”⁴⁵

“Examining the evidence –adds the report- it seems that much of media development assistance has not been driven by country ownership. Rather, it has been supply-driven, focusing on training as opposed to creating institutional structures that build the capacity of the media overtime.”

This is an issue that authors Carrington y Nelson also underlined: “The bulk of national and multilateral donor programs is oriented toward building reporters’ and editors’ skills or pressuring reluctant governments to loosen the web of legal and regulatory controls they maintain over local media. Unfortunately, only a handful of international programs deal with the economic environment and the capacity of individual news organizations to craft a business strategy for financial survival, let alone success.”⁴⁶

The case of Cuba proves this. Media development programs do not provide the expected results because the Cuban government can easily neutralize these projects through prohibitions, typical of a communist government.

Among other projects, the Cuban government neutralized a project by Alan Gross, an American who was arrested in 2009 while distributing communication and internet equipment between members of the Cuban-Jewish community. Gross, who was working for Development Alternatives Inc., a company under contract of the USAID, was sentenced in 2011 to 15 years in prison, for working for the U.S. government on charges of destabilizing the Cuban revolution and “acts against the independence or integrity territorial state.”

Cuba, in this sense, seems to be more of a moral priority and a reason of principles for the U.S. government, rather than a pragmatic strategy to support programs that can provide results, and where it appears that the money is better spent, and where efficiency and impact can be evaluated.

Although significant economic contributions could be made, it would not be easy to develop autonomous structures and institutions that could be sustainable in the future in Cuba. Until profound and radical political changes are made, there will be no such thing.

This does not mean that the support should be set aside, quite the contrary. However, that support should not be concentrated in Cuba and this country should not be the priority in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region has more pressing problems, where these programs could be successfully and efficiently implemented.

In this region, as stated above, the private media are victims of many governments, which use multiple economic, legal and judicial weapons in order to silence it. Furthermore, these governments make ostensible use of propaganda and continue to enlarge their governmental media network.

These three elements not only constitute an attack on the independent press, but they have generated a lot of confusion in the population and a great distrust on the media in general. Much of the prestige that the press had won with the advent of democracy and the fall of military regimes collapsed.

This continued progress against private property and the work of the independent media, and against the concept of the role of media in society, is undermining the sustainability of the press.

However, the problem of press freedom is as much internal as it is external, and requires to be considered in media development programs.

In several countries media concentration is a major factor, and in many cases media owners' pressure journalists not to publish stories that might jeopardize their economic interests or private advertisers. Journalists' salaries are low, and in some countries many journalists do not receive social security, health or life insurance, even though they're in areas where they are exposed to drug trafficking and organized crime.

On the other hand, there are many journalists who are not committed to professional ethics; some are corrupt, receive bribes or extort their sources.

CHANGE OF PRIORITIES

This scenario should serve for the U.S. government to change its strategy and priorities in the region - leaving aside the tactic that was implemented at the end of the Cold War to promote independent media in the hands of Communist states - making a larger and more diverse strategy.

It is therefore necessary that without abandoning media development programs, the government offer more economic aid to media literacy programs, one of the priorities in the region today, either through traditional media campaigns, online and social networks, NGOs, press associations and, in particular, through universities.

Assistance can also be offered to mainstream media, and to the most vulnerable and precarious media in the interior of the countries. This assistance should be made through specific organizations dedicated to advocate and to support the press and other activities within civil society.

For these programs to succeed, help should be given with full transparency so that news organizations, media, NGOs and universities can justify the aid and not feel that their independence is being compromised.

In the past, that kind of support allowed Mexico to discuss legislation on access to public information, similar to the U.S. Freedom of Information Act

After a meeting convened by the IAPA in 2001, attended by publishers, editors and academics, the Oaxaca Group was formed. It was a working group that received U.S. support to discuss and offer ideas on access to information, in order to prepare a bill, which later was adopted by Congress.

Subsequently, the U.S. government supported other Mexican NGOs who cared to install other conversations about freedom of the press, such as the decriminalization of defamation laws. Currently, another group, with the support of Freedom House, is trying to eradicate violence against journalists in the country.

This form of support could be much more effective. For example, there are still many countries that need to delve deeper discussions on press freedom. In Argentina, the government has been reluctant to comply with the ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice to agree not to discriminate against the media through official advertising. The Court also forced the government to pass legislation on the matter, but the government failed.

In several countries, including Argentina and Paraguay, there were many attempts to legislate on access to public information in the last decade; however different projects are still stuck in Congress.

DIGITAL STRATEGY

Regarding aid in general, the region should pay attention to the U.S. government, which although is devoting few resources, is increasing those for digital projects. In 2012, the Congress decided to spend \$23 million for Internet freedom activities. In 2010, USAID established \$5.7 million for a digital project to help independent media in Bosnia Herzegovina.

According to June 2012 CIMA report, “The Medium versus The Message: US government Funding for Media in an age of disruption”, at the same time “that Congress is cutting back on foreign aid budget, resources to launch new digital programs continue to grow.” In one critical subsector of media development, media freedom and freedom of information, State Department and USAID funding total \$96 million in FY 2009, \$127 million in 2010 and nearly \$107 million in FY 2011.⁴⁷

The trend to support digital programs is also embraced by private foundations, like Knight Foundation, and by Scandinavian governments.

This is a positive trend towards the future, considering that mobile technology and broadband connection will deepen in all developing countries, especially in Latin America.

It should also be borne in mind that the Internet is causing serious security problems because governments fail to develop security systems as rapidly as evolving digital technologies.

That's why the U.S. government and other developed countries have allowed cyber security to become another branch of the armed forces. They know that vulnerability is against private companies not only because of cybercriminals' mafia activity, cyber activists and hackers who steal trade secrets, intellectual property and money - which have caused losses of \$ 300 billion in 2012 - but also because of the work of cyber terrorists who might undermine financial systems, power systems, nuclear plants and air traffic.

Unfortunately, a lot of illegal Internet activities begin with users and their illiteracy about digital issues and actions. When there is no awareness about the adoption of safety precautions, users - through their online activities, e-mail accounts and social networking - are the means that cybercriminals go through to commit crimes.

While most developed countries are more aware on cyber security issues, the problem involves all governments. Latin America is no exception to the upward trend of cyber-attacks, but its greatest vulnerability lies in the lack of prevention.

The 2013 Global Security Report by Trustwave, which puts Brazil in the list of the 10 countries that receives and performs more cyber-attacks, warns of the growing problems for the banking industry and governments in Latin America, generated by computer thieves and hackers.

While Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Peru are the countries that do more for data protection and cyber security, the region needs greater efforts to synchronize security with the growth of technologies in the region.

This field of cyber security and digital literacy is an unexplored terrain that would give a nice edge to the U.S. government to work with all kinds of governments in Latin America.

UNIVERSITIES: AGENTS OF CHANGE

Programs promoting democracy, including those for the defense of freedom of speech and the press, were always oriented according to the political interests of the government.

This explains why such programs are not a priority in Latin America and goes to show that when they were, they were oriented to countries that did not share the ideology of U.S. as Cuba, Chile during the Allende era and Nicaragua at the time of the Sandinista revolution.

Implementing these programs of media development and media literacy is not easy. It is difficult to evaluate their effectiveness because many abstractions are handled in some of them. For example, it isn't easy to measure the impact of training programs on ethics. Furthermore, many of the positive results of these programs can be seen just after completion.

To avoid problems of independence in recipients of aid - especially in the field of media literacy and training of journalists - the best choice in Latin America are universities, journalism schools, but with government autonomy.

The help of the U.S. government would not have to be a direct contribution to these universities in Latin America, but rather through their U.S. counterparts.

This would also help Latin American universities to maintain a fruitful academic exchange and a curricular feedback with American universities.

There are good examples of media development and training programs for journalists in Latin America that were established with public and private funds through U.S. universities. Some of these examples are the Journalism of the Americas program at the University of Texas in Austin funded by Knight Foundation, and some of the Journalism training programs of Florida International University in Miami, funded by the U.S. government.

While it would have to overcome several limitations in Latin American universities, as a curriculum highly politicized and too far from professional practice, this methodology may be the best option to create a mindset change and a better culture in favor of press freedom and expression.

This strategy would help universities and schools of Communication in Latin America to be agents of change.

The challenge is not only for them, but also for American universities, which will also have to make an effort to adapt its educational curricula to the needs of a more technological environmental, as proposed by the Knight Foundation.

According to Eric Newton, senior adviser to the president at Knight Foundation, in an article in the Foundation's blog⁴⁸ "How Does your school measure up?" he asks: Is journalism education getting the message? We've been talking about four "transformational trends." Great journalism schools 1. Connect with the rest of the university; 2. Innovate with digital tools and techniques; 3. Master more open, collaborative approaches, and become not just community information providers, but "teaching hospitals" that inform and engage their communities.

MIMICRY AND SPREAD

This combination between U.S. and Latin American universities could be very useful not only to develop programs for media development and media literacy, but to develop these in other countries where there are not serious problems

affecting press freedom or where their governments are friendlier to the U.S. government.

In Latin America there are few countries with stable democracies. But in most, government changes usually bring changes in public policy, which not always favor press freedom and freedom of expression.

In the first group are, among others, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru, while in the second group are Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela.

Developing programs in countries friendly to the U.S. government could serve to prevent public policy changes affecting press freedom and to create a conducive culture to freedom of press and expression to consolidate in society.

Embracing these countries, rather than the unruly, will help establish good, successful and efficient media and media literacy programs, which will also help those societies to become even more democratic or prevent them to become more autocratic.

Undoubtedly, when populations of a country observe that individual and social freedoms are respected in another country, they will also want to embrace and imitate them.

Under the premise that there is no democracy without a free press and vice versa, the U.S. government should use its best efforts and money in those countries to become examples for others in the future.

However, it is not about neglecting unfriendly governments. For them, it is better to look for ways to have direct collaboration and cooperation, and prevent them from blaming the U.S. government of interference in its sovereignty.

In that sense, a path that needs to be explored is to develop direct cooperation programs between governments that would implement digital literacy programs and online security, either through exchange of information, scientists and university students, as well as through public campaigns to educate government officials and the general public.

In both cases, whether creating a better culture of freedom of expression and press freedom in countries with friendly governments or seeking methods of direct cooperation with unfriendly governments, the U.S. government has unique opportunities to meet its objectives of promoting democracy and build alliances with the peoples of Latin America.

CONCLUSIONS

The U.S. government is investing fewer resources in media development programs and media literacy, as part of its strategy to promote democracy worldwide.

In aggravation of that policy, Latin America is the region that receives less support; despite the decline of press freedom in the region and despite that freedom of expression is not installed as a cultural value of democratic life.

The few funds available for the promotion of democracy in the region are used with the same criteria that the U.S. government used during the Cold War era. The majority of investment funds for media development projects are aimed at Cuba, which shows the wrong policy.

The policy of the U.S. government is not transparent, creating resistance and accusations of interference and intervention in the sovereignty of the countries.

A better way of working to promote media literacy and support programs to freedom of press and expression is through universities and schools of journalism, rather than NGOs, media associations, media and governments.

Digital literacy and cyber security cooperation is the most appropriate field to work with non-friendly governments and generate greater empathy with the people of those countries, beyond political differences. Moreover, in these countries, it is better to develop media literacy programs than to work with media development programs because of the resistance they generate.

The U.S. government cannot forget that the best investment of media development programs, such as media and digital literacy, will be in countries with friendly governments and most stable democracies. This will create better governance in the future and generate that the freedoms of speech and of the

press are forged as values of democratic culture, achieving in turn, that this new environment will want to be infected or be emulated in other countries.

The U.S. government must understand that the freedoms of speech and of the press are the best instruments of its strategy to promote democracy and are essential to improve its relations with Latin America.

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