



UNIVERSITY  
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International Communication, Media and Journalism Research  
in the Light of 70 Years of Article 19  
of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

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# 1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948.

Initiated in the post-war spirit at its first session in 1946 as a bill of rights parallel to the UN Charter, it was prepared by a drafting committee of the Commission on Human Rights firmly chaired by the late US President Franklin Roosevelt's widow Eleanor, with members from France, Lebanon, China, etc. Her closest aid was the Canadian head of UN Human Rights division John Humphrey.

Meanwhile, the post-war aspirations for building a peaceful world were being replaced by the rise of the Cold War.

Shifting geopolitics emphasized freedom and undermined responsibility, which were in balance when founding the UN and UNESCO in 1945.



### 3. Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

## 4. Comments

The **subject** of the right here is *everyone* in the sense of “all human beings” (phrase used in Article 1), meaning an *individual human being* and not an institution called the press or the media. The phrase “freedom of the press” is misleading as it suggests that the privilege of human rights is extended to the media, its owners and managers.

Beyond “everyone” appears only “a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized”, as stipulated in Article 28 – introducing the concept of “international order” which later appeared in the NWICO debate.

## 5. Comments, cont.

In fact, Article 19 stipulates that the media should be at the service of the people. It is a myth that media as an institution have human rights and it is another myth that journalists enjoy more human rights than ordinary people. In this respect many lobbies, including “Article 19”, have taken partisan stands in favour of media and against people as individuals.

Article 19 introduces the right of “freedom of opinion and expression” – not “freedom of information” or “free flow of information”, let alone “press freedom”.

## 6. Comments, cont.

To “seek, receive and impart” is a demanding package. Professor Humphrey recalled in a roundtable at the IAMCR conference in Barcelona in 1988 (celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UDHR) that it took special effort of Mrs Roosevelt to get *impart* included.

Most tricky is the concept of *seek*, notably in defense of investigative reporting. It is not included in the European Convention of Human Rights of 1950 and its respective Article 10 but is still supported by the European Court of Human Rights as a prerequisite of wide access to information in pursuing public interest.

## 7. Comments, cont.

In general, the UDHR of 1948 does not constitute proper international law; it is a UN declaration just expressing a mindset of the international community. Proper international law on human rights was established 18 years later by the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

Its Article 19 essentially repeats the UDHR definition but adds to it the provision that the exercise of this right “carries with it special duties and responsibilities” and may be subject to certain restrictions under specific circumstances to be provided by law.



## 8. Comments, cont.

All this is an old lesson which, however, has largely been forgotten. It is important to repeat this lesson, with teaching materials such as those provided by *National Sovereignty and International Communication* (1979), *The Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO* (1984) and *The Politics of World Communication: A Human Rights Perspective* (1994). Moreover, here is a challenge for journalism educators to prepare an easy-to-read and up-to-date presentation of the idea of freedom within the context of international law and politics.

## 9. International communication (research) traditions: A sweeping overview of history

Emerging professional identity of journalists since the late 19th century led to **idealism** about media in society as manifest in the first *international associations of journalists* which promoted quality and ethics and even founded a *Court of Honour* in 1931.

Already in 1925 the League of Nations began to pursue *Collaboration of the Press in the Organisation of Peace*, adopting the first resolution of the international community on media:

“Considering that the Press constitutes the most effective means of guiding public opinion towards that moral disarmament which is a concomitant condition of material disarmament...”

## 10. Idealism prevailed until the Cold War

Despite setbacks caused by commercialism, communism, fascism and the war, idealism on the role of media in society persisted as an overall approach in international communication, highlighted by the *International Convention on the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace* in 1936, and reaffirmed by post-war organizations – intergovernmental United Nations as well as non-governmental International Organization of Journalists (IOJ, founded in 1946).

# 11. From idealism to aggression since 1948

The Cold War grew out of the post-war international order, both the US-led West and the USSR-led East aggravating the division, with Churchill speaking of an iron curtain already in March 1946 and the USA establishing the Marshall Plan and the CIA in 1947. International communication was rapidly embroiled in the Cold War with **aggression** as the underlying approach dominated by propaganda, employing much of research and associations splitting between pro-Moscow and pro-Washington clans. The division of journalists was sealed by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, founded in 1952).

Under these conditions a fierce competition between two political systems took over making ecumenical internationalism impossible.

## 12. Accommodation emerged since the late 1950s

Aggressive Cold War policies were challenged by more flexible approaches of **accommodation** especially in the West but also in the East, accelerated by the decolonization of developing countries in the 1960-70s, turning Northern competitors to win support in the South – through modernization (West) and solidarity (East). In the West the strategy had a character of **apology**.

The arms race in nuclear weapons also led to alternative approaches of relaxing East-West tension, with IOJ and IFJ beginning to talk and gradually co-operate, bringing some idealism back.

Already in 1957 early détente facilitated the founding of IAMCR as a truly international research association.

## 13. Critical approaches entered since the 1960s

Decolonization inspired research to side with the Third World, suffering from dependency on imperialism, fuelling **criticism** of prevailing Western doctrines and sympathizing neo-Marxist approaches.

By the 1980s the critical wave dispersed to political economy and cultural studies without a distinct character and increasingly integrated into both mainstream and alternative traditions.

## 14. Diversity of traditions in the new millennium

After the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the world has turned multi-polar – while Cold War doctrines still persist – displaying an unprecedented **diversity** of research on international communication as an integral part of the field, which has undergone an exponential growth since the 1970s, and which is currently in the centre of a revolutionary change with digitalization and globalization.

So the sweeping overview offered us idealism, aggression, accommodation, criticism and diversity – all having close relation to the 70 years old UDHR.

# Sources and references (in the order of slides)

**Slide 1** <http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/history-document/index.html>

**Slide 2** [https://iamcr.org/sites/default/files/iamcr\\_in\\_retrospect\\_0.pdf](https://iamcr.org/sites/default/files/iamcr_in_retrospect_0.pdf)

**Slide 3** <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

## **Slides 4-5**

- Article “Myths about press freedom” (2007)  
<https://bjr.sbpjor.org.br/bjr/article/view/97/96>
- Article “Deconstructing libertarian myths about press freedom” (2013)  
<http://tampub.uta.fi/handle/10024/68290>
- Article “Liberate freedom from its ideological baggage!” (2016)  
<http://tampub.uta.fi/handle/10024/99791>



## Sources and references, cont.

### Slide 6

- Paper “International dimension of media ethics: The challenge for journalism education” (2016) <http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/Future-of-media-ethics-Helsinki2016.pdf>

### Slides 7-8

- Book *National Sovereignty and International Communication* (1979)  
[https://books.google.fi/books/about/National\\_Sovereignty\\_and\\_International\\_C.html?id=axaqb1Ovg\\_EC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.fi/books/about/National_Sovereignty_and_International_C.html?id=axaqb1Ovg_EC&redir_esc=y)
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### Slides 9-10

- Book *A History of the International Movement of Journalists: Professionalism Versus Politics* (2016) <https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137530547>
- Paper “The long passage of history: The evolution of professionalism among journalists and their international contacts” (2011)  
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- Paper “The League of Nations and the mass media: The rediscovery of a forgotten story” (1986)  
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- Article “The forgotten history of global communication negotiations at the League of Nations” (2005)  
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# Sources and references, cont.

## Slides 11-12

- Paper “Idealism, Aggression, Apology, and Criticism: The Four traditions of research in international communication” (1980)  
[http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/HeikkiHellman\\_10\\_9\\_081.pdf](http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/HeikkiHellman_10_9_081.pdf)

## Slide 13

- Article “Ferment in the field: Notes on the evolution of communication studies and its disciplinary nature” (2014)  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13183222.2004.11008856>
- Article “Being (truly) critical in media and communication studies: Reflections of a media scholar between science and politics” (2016)  
<http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/Javnost%201%202016%20Nordenstreng.pdf>

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### Slide 14

- Article “Discipline or field? Soul-searching in communication research” (2007) [http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/248\\_248\\_nordenstreng1.pdf](http://www.nordicom.gu.se/sites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/248_248_nordenstreng1.pdf)
- Paper “Disciplining the disciplines?” (2009) <http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/Annenberg.pdf>
- Paper “The fantastic growth of communication research since the 1950s – but for what?” (2011) [http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/Cairo\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/publications/Cairo_presentation.pdf)



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kaarlenordenstreng/index.html](http://www.uta.fi/cmt/en/contact/staff/kaarlenordenstreng/index.html)