

*Marxist regimes  
have larger military  
forces — but not  
for the reason  
you might think.*

# Marxists: They Love a Man in a Uniform

*By James L. Payne*

**There are 27 million men under arms in the world today. All nations combined spend over \$700 billion per year on armies and armaments, a**

figure that averages out to 6 percent of world output and 20 percent of national-government budgets. What causes these great investments in military forces?

To some extent, these expenditures are reflections of each nation's policy purposes. One country may want forces to defend itself against possible attack, another to overrun a neighboring state, and so on. But that's not all there is to it. The military aims of a country do not dictate a precise level of forces—there is no way of knowing how many troops or how many tanks will be required to execute a particular defense or a particular conquest under some hypothetical future circumstances. National leaders can only guess. As a result, the military forces of different countries are not closely tied to their foreign-policy "needs."

Instead, a nation's force level tends to be set by default: it is the result of political and bureaucratic struggling. For those who seek to control armaments in the world, an understanding of this "structural" aspect of militarism is an indispensable starting point. A nation's

armed forces are not only, or even primarily, the result of conscious, calculating leadership decisions, as many arms-control theorists would have it. Rather, the size and character of a nation's armed forces are shaped by the *structure* of the regime and the political processes within it.

I discovered this correlation in a study I conducted comparing the military-force levels of Marxist and non-Marxist countries. I compiled a list of countries adhering to Marxist-Leninist doctrine (see table on page 41), then looked up the "force ratio" of each. A nation's force ratio is the number of its full-time, active-duty military personnel per 1,000 population—one of the best indicators of a nation's commitment to military power. These data are compiled yearly by the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (and by the British Institute for Strategic Studies, whose figures are similar). I compared these figures with those for 109 non-Marxist countries.

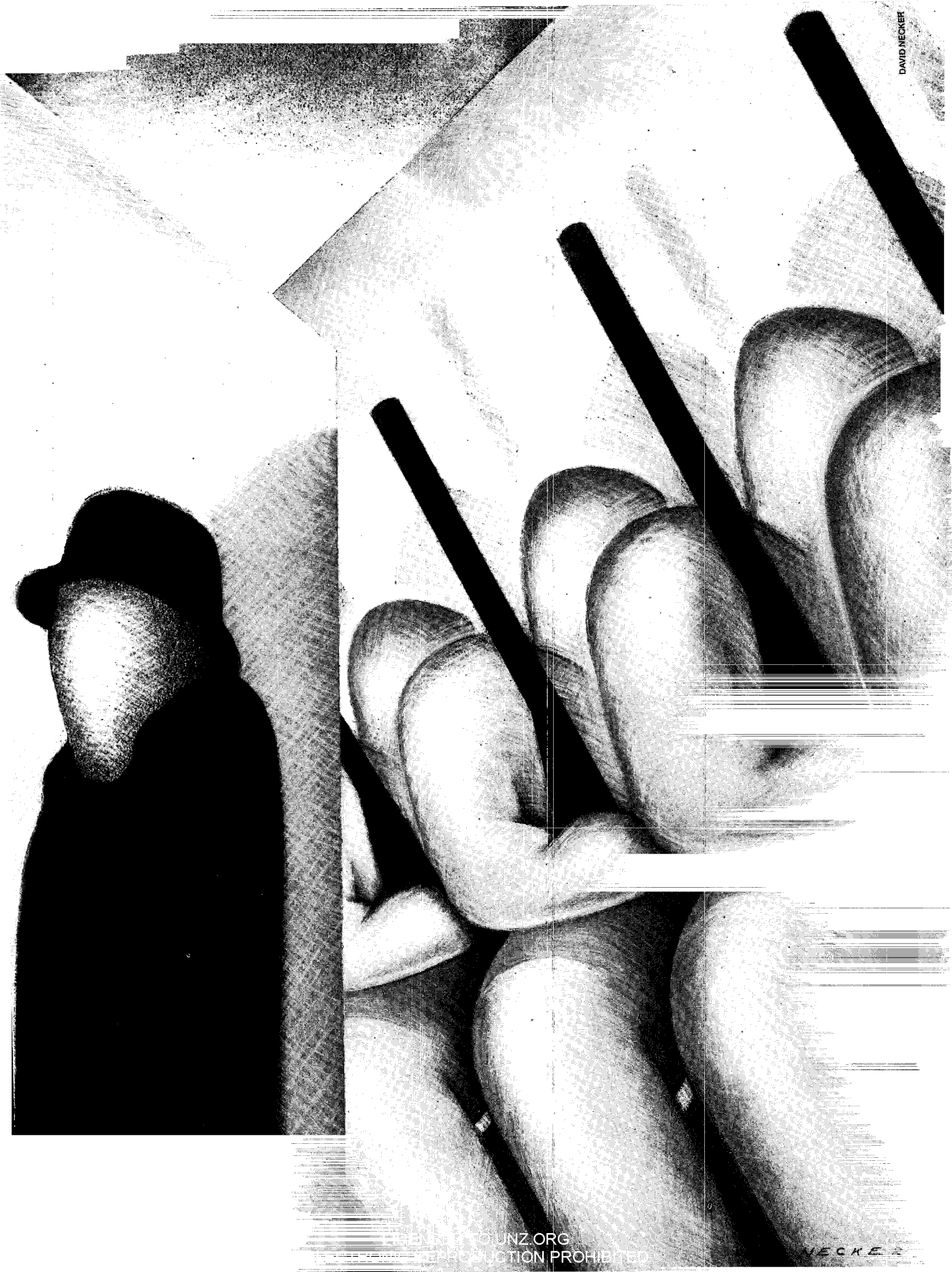
Overall, the numbers show that Marxist regimes have armed forces more than

twice as large as non-Marxist countries. The 32 Marxist countries for which data are available have an average force ratio of 13.3; for the 109 non-Marxist regimes, the average is 6.1.

This broad pattern holds up quite clearly when one compares countries similar in location, culture, and size. Marxist North Korea has a force ratio of 38.0; non-Marxist South Korea, 14.7. Marxist South Yemen has 12.5; non-Marxist North Yemen, 3.9. Marxist East Germany has 14.0; non-Marxist West Germany, 7.8. Nonaligned Marxist Yugoslavia has 10.9; neighboring, neutral, non-Marxist Austria, 5.3.

Europe's eight Marxist countries have an average force ratio of 13.8; the 17 non-Marxist European countries have an average of 7.6. The nine Marxist African countries have an average of 5.9; the 31 non-Marxist African countries, 2.1. The pattern holds for the superpowers as well: the Soviet Union has a force ratio of 16.3; the United States, 9.1.

To test the Marxism-militarism connection further, I looked to see what hap-



pens to the size of a nation's armed forces after Marxists come to power. For the 10 countries where this type of comparison is possible, the force ratio under Marxism has increased, on average, 282 percent. Take, for example, Ethiopia, a poignant case of a recent transition to Marxist rule. In 1973, the last year of non-Marxist rule, the force ratio was 1.8;

under Marxism, it has increased 355 percent.

I checked the correlation still further by introducing a control for national wealth, because the wealthier a country is, the more it spends on just about everything—hospitals, schools, parks—and this “consumption function” effect also operates upon military forces. The

wealthier a country is—everything else being equal—the higher its force ratio. This effect, however, can be statistically controlled for by recalculating each country's force ratio as a “wealth-adjusted force ratio” (listed in the second column of the table). Wealth-adjusted force ratios enable us, then, to compare countries as if each nation had the same amount to

## Marxism and Militarism

### Force Ratios of Marxist and Non-Marxist Regimes

Selected Non-Marxist Countries			Marxist Countries		
	Force Ratio	Wealth-Adjusted Force Ratio		Force Ratio	Wealth-Adjusted Force Ratio
<b>Western Hemisphere</b>					
United States	9.1	4.6	Albania	18.9	19.6
Canada	3.3	-0.9	Angola	6.4	7.1
Mexico	2.0	0.4	Algeria	6.0	5.2
Guatemala	2.3	2.8	Benin	0.8	4.1
Honduras	3.9	5.7	Bulgaria	19.7	17.6
El Salvador	5.4	6.8	Burma	4.9	9.3
Costa Rica	1.5	2.6	Cape Verde	10.0	12.9
Colombia	2.6	2.6	China (Mainland)	4.3	5.9
Venezuela	3.2	1.1	Congo	10.0	10.4
Brazil	3.6	2.7	Cuba	23.5	22.7
Argentina	6.0	3.9	Czechoslovakia	13.8	10.0
Chile	10.3	9.2	Ethiopia	8.2	12.9
<b>Europe</b>					
United Kingdom	5.8	2.0	Germany (East)	14.0	10.0
France	8.9	4.7	Guinea	3.2	6.4
West Germany	7.8	3.6	Guinea-Bissau	5.0	9.4
Sweden	8.4	3.7	Hungary	10.5	7.5
Switzerland	3.6	-1.3	Iraq	32.1	31.7
Austria	5.3	1.5	Korea, North	38.0	39.1
Italy	6.9	3.8	Laos	15.8	21.6
<b>Mid-East</b>					
Israel	46.2	43.4	Madagascar	2.2	5.3
Turkey	13.3	13.5	Mongolia	21.2	21.6
Jordan	19.7	19.8	Mozambique	1.6	4.4
Egypt	10.0	11.7	Nicaragua	27.8	28.7
Saudi Arabia	5.4	0.5	Poland	11.9	9.3
Iran	11.4	11.0	Romania	10.5	8.1
Libya	16.7	19.8	Somalia	8.9	12.0
<b>Africa</b>					
South Africa	2.3	0.9	Soviet Union	16.3	13.3
Nigeria	1.6	2.5	Syria	30.9	30.4
Ghana	1.0	0.3	Tanzania	2.7	6.1
Zaire	0.9	5.3	Vietnam	21.5	25.8
Liberia	3.5	5.8	Yemen (South)	12.5	14.8
Sudan	3.3	5.3	Yugoslavia	10.9	9.3
<b>Asia</b>					
Japan	2.0	-2.0	<b>Mean, 32 Marxist countries</b>	13.3	14.1
India	1.6	5.3	<b>Mean, 109 Non-Marxist countries</b>	6.1	5.9
Indonesia	1.7	3.7			
Thailand	4.8	6.1			
Taiwan	27.2	25.9			
Australia	4.8	0.5			
Philippines	3.0	4.3			

The force ratio is the number of active, full-time military personnel per 1,000 population (data are for 1982). The *adjusted* force ratio is based on the relationship between national wealth and the force ratio. Each country's figure represents the deviation of its actual force ratio from the force ratio it would be expected to have given its level of wealth.

Source: *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1972-1982*, US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (Washington, D.C., 1984)

spend on military forces.

When I averaged these wealth-adjusted force ratios, the gap between Marxist and non-Marxist countries widened still further, the militaristic bent of Marxist countries becoming even more apparent. Because Marxist countries are, on average, poorer, their higher force ratios are even more remarkable.

**W**hat accounts for Marxist countries' pronounced tendency toward larger military forces? At first, I thought it would be easy to explain: Marxist rulers were rationally acquiring these forces to carry out their foreign and domestic aims. But as I looked more closely at each possible reason why Marxist regimes might "need" greater military forces, I had to doubt this initial idea.

For example, we might suppose that the greater aggressiveness of Marxist regimes would explain their higher force ratios. After all, Marxist doctrine urges an ever-expanding world revolution, and many Marxist countries *have* attacked their neighbors. In order to carry out this expansion of socialism, this theory goes, Marxist countries acquire the needed military forces.

But this theory doesn't account for the consistency of the pattern. A number of Marxist countries aren't, or can't, be aggressive, yet they have high force ratios, too. Look at Mongolia, for instance. Sandwiched between the Soviet Union and China, and thousands of miles from the nearest non-Marxist country, it is necessarily nonaggressive. Yet its force ratio is an extremely high 21.2. Other countries in the same category include Poland, Romania, Albania, and Yugoslavia—they are not particularly aggressive, but all have high force ratios.

Furthermore, if aggressive countries always have high force ratios, then the point should apply to non-Marxist countries as well. But it doesn't. Argentina was clearly the aggressor in the 1982 Falkland Islands War (and also the aggressor in the dispute with Chile over the Beagle Channel Islands). Yet its force ratio was a mere 6.0, half that of Yugoslavia and one-quarter that of Cuba. Guatemala, which has militarily threatened neighboring Belize since 1972, has a force ratio of 2.3. An aggressive orientation, then, will not entirely account for the endemic militarism of Marxist countries, for aggressive non-Marxist countries do not have such consistently high force ratios.

Another suggested explanation of Marxist regimes' large military forces is that they need such forces for defense.

The first exhibit for this argument would be Cuba: some say its force ratio of 23.5 reflects the danger of attack by the United States. But even if you agree that Cuba is threatened, its military forces are still abnormally large. Many non-Marxist countries also face threats from big neighbors, but they do not have such large armies. Finland, for example, borders the Soviet Union and was invaded by the Red Army in 1939. Yet its force ratio is 7.5, less than one-third Cuba's. Most non-Marxist countries threatened by the Soviet Union and its satellites have similarly moderate force ratios, including Norway (9.0), Austria (5.3), West Germany (7.8), Pakistan (5.2), and Japan (2.0). And, of course, the defense argument would not account for the high force ratios of Marxist countries not plausibly threatened by Western attack, including Albania (18.9), Bulgaria (19.7), and Laos (15.8).

Marxist countries, it is sometimes said, need large armies to suppress domestic opposition. But this theory, it turns out, is based on a fundamental misconception. In virtually all countries, the management of political opposition is handled by police forces—and by bureaucracies that give and withhold privileges. The regular armed forces are typically employed only when opposition takes a *military* form. Demonstrations, for example, are almost always controlled by police forces; even terrorist gangs, like the Red Guard in Italy, are mainly a police responsibility. Hence, the repressiveness of Marxist regimes would account for these countries' large internal security forces, but it would not explain their larger regular armies.

A few Marxist countries do have a violent domestic opposition, but here again we find the familiar contrast: non-Marxist countries with a similar problem have much lower force ratios. For example, the Marxist regime in Nicaragua, challenged by the *contras*, has a force ratio of 27.8. But non-Marxist El Salvador faces the same kind of threat from guerrilla forces in its territory, yet its force ratio is only 5.4.

**C**omparisons like these finally convinced me that the high force ratios of Marxist countries cannot be explained as a calculated response to a common need, for two reasons. First, Marxist countries don't share a common policy aim consistently enough to explain the consistency of the pattern. And second, when a non-Marxist country has the same apparent need for military forces as a Marxist country—for aggression, for defense, for internal security—its force

ratio is typically much lower.

Since the pattern cannot be accounted for by assuming rational policy-making by the Marxist leadership, it must be traced to some institutional characteristic of Marxist regimes that operates to produce an undue expansion of the military sector. What might this characteristic be? Although several possibilities suggest themselves, the one that stands out is the highly dictatorial structure of these systems: Marxist regimes are totalitarian.

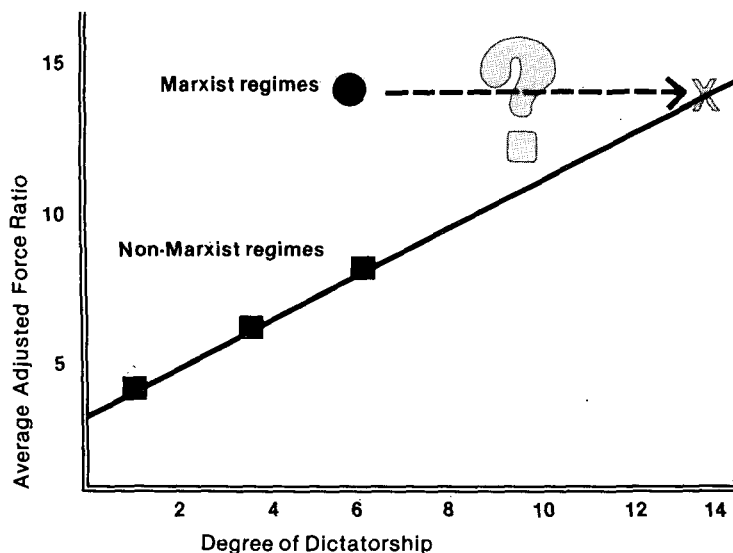
Marxist governments control all major activities: the media, economic life, the arts, sports, religion, science, education. Government restrictions on freedom in these realms inhibit the rise of independent centers of innovation, opinion, and influence, and the lack of diversity in these systems encourages the growth of the military sector. After all, any bureaucracy seeks to expand. It develops rationales for what it does and weeds out members who question the virtue of expansion. Military bureaucracies, in particular, are well suited to expansion, because soldiers have a natural edge in arguments: the weapons of war they wield inspire awe, and their mission of defending the homeland promotes respect. Therefore, the military bureaucracy is likely to prevail in disputes affecting its size, unless countervailing forces check it.

In a relatively free, pluralistic country, such forces will be numerous, ranging from commercial and consumer groups to media and academic sectors. But in a totalitarian dictatorship, there are practically no independent voices to contradict proposals for expansion. Hence, military outlays expand to higher levels.

In other words, Marxist regimes have large military forces not because anyone in them is saying "yes" to military expansion with more enthusiasm than elsewhere. The problem is that fewer voices say "no." When a Soviet general proposes yet another military base or yet another generation of missiles, for instance, no one dares to call his proposal foolish or unnecessary—an unlikely event in the United States.

If this theory explains the militarism of Marxist countries, then it should work for non-Marxist nations, as well. Countries with a more dictatorial structure should have larger military forces than freer, pluralistic nations. To test this idea, we need an indicator of the degree of dictatorship in the different non-Marxist countries. One such measure is provided by Freedom House, a New York-based organization that assesses the status of political and social freedom worldwide. Freedom House ranks countries according to the degree to which the

# Force vs. Freedom



The degree of dictatorship is based on the Freedom House 1982 ratings of each country's observance of civil liberties. Thus, civil-liberties rankings of 1 and 2 place the country in the "low" dictatorship category; rankings of 3 or 4, in the "medium" dictatorship category; and rankings of 5, 6 or 7, in the "high" degree of dictatorship category. (Force ratios are adjusted for national wealth.) In the "low" category there are 31 non-Marxist regimes; 23 in "medium"; and 55 in "high." The 32 Marxist regimes fall into the "high" category, as well.

government allows freedom in the media and public opinion and respects private rights in education, occupation, religion, residence, and so on.

The Freedom House rankings serve as a rough measure of a country's degree of dictatorship. Nations high in respect for civil liberties (ranks 1 and 2) can be labeled "low" in their degree of dictatorship; nations ranked 3 or 4 can be classified as "medium"; and countries ranked 5-7 can be considered "high" in their degree of dictatorship.

On the graph above, the squares indicate the non-Marxist countries, grouped by their degree of dictatorship—low, medium, and high—and plotted against each group's adjusted average force ratio. As the graph shows, there is a clear effect in the expected direction: the more dictatorial a country, the higher its average force ratio. The "dictatorship effect" is confirmed.

But the graph also reveals an anomaly: Marxist and non-Marxist dictatorships do not come out equal. The Marxist countries, designated by the circle on the graph, have a much higher average force ratio than you would expect, given their level of dictatorship.

What has caused this outcome? Is there some factor, in addition to the dictatorship effect, that makes Marxist countries more militaristic? It could be. But I find another explanation more per-

suasive—namely, that the Freedom House measurements of dictatorship are distorted. Marxist regimes have actually been given an average score of 6, whereas—my suggested interpretation goes—they should have a much *higher* score (say around 14). This would place them at point "x," right where the dictatorship theory would put them.

**W**hat justifies this interpretation is the bias of the American media in reporting on freedom and civil liberties around the world. The media tend to concentrate on violations of only one type of freedom—the freedom of political opposition. This freedom involves the right to criticize the government in the mass media or before a mass audience. Naturally, journalists report extensively on violations of this freedom, because they involve prominent political leaders or newsworthy mass-protest activities.

The media virtually ignore, however, violations of other freedoms that affect the dreams and daily lives of citizens: the freedom to work, the freedom to buy and sell property, the freedom of non-political expression, the freedom of movement, the freedom to organize non-political groups. These are the "quiet" freedoms. They are rarely noticed by reporters, because ordinary people, not

newsmakers, suffer when governments clamp down.

Typically, Marxist countries restrict *both* the freedom of political opposition and these other "quiet" freedoms. Non-Marxist dictatorships restrict the freedom of political opposition, but they do not so greatly restrict all these less-noticed rights. Consequently, non-Marxist countries are actually much freer than indicated by media reports. But an observer who relies on media reports will tend to equate Marxist and non-Marxist dictatorships as equally repressive. This appears to have happened in the Freedom House tabulations.

In Guatemala, for example, there certainly have been violations of the freedom of political opposition. But in Guatemala—just to take one example—there is a private university, Francisco Marroquin University, that was founded to combat the economic doctrines dominating government policy and the government-run university system. It is unthinkable that such an independent, critical institutional voice would be allowed to exist in any Marxist country. Yet Freedom House gives Guatemala a civil-liberties ranking of 6, precisely the same as it gives Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Vietnam—and a *worse* ranking than Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia.

The same questionable classification has occurred for many other non-Marxist countries, including South Korea, Chile, Indonesia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. These countries' failure to respect the freedom of political opposition has led the Freedom House writers to rank them with the Marxist countries in their overall level of respect for civil liberties.

It is therefore quite possible that a valid measure of the lack of freedom in Marxist regimes would clear up the anomaly in the graph above and reinforce the dictatorship theory of militarism: the Marxist countries have higher force ratios than non-Marxist dictatorships, because the Marxist regimes are much more thoroughgoing dictatorships.

Regardless how the explanation works out, the underlying finding remains: Marxist regimes have dramatically larger military forces than non-Marxist countries. One cannot address the problem of militarism in the world today without coming to grips with this basic reality. □

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By Dwight R. Lee

## The Price Blackout

**M**ore than any other profession, journalists are aware of the value of open communication and a free flow of information. Certainly no group is more adamant in its condemnation of politically inspired censorship. It is therefore surprising to realize that journalists routinely report sympathetically on a certain kind of political censorship.

The censorship I have in mind is a result of government restraints that block the free flow of price information. In our highly specialized society, market prices communicate crucially important information—to consumers, about product availability; and to producers, about consumers' choices. This price information permits coordination between the plans of consumers and producers that promotes both economic productivity and social harmony.

Government policies that force prices above or below what they would be in a free market thus involve censorship. They violate the right of free expression just as if the government dictated the content of the daily newspaper. And, as with any censorship, such policies impose genuine harm on people, often the very people that supporters of the controls want to help.

Our minimum-wage laws, for example, make it illegal for an unskilled youth to communicate effectively with a potential employer. Many youths would like to tell employers, "I have few skills, and college is out for me. So if a low wage is all you can manage I am willing to work for little now, while I have few financial responsibilities, in order to acquire on-the-job experience and training." Without the censorship of minimum-wage legislation, thousands of unemployed youth could be productively preparing for their future in jobs that are now denied them.

Agricultural price supports are another example of this kind of government censorship. It victimizes all consumers, but particularly those whose low income makes hunger a real concern. May a poor family communicate through the marketplace its willingness to buy milk at the lowest price that dairy farmers would be willing to accept? No. That communication is currently illegal in the United



states, where milk prices are propped up by the government. Journalists have the opportunity both to strike a blow against censorship and to rally to the cause of the poor. Unfortunately, most journalists see less connection between hunger and price-information censorship than they do between hunger and comments by Ronald Reagan.

Other examples of censorship that journalists seldom recognize as such are rent controls, equal-pay-for-equal-work legislation, tariff duties on imported goods, and still-existing price controls on natural gas. But by censoring market information, these restrictions impair communication that is in some respects more important than that protected by freedom of the press.

Journalists could fill newspapers with stories of jobless teenagers and write compellingly of the need to expand employment opportunities for our nation's youth. But the effectiveness of this information would be nil in comparison with lower wages, which would serve to tell employers that teenagers are willing to work for less. Similarly, if consumers want access to natural gas or nicer apartments, expressing their demands through uncensored markets will be vastly more effective than writing letters to the editor.

This is not to argue that we should be happy with low wages and high prices. Low wages inform us that productive

skills are lacking, and high prices tell us that important products are in short supply. But bad news, whether from the market or elsewhere, is no excuse for suppressing the news.

It may be objected that freedom of price communication discriminates against those with fewer financial resources. But if this is so, then traditional freedom of speech discriminates against those with less savvy or intelligence. Although those who are knowledgeable and articulate have in many respects a great advantage over those who are not, clamping down on the free press is not justified in an effort to protect the ignorant. Nor is denial of freedom in market communication justified in hopes of protecting the poor.

Indeed, censorship would work to the long-run disadvantage of both the ignorant and the poor. Just as free verbal and written expression offer the best hope for developing intellectual skills, so does free market expression offer the best hope for developing economic skills.

We cannot, of course, depend on free-market communication being always honest and accurate. Some firms will have the market power to distort prices in their favor. The unscrupulous will often be able to misrepresent their products to the disadvantage of the unwary. But who is prepared to deny that analogous distortions and misrepresentations often creep into the news, books, magazines, and so on?

Such imperfections can never be eliminated; they can be moderated and countered by maintaining open communication. The best way to control the harm of misinformation is with the competition of free expression. And this is just as true with information expressed through prices as it is with information expressed through words.

As advocates of freedom in communication, journalists should find government attempts to control prices just as abhorrent as they find government attempts to control the news. Neither has any place in a free society.

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