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The Question of Academic Freedom: Universal Right or Relative Term

Abstract In this essay, we interrogate the role of academic freedom in the 21st century by describing its historical genesis in the modern university, its association with the concept of tenure, and how it is reinterpreted by different cultural and social contexts. Afterwards, we examine traditional infringements by national governments upon academic freedom, as well as new infringements brought on by the forces of globalization and commercialization. Since academic freedom not only protects scholarly inquiry, but the health and safety of academics across the world, we argue that academic freedom is a “transcendent value” that should be respected by political and institutional forces and carefully defended by engaged scholars.

Keywords academic freedom, commercialization, higher education, globalization, tenure

Introduction

Academic freedom—broadly defined as the freedom to teach and conduct research without fear or concern of retribution—is at the heart of the modern university. Or is it? Is academic freedom a distinctly Western tradition, essential in such countries as the United States and Australia, but expendable in non-Western countries like China or Ethiopia? As academic labor becomes commoditized and transitory in the 21st century, is the value of academic freedom declining in Western countries? Does the internet pose different issues

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for how to think about academic freedom? These are the questions we wish to entertain.

As we will elaborate, academic freedom was traditionally associated with definitions of institutional quality. The assumption was that society and the state benefitted from intellectual spaces (universities) that respected free inquiry and expression. Some have carried this assumption further, arguing that in a knowledge-driven world, academic freedom is more important than ever as an intellectual engine for creativity and innovation. From this perspective, the world benefits from universities that support the universal idea of academic freedom, promote a greater awareness of current threats to academic freedom, and appreciate the vital role of higher education and scholarship in free societies.

Nonetheless, scholars throughout the world continue to be criticized by political, social, and cultural agents because of their ideas, their language, or the findings from their research. The frequency of these attacks is on the rise, in part, due to commercialization. That is, concerns about academic freedom have come from a new angle as the modern university enters the marketplace. The internet has also shifted the venues through which scholars address society. Increasingly, scholars are utilizing mass outlets, such as blogs and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), in addition to traditional academic vehicles (e.g., scholarly journals). As a result, powerful forces have the ability to limit access to information and new ideas by inhibiting academic freedom and suppressing the scholarly activities of research, publication, teaching, and learning.

An alternative perspective contends that different traditions of knowledge production and dissemination suggest different interpretations of the idea of academic freedom and, of consequence, a different relationship between the scholar and society. The issue of university autonomy, for instance, underscores differences in norms and values between higher education systems in China or Africa and the West. Is it practical to adapt Western norms and values of academic freedom and university autonomy to a Chinese university? Should a university in the Middle East adhere to the same underlying ideology as that of an institution in the West? The answer to these questions are intertwined with other, increasingly important, debates, such as the role society assigns to its tertiary universities and whether core values are absolutist and universal or relativistic and national.

Depicted another way, the notion of freedom from constraint, defined by Isaiah Berlin (1969) as “negative freedom,” is only one part of the puzzle of freedom. The freedom to act and the capacity to do good things, called “positive

freedom” by Berlin, constitutes a second part. Berlin’s important distinction between these two freedoms suggests differing epistemologies. The absence of external constraints in negative freedom presumably enables people to act in a manner that they see fit. Positive freedom, meanwhile, focuses more on the development and enhancement of personal growth. Hence, negative freedom is more individualistic, and positive freedom flows from a collective of individuals.

In the academic world, negative freedom comes close to being a “universal idea of academic freedom,” we cannot carry out any kind of duty or responsibility while we are literally constrained. Positive freedom in academia is more complex and culturally variant because ideas of social action differ. Academic freedom is linked with notions of the social responsibility of academics. If problems of “protection” and “vulnerability” are universal, national cultural perspectives might differ on whether a particular act of dissent or criticism is the exercise of academic freedom (e.g., part of the social duty of an academic to truth and the public good). Both of these ideas of academic freedom interact and are played out at the institutional level within the countries that have a particular notion of the role of the university and the academic.

Once “social” interactions are introduced to the equation, questions of academic freedom become engaged with the articulations among universities and the state, universities and the community/society, and universities and the public good. Obviously, determinations of these various articulations are not the same in each case, but there is nevertheless an overlap between how one conceives of the “state” and “society” and “public good.” The role of the state in higher education looms large in many, if not most, countries, not just in East Asia, but also in Latin America and Africa, as well as in those countries where the role of the state is not seen as a problem (though its manifestations might be). In the English-speaking world, too much state involvement in tertiary education is seen as a problem in itself. However, our argument here will be that the state ought not to be the sole arbiter of how academic freedom is defined, and, more importantly, the safety or danger a scholar faces when he or she teaches and conducts research.

Purpose

Our purpose here is to suggest that, for over a century, academic freedom has been a foundational value for academics in many countries; yet, how it is articulated varies significantly by country or region, as well as by changing

temporal contexts. Traditionally defined, academic freedom endows faculty with considerable autonomy in their research and teaching agendas. Academic freedom is driven by the belief that society benefits when professors are enabled to explore theories, expand upon existing areas of knowledge, and report their findings without fear of reprisal due to content. Faculty are evaluated by their peers on the quality and significance of their ideas, rather than by administrators or state legislators for instrumental or ideological reasons. The assumption is that universities exist for the common good, not for the political or economic interests of an individual or institution. The common good depends upon the search for truth and its free exposition.

Academic freedom's acceptance has had at least one major consequence. In much of the world, tenure—job security—became commonplace in the 20th century academy. At the start of the 21st century, for example, tenure was offered at over 95% of the traditional postsecondary institutions in the United States. The assumption throughout the 20th century was that tenure, or some other version of job security, provided critical protection for academic freedom. Administrators or external agents could not use threats without “teeth,” such as the loss of one’s job, when a scholar published controversial findings or had something to say that contradicted administrative policy. In other words, individuals would seek truth if their jobs were secure. Tenured faculty members were also responsible for protecting academic freedom as a central idea within the academy.

Today, however, the ability of academics to conduct their work without interference is under attack due to the changing nature of academic work and the expansion of tertiary education into countries without a Western tradition of academic freedom. New economic circumstances have forced universities to act in different ways. As we elaborate below, globalization is not merely an economic term that impacts the way countries do business or how corporations acquire capital and labor. Globalization also changes the purpose and function of academic work. In what follows, we shall argue that academics are seen less as individuals with the academic freedom to explore different topics, and more as workers to advance the economic interests of the country. Consequently, tenure and job security are threatened. This is what we will define as a relatively new threat to academic freedom, whereas traditional threats to academic freedom are occurring in much of the non-industrialized world.

We shall first define academic freedom, describe its genesis in the modern university, and discuss how it functions throughout much of the world. We then

turn to a discussion of globalization and explain the consequences for academic work. On one hand, tertiary education has become more important not only to train individuals but also as an economic engine for the state. On the other hand, the cultural mores of the country, when layered onto globalization's framework, have made academic freedom problematic. In addition to traditional definitions of academic freedom, globalization has brought forth new concerns as institutions become more market-oriented. We conclude by considering the strengths and weaknesses of the academic's new position in a globalized world, and we suggest what these changes mean for the future of academic freedom. We shall suggest that, although academic freedom is certainly a complex term with multiple contingencies, academics must be able to function without threat of sanction, regardless of institutional or national context.

Defining Traditional Notions of Academic Freedom

The Genesis of Academic Freedom

The idea of academic freedom in modern universities is a little over 100 years old. Although European universities in the Middle Ages were in part self-governing, the control of the church and/or the state went back and forth for centuries. Charters from the Pope or the Emperor ostensibly protected faculty from external interference, but charters could be amended or taken away. The result was that academic freedom was not absolute. However, as research universities proliferated in the late 19th century, an increasing number of graduate students studied in Europe, particularly in Germany, and assumed faculty positions. These new faculty members, desirous of an atmosphere that facilitated freedom of inquiry, imported the idea of *Lehrfreiheit*, defined by the historian Frederick Rudolph as "the right of the university professor to freedom of inquiry and to freedom of teaching, the right to study and to report on his findings in an atmosphere of consent" (1962, p. 412). Accordingly, most scholars of academic freedom point to the late 19th century as the beginnings of the modern conception of academic freedom. The structure of universities did not change, however, and the beliefs of these new faculty members inevitably conflicted with existing institutional frameworks.

The vast expansion of the academy during the late-19th and early-20th centuries established research as a vital aspect of academic life, yet the president and board

of trustees of an institution retained power over daily activities. Faculty were expected to relay inherited knowledge, not develop research agendas that yielded new theories and insights. As a result, new faculty members who believed in the concept of *Lehrfreiheit* found themselves conflicting with administrators over ideals that gradually evolved into contemporary notions of academic freedom.

Eventually, scholars in a variety of disciplines created groups, unions, professional associations, and/or national faculty associations to advance the rights of faculty and the notion of academic freedom. In the United States, for example, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) was established in 1915 as an organization that advocated for professors whose research or beliefs were under attack and whose job security was threatened. Within two years of its creation, the AAUP dealt with over 30 cases pertaining to violations of academic freedom. In 1940, the AAUP created a statement that many institutions in the United States and elsewhere continue to use to define academic freedom in their faculty handbooks. In part, the statement reads:

The purpose of this statement is to promote public understanding and support of academic freedom and tenure and agreement upon procedures to assure them in colleges and universities. Institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free speech for truth and its exposition. Academic freedom is essential to these purposes... (1940)

The Genesis of Tenure

As a protective mechanism for professors who researched and/or taught controversial topics, the concept of tenure was established by the AAUP. Since faculty members do not enjoy the professional mobility of employees in other sectors, the assumption was that professors needed the job security provided by tenure, if academic freedom was to be a meaningful reality in American higher education. The founders of the AAUP recognized that scholarly progress obliges space and tolerance for speculation and error. As Albert Einstein wryly noted about his own work, “that fellow Einstein makes things convenient for himself. Each year he retracts what he wrote the year before” (Ohanian, 2008, p. 253). This statement by Einstein reveals a truism recognized by professors engaged in the process of scholarly inquiry: To challenge conventional wisdom, scholars must regularly advance unpopular theories that may be initially flawed, yet

undergo refinement over time.

Throughout the 20th century, a series of legal rulings strengthened the bond between academic freedom and the American university. Justice William J. Brennan, writing for the United States Supreme Court in the 1967 case of *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, was especially pointed in his defense of academic freedom, writing "...our Nation is deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us and not merely to the teachers concerned.... The Nation's future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to its robust exchange of ideas which discovers truth out of a multitude of tongues, [rather] than through any kind of authoritative selection" (*Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, 1967). Brennan's statement evinces a belief that the concept of academic freedom is greater than the protection it affords a single individual. Academic freedom is, in fact, essential for any nation that values democratic principles.

As previously noted, tenure was offered at over 95% of the traditional postsecondary institutions in the United States at the beginning of the 21st century. Individuals occasionally criticized tenure as inefficient (Chait, 1998), and modifications, such as longer probationary periods, post-tenure review, and family-friendly tenure clock policies, were instituted over the latter half of the 20th century. Tenure's importance as a bulwark for academic freedom, however, was regularly confirmed after much investigation and deliberation (Chait, 2002). Support for tenure and academic freedom was not only voiced by individuals working in colleges and universities, but by individuals outside academia (Lindholm, Astin, Sax, & Korn, 2002; Selingo, 2003, May 2, pp. A10, A17).

Academic Freedom in Context

Historical Contexts of Academic Freedom Outside of the United States

Although the enshrinement of academic freedom occurred in the 20th century, violations of academic freedom have occurred nearly as long as there have been universities. The Catholic Church, for example, did not—and does not—allow the teaching of ideas that contradict accepted doctrine. Martin Luther lost his university position in Germany because he was in conflict with the church. National governments have also circumscribed academic work for fear that a tertiary institution may contradict the ideology of the ruling party. Nazi Germany,

of course, is perhaps the clearest example of a government that did not allow any freedom of expression in its universities, but examples also exist throughout the 20th century in Chile during the Pinochet regime, Zimbabwe during Mugabe's rule, and Malaysia during Prime Minister Mahathir's tenure.

In Latin America, the concept of academic freedom has gone hand in glove with the idea of university autonomy. The Cordoba Reforms of 1918 pushed Latin American countries to make their tertiary institutions autonomous and, consequently, to allow academic freedom to flourish. Indeed, this action not only enabled academic freedom for faculty, but also for students (Walter, 1968). Although many countries, like the United States, provided indirect support for everyone on a campus, including students, to have academic freedom, countries in Latin America have emphasized student voice in addition to the professoriate. As elsewhere, there have been infringements on academic freedom and autonomy throughout the 20th century, but the idea of academic freedom has been a hallmark of academic life in Latin America.

Contemporary International Contexts

Traditional Infringements on Academic Freedom

Many countries, such as those in the former Soviet Union, progressed toward academic freedom during the 20th century (Altbach, 2001b). One also must acknowledge that, in countries such as Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, Iran, and many others, very little academic freedom has existed as it pertains to how the term has traditionally been defined. Surely, the historical traditions of a country inform its current positions. The same may be said with regard to how societies have positioned universities and the concept of academic freedom, whether that country is the United States, France, India, or China. In what follows, we offer an overview of traditional infringements on academic freedom that largely occur in countries without a history of academic freedom.

To be sure, some older institutions in Central and Eastern Europe had a history of autonomy and freedom that was stifled during much of the 20th century, either by the Nazis or the Soviets. In the late 20th century, however, many of these institutions have seen a resurgence of autonomy with the collapse of communism (Altbach, 2001b). The free search for inquiry has trumped ideology and political control. In other former Soviet-bloc countries, such as the Ukraine, however,

academic freedom is largely absent.

In general, countries in Asia and Africa that had colonial rule have had a less firmly-rooted sense of academic freedom, and it has been less well protected (Altbach, 2001a). The British and the French, primarily, acknowledged the need for their colonies to have tertiary institutions, but their universities were seen more as training grounds for jobs, particularly for the civil service sector, than as intellectual arenas engaged in the search and struggle for truth (Altbach, 2004). Nevertheless, throughout the colonial era, many universities were arenas of protest, even though such protests were not sanctioned. Government interference in these institutions has been more intrusive than in the Americas, Europe, or Australia, where academic freedom and institutional autonomy has been more firmly established.

In a recent text on academic freedom in Hong Kong, Jan Currie and her colleagues write about the concerns commercialization has caused in industrialized countries like Australia, and they document abuses that have taken place in Hong Kong (Currie, Petersen, & Mok, 2006). The vice chancellor of a university in Hong Kong, for example, warned a faculty pollster in 2000 to suppress polls which showed that the region's then-chief executive, Tung Chee-Hwa, was unpopular with Hong Kong residents. Similarly, Philip Altbach notes how "Chinese academics routinely censor themselves. Criticism, loss of jobs, or even imprisonment ... can result from publishing research or opinions that contradict the views of the government" (Altbach, 2007, p. 49). The lack of freedom of speech in China can be traced to the first Emperor, Qin Shihuang, who burned books and may have imprisoned and killed scholars (Bodde, 1986). Such incidents demonstrate how historical perspectives on academic freedom in a given culture can shape contemporary viewpoints and conditions.

Malaysia and Singapore have had very little in terms of a history of academic freedom. As government employees, faculty in Malaysia do not believe they have the right or ability to speak out on topics that might be controversial to the government (Altbach, 2001a). Faculty in Singapore occasionally find their research hampered by defamation lawsuits (Sim, 2011) and informal pressure by the city-state's single-party system (Verweij & Pelizzo, 2009). Shared governance does not really exist. In Myanmar, the university is periodically closed (Lall, 2008). Afghanistan has no tradition of academic freedom, and faculty and students have been frequently tortured and killed for expressing their opinions. Iranian social scientists have been sentenced to death for expressing support for democracy

(Altbach, 2007, p. 49).

The academic freedom of individuals working in universities throughout the world is frequently curtailed. Two universities in India prohibited professors from addressing the media after academics made statements critical of antiterrorist policies (Rajagopal, 2003). In Egypt, a well-known sociologist named Saad Eddin Ibrahim was arrested for “defaming” Egypt (MacFarquhar, 2001). Abdul Sattar Jawad, a university dean and English professor, fled Iraq because of death threats based on the ideas he espoused (Scholars at Risk, n. d.). Abdolfattah Soltani is currently serving an 18-year prison sentence in Iran for establishing a human rights center. Pham Ming Huang, a math professor who was recently released from prison in Vietnam, was unable to exercise the fundamental right of free expression. Aziz Bari, a law professor at the University of Malaysia, was suspended from his position for a comment he made on a public website pertaining to law. At the University of Bahrain, Abdul Jalil Al-Singace, a professor of mechanical engineering, was sentenced to life in prison for his pro-democracy activism during the Bahraini uprising. Professor Kemal Gürüz, a scholar of chemical engineering and former head of Turkey’s Council of Higher Education, was jailed in 2012 for his alleged role in the 1997 political transition in Turkey (Scholars at Risk, n. d.).

Again, many institutions came about during the colonial era, and their freedoms were restricted. Since independence, countries that were formerly colonized have rarely enabled faculty to hold tenure in order to protect academic freedom. The lack of a democratic tradition, coupled with political instability and ongoing debates about fundamentalism and secular reform, have created a particularly tenuous position for Arabic universities. As Altbach (2001a) has noted, “in Egypt, Algeria, and some of the Arabian Gulf states, academics who support fundamentalist groups may face arrest or other restrictions. In Sudan, which has had a pro-fundamentalist regime, dissident views from the other side engender repression” (p. 212). In Ethiopia, opposition to government policies has led to the summary firing of 40 Ethiopian academics; many of them ended up in jail. In countries suffering through American invasions, such as Iraq, there also has been little, if any, movement toward enabling academic freedom.

In Zimbabwe, Paul Zeleza (2003) has documented how Robert Mugabe’s regime has resorted to a reign of terror to silence academics; the struggle for institutional autonomy and academic freedom became seen as a desire for greater societal freedoms which resulted in the imprisonment and murder of academics (p. 161). Two Ethiopian academics who spoke to students in a university seminar

about academic freedom were put in prison (Akker, 2002). Elsewhere, entire systems have been put at risk; under Slobadan Milosevic, all Serbian institutions lost their ability to exercise academic freedom and shared governance; in its place, politicians took over the governing councils (Akker, 2002). The important text, *Women in Academia: Gender and Academic Freedom in Africa*, outlines numerous cases where women academics were harassed and their work was curtailed (Sall, 2000). In Iran, seven professors of an online university serving members of the Baha'i faith were sentenced to 30 years imprisonment because the government ruled that Baha'i are barred from postsecondary education. In Turkey, academics continue to be prosecuted and imprisoned under Article 301 of the penal code which criminalizes "insults" to Turkish identity, nation, state, or official interpretations of history. The Nobel Laureate, Orhan Pamuk, is perhaps the most famous example of someone prosecuted under Article 301 because he referred to the Armenian genocide as "genocide" (Heisler, 2007).

As shown by these examples, many developing countries have seen the rise of tertiary institutions, but a simultaneous commitment to institutional autonomy and academic freedom has not occurred (Mazawi, 2005). History is nevertheless repeating itself. Academic freedom was cherished by American graduate students who studied in Germany in the late-19th century (O'Neil, 2005). Likewise, in the 20th and 21st centuries, students from third world countries who trained in the United States and Europe have returned with a desire for greater control over what they are able to say, write, and think.

Commercialization as a New Infringement on Academic Freedom

Recently, a good deal of discussion also has occurred in Australia, the United States, and much of the industrialized world about academic freedom, but from what we think of as a different perspective based on a newer concern. An extensive empirical study of academic freedom in Australia, for example, was undertaken by Carole Kayrooz, Pamela Kinnear, and Paul Preston in 2001. Their summation is helpful to quote at length:

Academic freedom now operates within a financial environment characterized by increasing reliance on industry research funding, fee-based courses and consulting services. These trends, in turn, involve closer attention to the needs of "consumers" and "markets." The impact of this environment on social scientists' experience of academic freedom is a matter of some concern for the quality of public debate and the health of

democratic pluralism. (p. viii)

Responses to the study were immediate and passionate. Gerard Noonan and Aban Contractor highlighted the urgency with which universities were identifying revenue streams for continued financial health. They further outlined how professorial judgment had been jeopardized by an increased reliance on full fee-paying international students. Some academics “alleged that they or their colleagues have felt under intense pressure to allow substandard work to be passed or be re-marked—invariably upwards—to keep as many full-fee paying students as possible” (2001, January 20, p. 5). The *Sydney Morning Herald* called for a government inquiry, editorializing that the integrity of tertiary education in Australia was being imperiled by questions about the evaluation processes for course grading and research funding (Hamilton, 2001, January 2, p. 10). Clive Hamilton, Director of the Australian Institute (which sponsored the initial study), urged universities to interrogate “why a large number of academics, at considerable risk to their careers, would make the claims they have. Why would they lie?” (p. 10). Henceforth, there has been continuing, if not increasing, concern that academic freedom in Australia’s university system is at risk, and the culprit is commercialization.

Similarly, concerns in the United States about the commercialization of the university and its implications for academic freedom have been considerable over the past two decades. Newfield (2003), Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), and Stein (2004), for example, have conducted extensive research that documents how academic freedom in the United States gets short-circuited as universities enter the marketplace. The quest for external funding and sponsorship not only circumscribes the sorts of research that academics undertake, but frequently the findings for one’s research may be embargoed or altered based on the priorities of the funder. More recently, the rise of for-profit higher education and the dramatic increase in part-time faculty has only increased the concern that academic freedom in the United States is becoming a historic artifact, rather than a central totem of the 21st century institution.

Although much has been made about administrative interference with academics’ freedom to give a student the mark that he or she deserves, multiple other areas exist where a scholar’s academic freedom has been placed at risk. Currie and Newsome (1998), for instance, point out how individual autonomy has lessened in universities because of government cutbacks in funding, increased governmental regulation, and greater control. They make a linkage between

greater accountability and a lessening of academic freedom with regard to the kind of research one undertakes and the manner in which one advances through the research process. Surveys conducted by Craig McInnis (1998) and the National Tertiary Education Union (McConville & Allport, 2000) support the assertions by Currie and Newsome. They discover an increase in the number of respondents who feel their intellectual freedom has been compromised. The same sorts of observations may be made throughout the industrialized world as institutions become more market-oriented.

These perspectives, informed by experiences in Western educational environments, contend that academic freedom is identifiable, worthy of protection, and under attack. If professors no longer have the autonomy to confer grades and produce research as they see fit, they become managed professionals (Rhoades, 1998) beholden to the values of “academic capitalism” and the marketplace (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). The marketplace, in turn, is viewed as antagonistic to the values underpinning academic freedom and individual autonomy.

Philosophical essays on academic freedom in Australia have explored similar terrain. Raimond Gaita (1997) notes that the search for truth, once considered a fundamental aspect of academic life, has been sublimated by an overemphasis on job training: “The universities are now marked by a pervasive mendacity” he wrote, “in their descriptions of what they have done to save subjects and jobs” (p. 18). And yet, Gaita observes that government support for tertiary education has decreased, resulting in even greater reliance on the marketplace.

In an interesting example of Lyotard’s notion of hyper-reality, Tony Coady’s (2000) *Why Universities Matter: A Conversation about Values, Means and Directions* was first accepted, and then rejected, by Melbourne University Press. The essays in the book pertained in general to academic freedom and were critical of the commercialization of the university. The chair of the University Press board was the chief executive of what was then Melbourne University Private. The authors alleged that the book had been quashed as an example of what present-day universities will do to stifle dissent; the authors were able to find an alternative venue for publication, and given the press surrounding the censorship, the book has done remarkably well.

In the text, Seamus Miller (2000) wrote against privatization because it reduced the ability to “pursue knowledge for its own sake” (p. 111). Bruce Langtry (2000) recalled an earlier era when a chancellor “while recognizing the need for instruction in what is ‘useful’... talked mainly in terms of cultivating the minds of young men, and the introduction of learning, wisdom, and virtue” (p. 86). In a

particularly dyspeptic passage, John Maloney (2000) went so far as to point out that in the past, mission statements were not needed because we knew that the higher education of our students on the one hand, and our dedication to research and the dissemination of its fruits on the other, were our essential purpose. Those who did not understand our purpose were unaware, ignorant, or perverse. (p.75).

From these perspectives, the university has been transformed. Academic staff were once able to pursue and convey truth in their teaching and in their research. The role of the institution was transparent, and safeguards existed for academic freedom to flourish. The conditions have changed, and such safeguards are no longer in place.

Simon Marginson and Mark Considine (2000) do not directly discuss academic freedom in *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*, yet they are quite clear about the effects of commercialization. They begin their important book by speaking of “paradise lost” and identify universities where individualism has existed and asserted “itself as a total right to academic freedom, expressed with equal plausibility as a responsibility to defend and criticize the dominant cultures of the day” (p. 1). However, that paradise, argue Marginson and Considine, has changed. Research has moved toward work that will be funded and is risk averse. The rise of business, commerce, and accounting courses and the demise of the humanities and sciences is a result of commercialization. Applied rather than basic research, and short-term rather than long-term projects, are favored. The result is that the academic no longer has the freedom to pursue research wherever he or she would like to go.

Although these sorts of concerns have been largely discussed in the industrialized world, universities in developing countries also have to deal with the commercialization of the university and the effects of globalization. Paul Zeleza (2003), for example, points out in his work how threats to academic freedom in Africa have become more economically focused as the state has gotten stronger. Institutional autonomy, he suggests, has been eroded and the health of the intellectual enterprise degraded.

Further, one of the more significant transformations in the academy in general, and with regard to academic freedom in particular, pertains to the internet and social media. A generation ago, academic freedom dealt with what an individual spoke or wrote as an academic. The internet, however, has not only changed the publishing format, but also how one thinks about publishing. The internet has made international conversations routine and the sharing of data in the cloud, or otherwise, commonplace. In this light, the internet is a major vehicle for the

advancement of academic freedom that enables the open exchange of information and ideas. However, internet freedom is based upon national and state policies.

Governments seek to control online activities by blocking and filtering content. Those who seek to subvert the restrictions are susceptible to sanction and penalties. As noted above, many bloggers who are academics have been imprisoned in Iran and elsewhere. At times, governments even have shut down the country's internet in its entirety in order to restrict free speech and curtail human rights. The challenge for academic institutions is that, as their communication and work becomes more "virtual," such sanctions go to the heart of academic work. Increasingly, student communications are monitored, and hundreds of students have been expelled from universities because of what they have posted online. Both students and professors have been arrested for their expression of peaceful views online.

Current Organizational Responses to Infringements on Academic Freedom

The challenges that are being confronted by academics have been a matter of concern not only for individuals but also for local, regional, and international agencies and groups. In 1988, the World University Service issued the *Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom*. The creation of the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) came about because of a UNESCO meeting where participants realized that greater awareness needed to be developed throughout the world about the dangers many academics face (Akker, 2002).

In 1990, a group of academics and policy analysts issued the *Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility* that spoke to the need to protect freedom in inquiry. In 1995, a similar statement was issued as the *Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility*. In 1999, Scholars at Risk started as a worldwide, freestanding organization dedicated to bringing attention to academics who were being imprisoned or having their freedoms curtailed. The Arab Society for Academic Freedom began in Jordan in 2008 to bring attention to human rights abuses in the Middle East. The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa has published several texts pertaining to academic freedom and human rights. These sorts of responses suggest that academic freedom is more than a concept that pertains to an individual institution or even a country. When regional and international organizations become involved, the implication is that the idea transcends a unitary perspective and has implications for a broader constituency. We expand on this idea in the

conclusion.

Conclusion: Whither Academic Freedom?

We began by pointing out that there are multiple ways to analyze academic freedom. One plausible framework is to recognize the contingencies that come within nation-states. Others have usefully pointed out that countries such as China do not have a historical or cultural tradition akin to what academic freedom suggests and entails. Even in the United States, different sorts of institutions, such as religiously-oriented colleges and universities, have different frameworks and interpretations that govern academic freedom. Further, it has also been pointed out that more recent theoretical frameworks, such as postmodernism, provide a different analysis of academic freedom than those that call upon traditional liberal humanist ideals (Tierney, 1993).

We wish to avoid a historical determinism that says current actions are inevitably the result of a country's particular traditions. At the same time, history and culture matter. The different histories of countries such as China, the United States and the Soviet Union have placed universities and the idea of academic freedom on different footings. Further, countries change. Although the academic freedom experienced in China may differ from that of the United Kingdom, one ought not to assume that such an idea is ever frozen in time. How one experiences academic freedom in the 21st century, particularly in a Western country such as Canada, may be less than what existed in the 20th century in part because of globalization. At the same time, China may well be experiencing greater freedoms today than a generation ago. Progress in classrooms and symposia are occurring; indeed, even this article and special issue are examples of greater academic freedom.

We are also experiencing a new form of infringement on academic freedom which has to do with the commercialization of the university. Although these sorts of concerns are in evidence throughout the world, the grossest violations appear to be in industrialized nations that are poised to commercialize knowledge. To be sure, such issues, as well as the advance of social media and the development of new sorts of institutions such as for-profit universities, will remain as critical concerns.

At the same time, we have demonstrated that there are citizens of countries throughout the world for whom not only speech has been threatened and curtailed,

but also their very lives, returning us to traditional threats on academic freedom. As Martin Heisler has pointed out:

The current challenges confronting academic freedom in the United States [are] serious. But important as those are, in most cases they affect some of the higher desiderata on Abraham Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970); academic freedom—and especially the freedom of academics—in much of the rest of the world often engages the most basic human needs: physical security, liberty and the means for livelihood. Academic freedom is a collective good [and] somewhat abstract. The freedom of academics from imprisonment, torture, or death is concrete. (2007, pp. 347–348)

Such a point is important and highlights that, even though academic lives exist in geographic and temporal locations, the idea of academic freedom and its infringements go beyond a bounded lad or particular time. That is, Heisler emphasizes that academic freedom is an idea that binds individuals together regardless of geography. From this perspective, one must speak up for those who suffer persecution for their ideas. Simply stated, individuals continue to be trained as academics in the disciplines in which they wish to study. Disciplines have intellectual traditions that transcend geography, as does the academic profession itself. Burton Clark (1987), for example, has written about the four cultures of the faculty: (1) the national culture where the individual works, (2) the institution where the individual teaches, (3) the discipline or profession of the scholar, and (4) the profession of the academic. These last two cultures—the discipline and the profession—are largely transcendent. One does not study “Turkish engineering” or teach “Armenian calculus.”

Academic freedom, as a transcendent value, needs to be protected regardless of location. We fully appreciate cultural differences and how a nation's identity may shape the manner in which academic life is organized. Nevertheless, when an institution threatens physical harm to an individual because of the nature of one's ideas and writings, it ought not to be viewed as a relativistic matter left to the sociocultural mores of an institution or country. Indeed, a threat to academic freedom in a faraway land, regardless of geography, is a threat to academic freedom everywhere.

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