



#journodefender

Turning trolling against journalists on its head

"Perhaps we need to accept the fact that larger forces are at play that wish to rearrange the values we hold dear and what we want to be as a democracy in the Philippines. Hence, we are fighting not just our local politicians, but we are standing up against a re-ordering of values in the world."

MELINDA DE JESUS, JOURNALIST , PHILIPPINES



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This report is an edited version of a Fojo Media Institute pilot study, in association with the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, aimed to investigate the potential and lay the ground for an international centre that deals with computational propaganda against journalism, i.e. hate, harassment and threats, with emphasis on female journalists. The pilot study was made possible through a grant by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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CONTENT

PROLOGUE.....	5
INTRODUCTION	6
Ch 1 - MAKING COLD WAR SCARE TACTICS WORK AGAIN	7
Introduction.....	8
The mud on the ground	10
Why hatred, harassment and threats?	10
The diluted role of Journalism.....	11
Journalists in the firing line	12
The effect on journalism - self-censorship	12
Female journalists particularly targeted.....	12
The “weaponization” of information	13
Misinformation/Computational propaganda - the purpose	15
Troll factories, propaganda and how to influence perceptions and decisions.....	16
Cambridge Analytica - the tip of the iceberg.....	17
Ch 2 - “SENATOR, WE RUN ADS”	18
Tech platforms and media’s sustainability	21
What Facebook does	21
What Twitter does	24
What Google does	25
What messaging apps are up to	27
Ch 3 - GLOBAL TROLLING - FIVE CASES.....	28
Mexico	29
The political landscape	30
Civil society, human rights	30
Legal framework	31
Media and freedom of speech	31
Attacks against journalists	32
Internet publishing - most independent, most exposed	33
Violence against female journalists.....	33
Egypt.....	35
The media and freedom of speech	35
Internet, social media.....	36
Harassment of journalists	36
The standing of female journalists.....	38
Ukraine	41
The political landscape	41
The role of civil society.....	42
The media landscape.....	42
Freedom of the press.....	43
Silencing journalists	44
Trolling	44

Pakistan	47
The political landscape	47
Civil society	47
The media.....	48
The media and freedom of speech.....	48
Digital gender gap	49
Philippines	51
The political landscape	51
The 2016 election campaign	52
Thousands killed and Duterte still popular	52
The Media	52
Women in media	54
Civil society.....	54
Women in Politics.....	54
Limitations to freedoms	55
Silencing journalists	55
Trolling	56
To sum it up.....	58
Ch 4- JOURNALISTS - LIVE SURVEY	59
The survey	60
Conclusions	70
Ch 5 - POLICING HATERS AND FAKERS.....	71
Taking action	73
EPILOGUE	76
Fojo Media Institute - #journodefender	76
ACRONYMS, ONLINE MEDIA AND PROPAGANDA INDUSTRY TERMINOLOGY	78



PROLOGUE

This report describes and analyses how online propaganda against journalists across the world - through hate, harassment, threats and fabricated news - undermines independent reporting, sows doubt among the public and makes journalists, in particular female journalists, open for online attacks and physical abuse to the detriment of freedom of expression and open, democratic societies.

To stem the tidal wave of mostly anonymous online propaganda against journalists, in particularly female journalists across the world who are exposed to unacceptable amounts of online sexual abuse, Fojo Media Institute, the publisher of this report, plans to set up #journodefender, a global hub to monitor, investigate and take action against the-ends-justifies-the-means trolling with particular focus on assisting journalism in countries that are particularly badly affected.

Fojo Media Institute has, since 1972, built capacity for 50,000 journalists from more than 100 countries and supported the establishment of journalism training institutions and media centres in a large number of countries.

Fojo Media Institute is presently active in Sweden and around 20 countries in Sub Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, South Asia and South East Asia.

INTRODUCTION

On the surface of everything, hate, harassment and threats online may look like the work of generally spiteful people and pranksters anonymously aiming to hurt their target for the sake of it. Every generation has people like this.

What we are looking at here extends far beyond adolescent behaviour:¹ Our focus is on those incidences when as many as 100,000 tweets an hour are suddenly fired off on Twitter in order to insult, threaten or intimidate, be it against a journalist or a public person, and where there is increasing evidence that behind it all are clandestine, sinister forces taking political aim at adversaries. In other words, what we are dealing with is organised - take your pick - disinformation, misinformation and propaganda.

It is not even about hate, threats, lies and deceit. It seems to be more about sowing doubt and causing division as part of a multi-staged attack against liberal democracy itself, intended to pave the way for strong-armed authoritarian rulers. Scare people, divide them, subdue them. And journalists are first in line.

There has been a significant increase in the understanding of the role of dis/misinformation and propaganda online and in social media, at least among a concerned public over the last 18-24 months due to the blatant manipulation of voters ahead of the Brexit referendum and the US presidential election.

This overstepping of the mark by partially identified forces, and the consequences for democratic processes, has not gone unnoticed: leading democracy and freedom indices have shown a dramatic reduction in freedom of expression in many countries, including the US, which used to lead by example with an extremely vigorous press. The freedom of the press index in the U.S, measured by the Freedom House, dropped by 7 points between 2006 and 2016². Some of this could be attributed to the economic decline of legacy media, some of it to a president who encourages attacks against the press.

The general public and politicians have been

reminded of how fragile Western style-democracies actually are, and investigations are underway into how to deal with online threats to freedom of speech and democracy as well as hate, threats and harassment against individuals.

This report takes note of recent, rapidly changing trends but is a work in progress. We need to find out and establish the most efficient and constructive means of addressing organised, mostly clandestine activities aimed at distorting public sentiment and rigging the political process without destroying the freedoms we have.

To move the goalposts somewhat is part of most political game plans; everyone tries to put themselves at an advantage. As journalists, our mission is to make that process as transparent as possible, to enable constituencies to understand the political landscape and to be able to make real and meaningful democratic choices.

As such, the intention is to propose an approach that includes action-oriented investigative journalism, plus an interlocutor and coordinator role in turning propaganda against journalism on its head. There are hundreds of projects and organisations that all deal with defending human rights, freedom of speech and independent journalism. It is envisaged that the outcome of the proposed centre's work will add a gender perspective and further substance and support to all the many initiatives already being carried out across the globe.

To fill all the voids and gaps that map propaganda campaigns against journalists, an independent journalism movement is a massive undertaking.

This report has obvious limitations: the objective is practical: to suggest what specific measures a centre can take to stem the flow of hate and harassment against journalists. What journalists do best is to investigate, as we are taught at journalism school, to the best of our abilities and without currying favour, to "write the first draft of history".

The leaning in this report towards initially

1 In 2014, New Scientist journalist Aviva Rutkin suggested five very viable ways of dealing with rape and death threats online: Save everything, Report the abuse, Filter it, Hire a detective, Tell their mum, New Scientist, 10 Dec 2014. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22429996.000-the-fight-back-against-rape-and-death-threats-online/>

2 Freedom House, Freedom of the press 2017 report, United States press freedom score evolution, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/freedom-press-2017>

supporting female journalists is calculated. Female journalists take more flak than male journalists and it sets them back even further career-wise. In many workplaces female media practitioners have to deal with impenetrable glass ceilings and sexual harassment. What we found in the five countries surveyed was that of the independent ventures set up in very harsh media environments many are led by women who felt it necessary to break loose from workplaces that had a strong patriarchal culture so they could report on the misuse of political and economic power and socio-economic disparities.

The impact of US president Donald Trump's election campaign and the way he carries out his administration's policies via social media postings (tweets) has influenced this study more than we would have wanted. We found it unavoidable. The message the US president sends to not only his most passionate followers but even more so to leaders in less democratic environments has proven to be extremely damaging in a very short time frame.

There are some clear outcomes from the US elections that led up to Donald Trump's presidency: it has shown that the vulnerability of the internet, the complete lack of data privacy, the apparent need for democratic regulation regarding the transparency of social media platforms and the fragility of democracy have come home to roost.

The way in which Vladimir Putin's Russia

influences the political processes in democratic, reasonably transparent countries through intense trolling is an important part of the picture.³

As this report attempts to emphasise, however, trolling comes in many shapes and forms and not all trolling, by a long shot, can be blamed on the Kremlin or Trumpism. Trolling, per definition secretive, unaccounted for and often supportive of controversial anti-democratic, anti-immigrant and misogynous views not expressed in the open by elected politicians, has become a national and international menace.

The common global denominator is that hate, harassment and threats against journalists online tend to be part of organised propaganda schemes linked together in online distributed networks - aimed at lowering the ceiling for independent reporting by making it a dangerous pursuit.

There are too many warning signs out there that democracy's own foundations are slowly being eroded and that urgent action is needed.

In the next few chapters we will try and explain how journalists - as is the case with many other professionals who stick their necks out - are increasingly targeted by trolls, what the social media platforms are doing about it (or not), how societies deal with this new threat to democracy and not the least what is needed to, in particular, support and strengthen media practitioners in autocratic countries and shaky democracies.

³ Act.tv gives an excellent graphic account for how Russian trolling operates:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psmpWYuCb8s>



1

MAKING COLD WAR SCARE TACTICS WORK AGAIN

#TRUMP

#CROOKEDHILLARY

#LOCKHERUP

#CLEANTHESWAMP

#FAILINGNEWYORKTIMES

#RELEASETHEMEMO

#DEARMARK

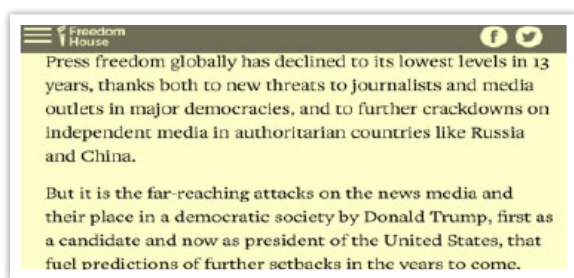
Some of the Twitter hashtags above are trolling hashtags used during the Trump campaign by Russian internet trolls while the #ReleaseTheMemo hashtag was a combined effort between US and Russian trolls to try and stop the investigation of the Trump campaign's possible collaboration with Russia, what president Trump called "the witch hunt".

The #dearmark hashtag links to tweets and letters to Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg from independent media that is suffering from Facebook's dominance and the effects of trolling against them.

INTRODUCTION

In its 2018 report, Freedom House, the US global democracy watchdog originally set up during the New Deal era by Democrats and Republicans, states that global press freedom has fallen to its lowest level in 13 years.

Even renowned modern democracies are dropping back, a decline that is also linked to the media being in financial trouble due to the disruption of old business models, primarily by social media platforms.



Source: Freedom House, *Freedom of the Press* 2018

Journalists have become prime targets in online campaigns with links to Russia, funded by anonymous money and given legitimacy by the US president himself who pronounces that the media is “the enemy of the people”. And everything seems to be allowed.

It is therefore not surprising that two thirds of mainly female journalists in six countries participating in an online survey think that hatred, harassment and threats against them are linked to political campaigns.

In recent years, social media has completely turned the old media and political rulebook upside down.

Social media, with more than half of the world’s population linked up, fast tracks political messaging in a way we have never experienced before. Social media platforms have become a tool for authoritarian and non-democratic forces to subversively target democratic countries by disseminating extreme, inflammatory information via the deep internet without easily being traced.

Hatred, harassment, dis/misinformation or propaganda have found a new and potent way of invading and distorting the open democratic discourse. Fearmongering aimed at sowing distrust and division are at the top of hidden agendas.

The present ambiguous situation, brought about by digital inventions over the past decades and launched in more or less lawless vacuums, suits the anti-democratic, populist forces that are playing on and exploiting the real and perceived side effects of globalisation.

Like never before, a particular issue, often an emotive one, can be catapulted to the top of political agendas almost instantly through campaigns that start on social media.

This is because there are no longer - for better and for worse - gatekeepers sifting through endless press releases, then deciding which ones to make a story out of and publish. Instead, any political message can be tweeted unvetted to everyone out there.

And there is not yet, partly due to the cross-border nature of the beast, any regulation in place in countries that take freedom of speech seriously that can balance the positives of instant global communication with the negatives of social media and the internet being used by political forces undermining liberal democracy.

The role that social media plays and its interaction with the news media has become evident during Donald Trump’s presidency. Whatever is posted on Twitter sends signals to an army of paid and unpaid trolls who pick up on the issues. Cyberwarfare is an important part of the picture. Russia and an increasing number of other countries are funding their own troll factories and are placing undercover ads and twisted propagandistic content on social media that distorts a particular issue.

It has become the new “norm” that anonymous “weaponised” social media postings, i.e. emotional language peppered with hatred, sexual innuendos against women, threats of violence and fabricated, sensational propaganda news, are planted on social media platforms and gain prominence through bots (automated robots) that push up the postings or tweets in the search engine rankings.

This trend towards the weaponization of social media, boosted by the manipulation of data adapted to suit individual voter profiles, influenced the outcome of the UK Brexit referendum, the US election and delivered an extremely dramatic outcome in the Philippines with the election of Rodrigo Duterte⁴. Thus far, the UK Information Commissioner’s Office has concluded that the Brexit campaign used social media illicitly. In the USA, investigations of the Trump campaign and social media companies are ongoing.

⁴ How important the matter is can be understood by the Special Counsel’s investigation of the Trump campaigns alleged collaboration with Russia, the UK parliamentary investigation on illegal external funding and social media action of the Brexit leave campaign and the interrogations of Facebook in the USA and in the EU.

As described in the five country cases in this report, in the wrong hands, the internet - as a highly centralised and easily controlled infrastructure - serves authoritarian governments by suppressing their subjects more comprehensively than was possible in the pre-internet era.

Having said this, as with all new technologies, they can be harnessed for both good and for bad. Journalists, politicians and civil society are busy learning what needs to be done to defend and expand democracy in this new era of “distributed networks” with political agendas threatening current political structures.

Thus far there has been a lack of coordination and a more precise understanding of the modus operandi of such clandestine political campaigns and what to do about them, which tends to increase the fear factor.

A starting point, however, is to subject social media publishing to human rights law, to make social media platforms answerable for how their use of private data affects political life and to have independent monitoring mechanisms in place to disclose politically-motivated hatred, harassment and threats, as well as other scare tactics and the use of “alternative facts” online - for which a proposed international HUB to defend and assist journalists with facts and tools online is essential.

The mud on the ground

It is important to underline and understand the muddy political reality from which the forces of disinformation are drawing their energy.

The dire situation a significant section of Americans has felt, in particular in the US Rust Belt, with a sense that no-one listened to them or represented them, has powered populism like nothing else. The Rust Belt’s traditional political party, the Democrats, had ignored class politics in favour of identity politics for years. There was no establishment candidate in the presidential campaign field who was trustworthy. Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders exploited this void.

Similar sentiment in Europe gave Brexit its momentum and has given rise to anti-immigration parties finding fertile ground in Europe’s own left-behind regions and constituencies.

Online propaganda against journalists, the

messengers, is just another targeted version of propaganda against politicians and the general public they represent.

In the early days, only ten years ago, the internet was seen as the best democracy-enhancing tool since the invention of the printing press. It was the new technology that would level the playing field - promising access to education and free speech for everyone, not least in spreading the democracy gospel to poor and autocratic nations. All politicians in powerful democracies, the international community, everyone - left, centre, right - praised the promise of the internet.

Why hatred, harassment and threats?

Why has online hatred so easily taken on a life of its own and made a significant part of constituencies in supposedly freedom-loving and reasonably well-off countries so eager to embrace aggressive, violent language and outright lies? What purpose does it serve? Whose agenda is being served by cooking up a storm online against journalists? The short answer: organised hate speech, harassment and threats against journalists is an integrated part of a misinformation/propaganda activity carried out with the intention of influencing journalists and creating a climate of fear and discomfort.⁵

Isolated incidents (of which some really are isolated, and others are directly linked to troll and bot activities) that cause harm and concern to the extent that 30% of female Swedish journalists have considered leaving the profession, are bad enough⁶. It would be disastrous for the profession of journalism and for gender-balanced reporting if female journalists were to lose faith and quit.

What is clear is that the substantial increase in hatred and harassment online, which we also found in all countries that were part of this report is, to a larger extent than previously, linked to global and national misinformation and propaganda campaigns carried out by states and political interest groups, be they involved in cyberwars with global or regional ambitions or agents with cultural, religious or identity motives.⁷

How did it come to this?

The correlation between online threats and physical confrontation is not clear cut, it differs from

⁵ Based on perceptions by surveyed journalists; still to be proven.

⁶ In a survey published by the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) on behalf of the newspaper industry organisation Tidningsutgivarna, it was established that between only 0.5 and 5% of comments about journalists on Swedish websites with an anti-immigration and generally more hateful leaning than the mainstream media, and with largely uncensored commentary fields, included hateful remarks about journalists. <https://www.medievarlden.se/2018/06/nathatet-mot-journalister-kommer-fran-ett-fatal/>

⁷ A computational propaganda project at Oxford University has identified at least 48 governments/countries that are hiring staff or private consultants to conduct trolling to a greater or lesser extent. Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: a Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation, Working Paper No 217.12, Computational Propaganda Project, University of Oxford, p 11, <http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/07/Troops-Trolls-and-Troublemakers.pdf>

situation to situation, country to country and culture to culture, as shown in the survey including six countries carried out and presented in this report.

To take a recent extreme example: it is not even that easy to link the alleged killer of five staffers at Capital Gazette, a small newspaper in Annapolis, USA, to his harassment of women online and to what extent he held grudges against the newspaper because he felt it had treated him badly.

However, drawing attention to yourself online, as with all publishing, does mean an increased possibility of unwelcome visitors. A Swedish female journalist, who has been under constant attack online and who has also been beaten up, describes the vitriol and threats against female journalists as a “low intensity, constant warfare”. “Some say switch it off, it’s just online (...) It doesn’t count. But it does count, and it’s having a real impact on our lives. Hate hurts. And it often fuels action in real life”.⁸

US democracy watchdog Freedom House and a number of journalism organisations are pointing a finger at US President Donald Trump’s role in escalating such hatred and threats against journalists both directly and indirectly: directly by singling out journalists as an “enemy of the American people”, indirectly through the combined effect of Trump’s tweets and demagoguery that rejects critical reports in the media as “fake news” by a “failing New York Times” and other media which has fed social media troll and bot campaigns in which Russian involvement has continued to be spotted.

The election of Donald Trump drove home a new, real and uncomfortable fact: social media with all its deceitful, foul language, bias, opinions, lack of transparency, and hidden agendas increasingly drives much of the global media agenda - not just through the president’s tweets, but even more so through social media’s role (until recently rejected by its owners) as a publisher of content.

The very national and international democratic institutions that have been built with blood, sweat and tears across two world wars and hundreds if not thousands of surrogate wars and mini wars across the world - with hundreds of millions of victims - have proven themselves to be much more open to attack and could come tumbling down if relatively independent voices and unbiased journalism are not able to continue playing an enlightening role in defending a shrinking democratic space.

A positive aspect: There is a growing awareness

that independent journalism is desperately needed to uncover cynical forces, the misuse of power and to make a reasonable judgement on what is true and what is false. Newspapers with an investigative agenda have actually bounced back, gained from “the Trump effect”⁹ (including its derivatives in other markets in which there is a relative free flow of information).

The diluted role of Journalism

It is necessary to take a step back and look at the highly challenging and changing environment journalism has been subjected to through globalisation and digital technology. Partially two sides of the same coin are causing disruption in just about every society, economy, market and profession.

News, publishing and journalism is affected in a number of ways:

- Globalised tech companies have drawn away the advertising revenue of leading print media companies.
- The process of obtaining information makes it easier for everyone to find information online, meaning that the need to buy or subscribe to newspapers has diminished.
- The advent of social media and self-publishing means that the gatekeeping, quality checking role of journalists has both diminished and in some quarters is being questioned. The end result is that although the need for journalism is perhaps larger than ever, news rooms have shrunk by sometimes 50% as loss-making media have retrenched reporters.

There are signs of a revival of liberal news media, characterised by relatively balanced reporting with separate opinion and editorial sections. High-end quality news media has found new global support among a subscription paying elite and middle class or in their respective markets (NY Times, FT, The Guardian, Economist, etc). Major cities in the USA have actually registered an increased level of employment and demand for reporters. In smaller towns the opposite trend, closures and retrenchments, persist. The trend is not even. While so-called mature economies are moving across to digital publishing, emerging economies with newly-literate populations continue to publish and even launch print newspapers.

⁸ Alexandra Pascalidou, giving testimony at the European Commission 2016 Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights, reported by The Sydney Morning Herald, 24 Jun 2016, <https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/swedish-broadcaster-alexandra-pascalidou-describes-online-threats-of-sexual-torture-and-graphic-abuse-20161124-gswuww.html>

⁹ The Trump Effect: An Update - The toxicity is spreading. Psychology Today, Jan 30 2018. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/the-time-cure/201801/the-trump-effect-update>

Journalists in the firing line

Journalists are increasingly being singled out by politicians as fair game to be targeted.

- The peer and downstream impact following Trump's statement that the media "is our country's biggest enemy" is profound. It legitimises action by authoritarian state surveillance actors such as Sisi in Egypt and Duterte in the Philippines, who are keen to also lay their hands on journalists' sources, and it fuels online forces and gives them carte blanche to target journalists, often way beyond common decency.
- Journalists are particularly vulnerable and targeted by anonymous online forces via the so called Darknet.¹⁰ The onslaught against journalism is particularly effective and destructive at a time when it is important to reiterate that news media is already being severely affected by the digital disruption of its business model.

The effect on journalism - self-censorship

Some of the consequence of being exposed to constant hatred is that journalists are being more cautious about what they say, and are even choosing their subjects more carefully, for the sole purpose of self-preservation and their inability to stand up to too much abuse over an extended period.

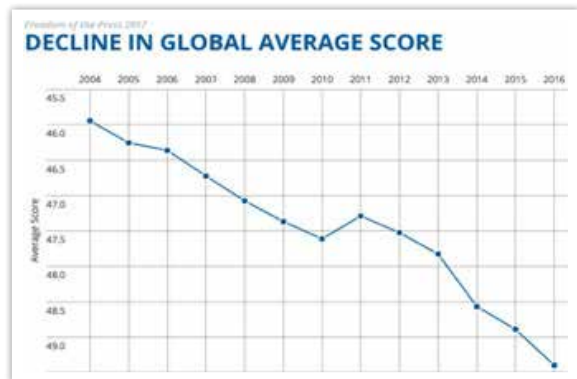
Many are understandably letting the abuse get to them.¹¹ Astonishingly, in an internal New York Times survey, 80% of the editorial staff respondents said that on some occasions they had shied away from particular subjects they knew would lead to hatred and harassment online.¹²

The fact that 30% of female Swedish journalists have considered changing their profession says a lot about how badly journalism is being affected.¹³

In this report's mini-survey a surprisingly small number of journalists admitted to outright self-censorship (which may have been due to question being phrased incorrectly) although two thirds believed that the purpose of hatred and harassment against them was to distort their reporting.

Female journalists particularly targeted

Part of the reason and inspiration to do this report - the need to act to defend particular female journalists - stems from alarming results in survey after survey of journalists' situations by journalist unions, publishers and public broadcasters in Sweden:



Source: Graph by Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2017. Press freedom has declined almost every year since 2004

A survey by the polling institute TNS Sifo and Utgivarna (the Swedish newspaper industry organisation) in Sweden in 2016 showed that 75% of media outlets had experienced increased levels of threats against them over the previous five years.¹⁴

Another survey by the Swedish public Service Radio (SR) and Tidningsutgivarna in 2016 showed that every third journalist (619 respondents) had been threatened during the previous 12 months.¹⁵

Threats against journalists are way above the average for the general Swedish population. It should be said that a study by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå, Brottsförebyggande rådet) of threats against journalists showed that only 5% of the general population have been subjected to threats and harassments. As with journalists, overall, women tend to be more exposed to hatred and harassment than men. The percentage for women was 5.7% against 3.7% for men.¹⁶

Yet another study by the Nordic Information Centre for Media and Communication Research (Nordicom) in 2016 showed a clear difference in the nature of

¹⁰ Darknet: a highly encrypted overlay network such as TOR, The Onion Router, which conceals a user's location, ironically set up by the US Office of Naval Research and DARPA, the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency.

¹¹ Jessikka Aro, Finnish journalist, gives ample evidence about Russian trolling and how it manipulates public debate and silences citizens in: The cyberspace war: propaganda and trolling as warfare tools, European View, June 2016.

¹² The Fourth Estate, The Trump Bump, Documentary on New York Times coverage of Donald Trump's first 100 days and beyond, by Lis Garbus.

¹³ <https://tu.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/PDF-Hot-mot-kvinnliga-opinionsbildare.pdf>

¹⁴ Hot och hat - så påverkas medierna, RAPPORT 2016:1, Utgivarna, http://utgivarna.se/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Utgivarna_Hot_och_hat_juni2016_TRYCK.pdf

¹⁵ a a

¹⁶ <https://www.bra.se/bra/brott-och-statisti/hot-och-trakasserier.html>

threats and intimidation between the genders: one third of the study's female journalists had received sexist comments and 15% had been threatened with rape, genital mutilation and other forms of sexual violence. For men, the same numbers represented only 3 respectively 5% of the male journalists.¹⁷

International surveys point towards similar results:

- A survey by the International Federation of Journalists in November 2017 found that 48% of female journalists had suffered gender-based violence in their work and that 44% had suffered online abuse.¹⁸
- A survey conducted by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) in December 2013 found that almost two-thirds of female journalists polled had experienced harassment or abuse linked to their profession.

73 out of 75 female journalists in five countries interviewed in a study by the University of Texas at Austin had received harassment online. "Many of the women we interviewed felt unsupported or even afraid to complain about the problems to their supervisors. That suggests that newsroom leaders need to change the culture at their organisations to deal with this issue".¹⁹

This report's survey in six countries - Mexico, the Philippines, Pakistan, Ukraine, Egypt and Sweden - draws similar but also more detailed conclusions (more details in Chapter 4).

- 73% of journalist respondents have experienced hate, harassment or threats against them. 67% of journalist respondents in the six countries surveyed think hate, harassment and threats take place to distort their reporting.
- 60% think that it could be part of a campaign.
- 66% believe that there should be harsher penalties, of which 25 % should be directed at social media companies, 23% at political instigators and 18% at individuals.

The interviews with female journalists clearly indicate a perception that harassment that may initially look as if it is being carried out by individual predators is often directly linked to or inspired by tightly controlled campaigns with deeper political

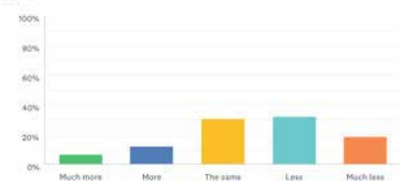
motives, such as suppressing the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press around certain issues.²⁰

Attacks against female journalists, whether online or offline, amount to a form of added censorship. Sexualised language is used to dampen the effect of the journalist's copy, or to scare them into shutting up all together.²¹

Scaremongering translates into fear. How real that fear is, i.e. the fear of actually being physically assaulted, depends - as this report has been able to establish through interviews in five countries and through a survey - very much on how, when and where - in other words, the environment. What is very clear is that while ALL journalists are threatened online, female, transgender and binary journalists have more reason to be fearful - and are more fearful - as they are under attack more often.

Do you think male journalists are more or less exposed than women, transgender and non-binary journalists to private and sexually-explicit online hate, harassment or threats

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0



Source: Fojo Media Institute survey on hate, harassment and threats against women, transsexual and binary journalists in six countries, 2018.

The “weaponization” of information

It may seem far-fetched to connect the dots between hate mail and political conspiracies that are sometimes loosely held together. Why should hate postings on social media by, for example, some immature teenager who sends a dirty, violent message, be linked to some greater conspiracy against democracy itself? Surely there are those odd postings that could be forgiven, apologies made, that could be discounted and left aside. But evidently, there is the other side of the coin, i.e. there is a

¹⁷ Fojo Media Institute's Special Report focusing on Threats and Online Hate against Women Journalists and Gender Equality. Background material to the UN Secretary-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the danger of Impunity. p 2 (citing Nordicom study by Löfgren/Nilsson)

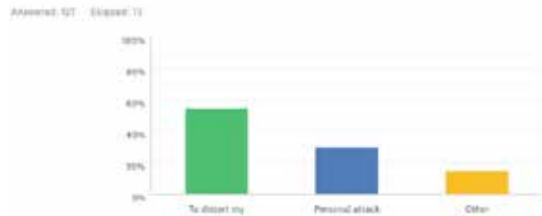
¹⁸ Study: Almost 2/3 female journalists polled have experienced abuse or harassment, International Women's Media Foundation, Dec 3 2013, <https://www.iwmf.org/blog/2013/12/05/almost-23-of-women-journalists/>

¹⁹ “‘You Really Have to Have a Thick Skin’: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on How Online Harassment Influences Female Journalists.” University of Texas at Austin's Center for Media Engagement , <https://mediaengagement.org/research/women-journalists/>

²⁰ See examples from pilot countries in Chapter 3.

²¹ a a

What do you think is the main purpose of you experiencing hate, harassment and threats:



Source: Fojo Media Institute survey on hate, harassment and threats against women, transsexual and binary journalists in six countries, 2018.

link to organised viral campaigns - as shown when one journalist or politician receives thousands of “weaponized” messages within minutes from a “distributed network” that even links up with cyber and hyper warfare financed by undercover foreign powers.

The Kremlin, in particular, stands accused of weaponizing information for the purpose of executing a cyberwar or hyperwar agenda through the Russian news media it controls and through frenetic trolling across global social media platforms - which finds its way into news media.

The intention, with particular relevance for the Ukraine among the countries in this report, is to weaken morale, be it in neighbouring former Soviet Union countries or, in the case of Western democracies, “by feeding audiences with conflicting messages, creating information chaos, the boundaries of what is true and what is false are blurred”.²²

A study by the International Media Service, which is also echoed in the Oxford University Computational Propaganda Project and numerous news media articles and intelligence sources, concludes that this is completely in line with the Kremlin’s interest in making Western countries look weak and lost - as a means of supporting a swing towards right-leaning, less human rights-minded, governments in the West and removing the tough sanctions against Russia.

In February 2018, the US online publication Politico disclosed how Russian bots and American alt-right groups (yet again) conspired to manipulate the US political agenda, in much the same way that Trump was given a strong push in the back during the elections. Over two weeks in January 2018, a concerted bot campaign involving the full spectrum

of well-known Russian bots and American alt-right hashtags managed to bombard US republican committee congressmen under the nose of the Special Counsel Mueller with more than half a million tweets, plus a quarter of a million tweets to House speaker Paul Ryan, which in turn allowed President Trump - who himself received more than a million #releasethememo tweets (there were 84,000 tweets an hour at one point) - to release a controversial house intelligence memo supporting Trump’s notion that the Russia investigation was just a “witch hunt”.

Politico concluded that the #releasethememo campaign - which largely followed the 4 steps described further down in this study - “was fuelled by, and likely originated from, computational propaganda. It is critical that we understand how this was done and what it means for the future of American democracy”.²³

One can argue about how influential the Kremlin actually is in the chain of events. There are lots of potent political reasons for exaggerating Russia’s abilities as a means of having a fall guy.

However, both the FBI and the CIA concluded that Russia influenced the US election through hacking and trolling. Now, after Trump fired FBI Director Comey in 2017, it is up to special counsel Mueller to find out if there was any possible collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign. Whether they sang from the same hymn book or not, both sides - the Trump campaign and Russia - did their best to secretly mine the US political landscape to achieve intended outcomes. In the particular case of the #releasethememo, a wide range of actors were involved - including well-known alt-right hashtags and hashtags with IP addresses identified as being close to the Kremlin.

If the process was compared with a fox hunt, the leader of the hunt would blow his twitter whistle and then give the direction - the hunt is on.

Major and minor issues are supercharged by pressing sensitive buttons that are known to sow division and cause confusion - and become the talk of town on the same day the leader of the most powerful nation in the world tweets something controversial. What used to be normal political decency falls by the wayside as old historical divisions, long forgotten, are once again re-legitimised and brought to the fore. An analysis by NBC of a 200,000-tweet dataset originating from Russian trolling, reveals a strategy that is not simply supporting Trump vs. Hillary but left-leaning hashtags such as #blacklivesmatter and

22 WEAPONISATION OF INFORMATION: The case of Ukraine - Countering disinformation, by Vitalii Moroz & Mtetiana Matychak, International Media Service (IMS).

23 <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/02/04/trump-twitter-russians-release-the-memo-216935>

#Fergusonremembers were also underpinned by or originated by Russian trolls.²⁴

The Kremlin is far from alone in carrying out hyperwar agendas or employing and largely encouraging trolls to carry out propaganda tasks.²⁵

On a global influence scale, President Trump, dictating news agendas with his tweets on a daily basis, is way ahead of Putin. In fact, an army of US-based websites such as Infowars and YourNewsWire are doing extremely “well” themselves, albeit with injections from global alt-right trolls, including the Russians.²⁶

Misinformation/Computational propaganda - the purpose

Initially, the internet opened up new avenues for independent news and freedom of expression, which in a way culminated with the Egyptian Revolution in 2011 and the so-called Arab Spring.

Thereafter, for each month and year, authoritarian governments and populist, reactionary forces have developed new and more sophisticated strategies to both curtail freedom of expression and a free press in authoritarian environments and to exploit technical opportunities and systemic weaknesses through social media platforms.

Politico notes that “fake news” is “not just about information, but about changing the audience’s behaviour”. In much the same way hate and harassment that targets journalists through social media is carried out to achieve a change of the narrative by using hate and threats to suppress editorial freedom.

Practitioners of misinformation/propaganda news are primarily interested in changing mindsets and establishing a new culture via “information and psychological operations being conducted on social media”.²⁷

Kelly-Ann Conway, the White House counsellor, stated in a TV interview with NBC when pressed on the numbers attending President Trump’s inauguration that the Trump administration had “alternative facts”. In the aftermath, a heated debate followed in which the head of news at National Public Radio

stated “this isn’t about euphemism, this is a struggle going on in the world right now. There are people who understand that if you can create a different understanding of reality you can actually change politics or anything else you want to deal with. But the problem with this is that when society needs to take decisions about real issues, about life and death, about war and peace, about the climate, about the economy, you need to deal with actual reality.”²⁸

More to the point, the Trump administration’s strategy is to align its output with core constituencies to keep them constantly mobilised and literally up in arms by taking the very same rather extreme positions on immigration, gun control, abortion, trade, environmental policy, foreign policy, etc., as promised during the election campaign. To do so means that the truth may stand in the way. So, another set of “truths” then needs to be developed. To denounce virtually all mainstream media as “fake news” has, thus far, not been too problematic. The truth has become less of an issue for as long as core Trumpian/republican constituencies are delivered policies they could only dream of 2 years ago.

President Trump’s mantra that “the failing New York Times” and the press in general delivers fake news has proven to be an effective strategy to keep constituencies mobilised. As the press is seen as being part of that very “swamp that needs to be cleared” alongside the deep state and the “corrupt” Washington establishment. The end result seems to be that every negative story on Trump fires up his core supporters even more - and in some cases going on a hate-the-media spree feels like the right thing to do.

In much the same way, psychological or physical threats - in the form of hateful language based on nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, social background, etc - are used downstream by Trump loyalist alt-right media, activist internet trolls and automated robots (bots) that are unleashing prejudiced messages through the meta-tagging of reactive code words used by bots and (domestic and foreign) troll factories targeting their audiences with pumped up messages.

24 The most common hashtags tweeted by Russian trolls, Quartz, Feb 15 2018, <https://qz.com/1207518/not-just-maga-russian-twitter-trolls-most-common-hashtags/>

25 A computational propaganda project at Oxford University has identified at least 30 governments/countries that are hiring staff or private consultants to carry out trolling to a greater or lesser extent. Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: a Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation, Working Paper No 217.12, Computational Propaganda Project, University of Oxford, p 11, <http://comprow.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/07/Troops-Trolls-and-Troublemakers.pdf>

26 <https://www.poynter.org/news/fact-checkers-have-debunked-fake-news-site-80-times-its-still-publishing-facebook>

27 How Twitter Bots Made #ReleaseTheMemo Go Viral - Russian bots and their American allies gamed social media to put a flawed intelligence document atop the political agenda. That should alarm us. MOLLY K. MCKEW, Politico, 4 February, 2018 <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/02/04/trump-twitter-russians-release-the-memo-216935>

28 <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1701/22/rs.01.html>

Hence social media platforms in particular have at this time become amplifiers for computational propaganda that supports new forms of political gamesmanship that undermines sensible, non-partisan societal dialogue.

A serious problem in identifying and analysing the origin of misinformation/computational propaganda - whether they are within or outside regulatory or normative frameworks - is that they mostly consist of fake user accounts that mask the originator's identity and interests. In April 2018, Facebook disclosed that it had identified and disabled 583 million fake accounts during the first three months of the year alone.²⁹

Commonly, "astroturfing" is used to pretend that the sponsor or organisation behind social media posts are grassroots activists. Often, these fake accounts are automated robots: "bots" - these are "bits of code designed to interact with and mimic human users".³⁰

The University of Oxford's Computational Propaganda Project's new numbers show that at least 48 countries - up from 28 one year earlier - are using trolls and bots to pump up an artificial sense of popularity, momentum or relevance by flooding social media platforms with Facebook likes, shares and retweets.³¹

"The majority of growth comes from political parties who spread disinformation and junk news around election periods. There are more political parties learning from the strategies deployed during Brexit and the US 2016 Presidential election: more campaigns are using bots, junk news and disinformation to polarise and manipulate voters".³²

It should be said that there are also left-leaning trolls but apparently with much less firepower at this point. Those who have no inhibitions in using foul language, lying upfront and doing anything for the cause can now get excellent help from social media's algorithmic technology. As recent research from a number of leading academic institutions indicates, foul language ranks more favourably in site rankings (more clicks, which also brings in more advertising revenue, at least in the short term).³³

Computational propaganda is not just about trolling in social media. It is conducted across all platforms, with the intention of doctoring reality and, in doing so, gaining psycho-social and political advantages. As the world at large is there to be manipulated constantly 24/7, the scope for behavioural change and establishing new narratives has no boundaries (besides the boundaries thought up by authoritarian states, tech companies and fearmongers).

Troll factories, propaganda and how to influence perceptions and decisions

A number of significant cases around the world throw some light on modern-day trolling.

In a poignant case, leading South African journalists have gone to a British court to get justice against a now defunct high-end UK PR agency, Bell Pottinger. The agency was paid for by a South African company which allegedly had former president Jacob Zuma in its pocket to launch a racially-divisive campaign that targeted "presstitute" journalists in Twitter ads. Five journalists were targeted in online ads that were spread on Twitter. Pictures of one of the journalists, Ferial Haffajee, showed her portrayed as a prostitute and as a lapdog to Johann Rupert, a leading white businessman, in photoshopped pictures.



There are significant parallels between this South African case and what president Putin and his oligarch allies are up to and trying to achieve - albeit on a much grander scale - namely to neutralise criticism, stay in power and hang on to their bounty by attempting to divide, sow distrust at home and - in Putin's case - also among Western democracies and continue to rule.

Cyber troops or trolls comprise an assortment of government employees, political party hacks, private contractors, volunteers and paid citizens who

29 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/05/15/facebook-disabled-583-million-fake-accounts-and-millions-of-spam-sex-and-hate-speech-posts/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.287a72efbde1

30 Troops, Trolls and Trouble makers: a Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation, Working Paper No 217.12, Computational Propaganda Project, University of Oxford, p 11, <http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/07/Troops-Trolls-and-Troublemakers.pdf>

31 <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2018-07-20-social-media-manipulation-rising-globally-new-report-warns?cldee=Y2hyaXNOZXJAYS1zY2FuLmNvbQ%3d%3d&recipientid=contact>

32 Challenging Truth and Trust: A global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation, Samantha Bradshaw and Philip N. Howard, University of Oxford, <http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2018/07/ct2018.pdf>

33 a a

are often deemed to be influential (in particular if they are seen to be independent).³⁴

Trolls and trolling, political propaganda, is nothing new. What is new is how information soldiers - trolls - are activated, with minimal funding, through social media platforms and with calibrated data on a micro level, down to the individual, to set a political snowball rolling in a desired direction at very short notice. Issues that used to take years to push up the political ladder for activists, think tanks and lobbyists can now be triggered and take a life of their own in minutes. By combining data on the perceived behavioural preference of millions of individuals online with emotional triggers, e.g. floating the idea that the youngsters interviewed on television after a school shooting are actors not real children, the outcome of a highly-charged event can cause confusion and divert attention.

According to a European Union Stratcom publication euvsdisinfo.eu, the two photos below represent just one of around 3,800 cases in its bulging files of Russian dis/misinformation, spread across all its channels and platforms and picked up in mainstream and social media across the world. In the first photo, which was distributed in the Russian media and beyond, a smiling Kim Jong Un shakes hand with foreign minister Lavrov. In the second photo, the real one, only Lavrov is smiling.

The EU has found it necessary to set up an EU vs. Disinformation campaign, based on its EU East Stratcom Task Forces' network. Since the disinformation gathering campaign started in November 2015, 3,800 documented cases of pro-Kremlin disinformation messages in 18 different languages have been created thus far.³⁵

HOW TROLLS AND BOTS ARE USED

The elements of a dis/misinformation campaign can appear as follows:

1. **A journalist, politician, public official** or activist writes or says something publicly - be it in the media, in social media or at a meeting - that goes against the status quo or touches a raw political nerve that can engender strong emotions (immigration, abortion, gun laws, etc).
2. **The story is picked up** by a troll who spins the story and connects it with a suitable base, after which the author receives an avalanche of anonymous weaponised dis/misinformation via online comments, tweets and emails containing abusive and violent language - sexually charged if the person under attack is a woman - that could include disinformation and misinformation.
3. **If a story is promising enough**, i.e. if there are cultural markers with high level trigger value, the story can be elevated to the next level where bots will assist in re-tweeting over and over again, causing a snowball effect. The political impact created by mercenaries or activists trolling feeds in to conventional political structures.
4. **A handful becomes a million** tweets. No particular individual or organisation needs to take responsibility or, during an election campaign, report legally required contributions. The IP addresses used are anonymous, undetected, buried in the darknet, the impenetrable underbelly of the internet.



³⁴ Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: a Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation, Working Paper No 217.12, Computational Propaganda Project, University of Oxford, p 16, <http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/07/Troops-Trolls-and-Troublemakers.pdf>

³⁵ <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/change-of-terminology-in-the-euvsdisinfo-database/>

There are various kinds of dis/misinformation, some of it relatively light “soft power”, some of it more crudely weaponised, designed to rub people up the wrong way, sow doubt, confusion, dissent and division in target markets.

Historically, the use of highly controlled messaging to convince and confuse an audience is nothing new. Disinformation happens all the time, it is widely used during times of conflict and war. Dictatorships or ‘post-modern dictatorships’³⁶ are better than open societies - where competitive journalists can come up with conflictual views - at controlling and disguising the disinformation supply chain.

Cambridge Analytica - the tip of the iceberg

The Cambridge Analytica scandal in March 2018, when it was disclosed that 87 million US voters had been captured and potentially manipulated by the Trump campaign, was a watershed.

It made rights-minded people cry shock horror and was mouth-watering news for those who are keen to emulate the manipulative successes of the Trump campaign team.

The embryo for a Cambridge Analytica kind of story had been brewing among insiders for years. It runs parallel with what strategically appears to have been part of the Kremlin’s game plan.

Cambridge Analytica, co-founded by Donald Trump’s onetime political strategist Steve Bannon, devised ways of getting to the bottom of electorates by testing out and fine-tuning popular vernacular to see how it worked on their target groups. The aim was to see what kind of digital disinformation worked best in mobilising populist public sentiment.

Ahead of the Trump campaign, Cambridge Analytica had already tested out various themes, such as “crooked Hillary”, “lock her up”, etc, to see which themes held the most traction among the constituencies it wanted to reach and that should be used widely in the campaign.

Again, this kind of misinformation/propaganda - be it in the shape of doctored news followed up by hate, harassment and threats against those who contest it - in particular, journalists, the perceived enemy - is nothing new. Political campaigns have always been littered with anything from half-truths to outright lies.

The real difference is that such manipulation can - if one have access to such behavioural data - take

place with incredible precision, on an individual level or calibrated in order to get a whole subset of people to attend an event or take to the streets.

The scope is immense and mostly disguised: political strategies can be cooked up and executed in unholy alliances between authoritarian rulers, criminals, communications professionals and corporations who in their own ways are benefitting from a script that is bedded down in layer after layer of deflected and encrypted internet protocols, data and social media algorithms. This is the so-called Deep Internet.

What the authors of a study in the Philippines say goes a long way to explaining the dilemma:

“At the helm of the machine, the chief architects of disinformation hide in plain sight, wearing respectable faces, sidestepping accountability while the public’s moral panic about trolling are directed elsewhere”.³⁷

The “architects of networked disinformation” often appear to be “a professionalised hierarchy of political operators who maintain day jobs as advertising and public relations executives, computer programmers and political administrative staff”.³⁸

What is interesting about this observation by a team of researchers from the US, UK and the Philippines is that they suggest that trolling is what it has always been, propaganda to gain influence, and that it is ultimately carried out by the same old class of political strategists and spinners as it has always been.

The preliminary findings in this report are pointing in a similar direction. It is the political class in power in Washington, Moscow, Mexico City, Cairo, Kiev, Islamabad and Manila who are spinning a new web to catch flies with the help of hired communication guns. This is all made possible courtesy of the dark web in which political messages are not displayed upfront but are lurking under the surface and executed through an almost impenetrable distribution network that reaches everyone across the globe who has a mobile phone within a fraction of a second, on the back of the most behaviour and ideology spinning technology ever invented.

The Architects of networked disinformation report points towards systemic complicity, and identifies how the lack of financial legislation regarding political campaigning during elections, as well as the lack of digital platform regulation, has led to the current situation.³⁹

36 A term used by Soviet-born British journalist and disinformation expert Peter Pomerantsev.

37 <http://newtontechfordev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ARCHITECTS-OF-NETWORKED-DISINFORMATION-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

38 Architects of Networked Disinformation - Behind the Scenes of Troll Accounts and Fake News Production in the Philippines, Jonathan Corpus Ong and Jason Vincent A. Cabanes, University of Massachusetts/University of Leeds <http://newtontechfordev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ARCHITECTS-OF-NETWORKED-DISINFORMATION-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

39 <http://newtontechfordev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ARCHITECTS-OF-NETWORKED-DISINFORMATION-FULL-REPORT.pdf>



2

“SENATOR, WE RUN ADS”

How selling data with your
consent became a threat to
freedom of the press worldwide.

Some pioneers, like data philosopher, Jaron Lanier, pointed out in a book five years ago⁴⁰ that internet tech platforms, or as he calls them: “behaviour modification empires” or “sirens”, were obtaining Orwellian-like organisational personas and that consumers, by giving away their private data willy nilly, are:

- giving away data they should actually be paid for (users live under the completely erroneous illusion that they are getting a free service),
- contributing to a kind of business totalitarianism that eats into every corner of life and, usurp whatever oxygen there is and chokes both good and bad in the rest of the economy.

Lanier suggests in his latest book that there is only one way out of the doldrums as an individual to avoid being messed around and becoming a behaviourally mindless machine that walks through life pressing buttons as in a computer game: to avoid social media entirely.⁴¹

That might be a bit drastic for most people. However, the psychological mechanics of social media algorithms, the behavioural change and addictive side of social media, of which the emotional messaging role may be the most alarming one, is at long last becoming more widely understood.

For the most part of 2018 newspapers were full of stories like “When tech companies expand without a plan people pay the price - tech companies are rushing to expand internationally, but often without a plan for managing fake news, extreme fringe content, hate speech and political unrest that stirs up on their platforms”.⁴²

The anti-social and questionable downside of social media has become more apparent as a handful of tech companies - with a combination of innovative foresightedness, financial clout and first strike advantage - have gained the upper hand in the global media market.

In brief, as a growing number of social media psychological analysts are testifying, hate speech and other emotional narratives tend to spread

so much easier and faster than a rational, more measured narrative.⁴³

Facebook and Google in particular stand accused of having become a duopoly by virtue of their complete market dominance: these two Silicon Valley companies jointly control about 70-75% of the global online advertising market.⁴⁴

The actual data economics behind social media business models is still not fully out in the open. It is clear however that the social media industry does not spring out of empathy, an urge to give people a new communications tool to create a better world.

What drives social media is a new promising business model aimed at attracting investors whose interest is to get a return on their investment. And to get return on an investment on social media means offering a new way of approaching consumers through personalised ads.

Coincidentally or not, these are the same tools that the disinformation and propaganda community are benefitting from.⁴⁵

The online propaganda industry benefits extremely well from social media platforms for at least three reasons:

1. The business models of social media are geared towards picking up and giving a push to - if not necessarily hateful - then sensational postings that could be calibrated and reach target audiences and individuals directly, instantly without any initial problems with gatekeepers (such as journalists or moderators).⁴⁶
2. Social media postings can be made anonymously with both human and automatic measures. This exponentially increases the ability to maximise political harm, frighten the target audience/individual without repercussions and influence the media and political agenda. Anonymity makes it possible to operate below the radar of political campaign regulation.⁴⁷
3. Social media campaigns can efficiently and inexpensively mobilise core constituents - as previously stated, for good and bad -

40 Who owns the future, Jaron Lanier, Simon and Schuster, 2013, ISBN: 9781451654967

41 Ten arguments for deleting your social media account, Jaron Lanier, Henry Holt and Company, 2018, ISBN: 978120196682

42 <https://theoutline.com/post/5575/google-nigeria-africa-tech-companies-expand-into-countries-without-a-plan?zd=1&zi=7ggo3sr5>

43 NYT story, New Yorker and other examples.

44 <https://wearesocial-net.s3.amazonaws.com/uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/01/Slide048.png>

45 Tech is now a weapon for propaganda and the problem is far bigger than Russia. Recode, Jan 31 2018. <https://www.recode.net/2018/1/31/16953268/dipayan-ghosh-ben-scott-new-america-digital-deceit-propaganda-kara-swisher-recode-decode-podcast>

46 Trump's tweet strategy is trendsetting.

47 Investigations into whether the Trump campaign was breaking election finance regulations are ongoing. The UK regulatory body has already delivered a report that the Brexit campaign did break campaign finance regulations.

particularly in combination with traditional media outlets and offline political activity.⁴⁸

Tech platforms and media's sustainability

There is no way the genie can be put back in the bottle. Privately owned tech companies have created the first truly global communications utility.

More than 4 billion people now have access to the internet, of which the majority (52%) use mobile phones. Actual usage is most likely higher as the daily use of mobiles is considerably higher than computers. Furthermore, there are 5.1 billion mobile phone users and 3.2 billion social media users. Perhaps most significantly, the average internet user spends six hours a day online. It means that globally we spent more than 1 billion years online in 2018.⁴⁹

Thus, three quarters of a billion years is spent on two internet platforms: Facebook and Google. These two giants have outwitted legacy media (pre-digital news media) and in a very short space of time gained control of some 75% of the world's total advertising revenue - by gaining access to the kind of user data that old school advertisers could only dream of before the internet and social media (including search engines) came along. Correspondingly, so-called legacy media either loses out, consolidates, finds new audiences or collapses.

The general trend is that major media brands that can make it onto the world stage have a good chance of surviving and maintaining or even improving their editorial powers while media in secondary, tertiary cities and beyond is folding.

The trajectory for the two tech giants is similar: they took off in North America, continued into Europe, which is a larger market for Facebook than

the US, and now has its largest audiences in Asia and the Southern Hemisphere.

The US election and Brexit outcomes have meant that politicians on Capitol Hill and in the EU have become acutely aware of the new dangers.

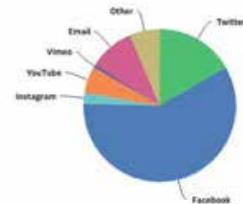
In parliamentary hearings, at Capitol Hill in April and at the European Commission in May 2018 Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg said "Senator, we run ads" to a less than precise committee member.

He admitted however that the company had been both naïve and not thought through the unintended consequences of the company's algorithms but that the social network giant was now in the process of tightening policies.

The Cambridge Analytica scandal had become a real threat for the company. Facebook felt it necessary to fully accept the need for EU's new data legislation and that the same legislation would do well in the USA too.

Which online media was mainly used to communicate messages with hate, harassment or threats?

Answered 128 · August 16



Source: Fojo Media Institute survey in six countries on the spread of hate, harassment and threats across social media platforms, 2018

WHAT FACEBOOK DOES

Knowing everything about everyone, be it an individual's political views or consumer cravings, has always been a highly valuable asset for politicians, the intelligence community and, of course, consumer sales.

Facebook is the largest and most comprehensive directory of people and their cravings the world has ever seen.

Days after the founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg reluctantly appeared in front of Congress in April

2018, followed by a flood of negative publicity, the company reported its largest quarterly revenue and profit ever. Stock markets value Facebook for what it is: the world's largest social network by far with unmatched private data on individuals even in countries with relatively humble penetration of consumer populations.

The company's ability to generate income was highlighted during the interrogation of Mr. Zuckerberg when he gave his 'ads' answer.

⁴⁸ An example of how personalised social media could be used was disclosed in a Ny Times article in Oct 2018 about an intricate plan to influence every single one of the 500 delegates to the Republican convention to vote for Trump by custom make a continuous stream of fake messages and fake events with the intention to convince those who had doubts. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/08/us/politics/rick-gates-psy-group-trump.html>

⁴⁹ Wearesocial - Digital 2018, <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

This is, however only one side of the coin, the side best suited to consumption at Capitol Hill. Yes, Facebook generates most of its revenue by selling ads. But the reason these ads can be sold is the value Facebook can extract by penetrating individuals and “harvesting” a private individual’s data - which makes it possible to match the online behaviour of billions of people with advertisers’ offerings.

This new kind of more precise penetration of individual’s preferences has opened up a previously closed Pandora’s box for product placement and content suppliers - be they advertisers, media owners or political propagandists. Facebook’s gain is every advertising dependent legacy media outlet’s loss.

FB’s data and freedom of speech

Facebook, with a combined global footprint of 4.37 billion users across its platforms⁵⁰ - including its subsidiaries Instagram and WhatsApp - has come under intense scrutiny by the media and lawmakers, particularly since the Cambridge Analytica scandal broke, disclosing how the data of 87 million Facebook subscribers had been used in the US election campaign and in the UK Brexit referendum.

Also, in June 2008, the social media network, contrary to what it had stated earlier, had to admit it had data-sharing partnerships in which it gave access to the personal data regarding its users’ relationship status, religion and political leanings to at least 60 major device makers including Apple, Amazon, BlackBerry, Microsoft and Samsung. The Cambridge Analytica scandal and Mr. Zuckerberg’s appearance on Capitol Hill led the company to quietly start winding down these relationships as late as April 2018. The sharing may contradict Facebook’s own legal fine print and is possibly in breach of a 2011 consent decree with the US’s Federal Trade Commission, reports the NY Times.⁵¹

“It’s like having door locks installed, only to find out that the locksmith also gave keys to all of his friends, so they can come in and rifle through your stuff without having to ask you for permission,” an analyst who had worked as chief technologist at the F.T.C. said to the New York Times.⁵²

In summary, Facebook stands accused, together

with other social media companies, of harvesting, packaging and on-selling its subscribers, plus an unknown amount of data from third party apps, to advertisers, including (inadvertently) to other platforms, including political propaganda consultants.

On the user side, Facebook’s outcome is well known: a combo of friends throwing likes and birthday wishes at each other while exposing users to sometimes interesting sometimes annoying personalised ads and articles. The outcome of matching algorithms and friends, and friends to friends data in a never-ending chain, has given rise to a fragmented media landscape in which the populace increasingly devotes a large section of its media life in internet filter bubbles.⁵³ Editing your own self-centred reality, albeit with its obvious limitations, has proven to have a strong pull and warranted Facebook’s first strike advantage on online advertising wherever it expands its footprint.

The company’s captive audience was subject to 2.5 million pieces of hate speech in the first three months of 2018. In May, Facebook reported that 38% of these occurrences had been captured using AI, Artificial Intelligence.⁵⁴ The AI ratio has increased somewhat but, as Facebook executives noted, it is hard to teach computers to understand contexts. In an August 2018 report, Facebook said that creators of fake accounts, although using similar methods as the St Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency, are constantly getting better at covering their tracks.⁵⁵

FB’s advertising dominance and freedom of speech

Lesser known - partially as the public loved its new freedom, as did politicians while media owners stayed suitably but still surprisingly passive - is the wider implications of Facebook on the world of media and its effect on democracy. These structural consequences on the global and local media landscape have only recently come to the fore.

The accumulated effect of Facebook and Google on legacy media - in particular, smaller media without a powerful brand to lean on - is immense. The so-called duopoly’s gain is traditional media’s loss. Newsrooms in Europe and the U.S have been decimated by

50 We Are social - 2018 Global Digital suite, <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

51 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/06/03/technology/facebook-device-partners-users-friends-data.html>

52 a a

53 To the extent to which the notion of bubbles and its effects on perceptions and the formation of views is a real problem or an exaggeration is debatable. In the pre-internet age we also made our personal “choices”. However, social media like never before can grow social interaction rapidly and exponentially - which is why Facebook’s platforms have a total of 4.4 billion users.

54 <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/15/facebook-artificial-intelligence-still-finds-it-hard-to-identify-hate-speech.html>

55 Reuters Aug 3 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-facebook-forensics/facebook-fakers-get-better-at-covering-tracks-security-experts-say-idUSKBN1KO2BB>

around 50% in ten years, with direct consequences on the quantity and quality of journalism.

The effects on media diversity and freedom of speech are obvious. To stem some of the criticism, which was obvious as long as 7-8 years ago, in 2014, Facebook launched [Internet.org](https://www.facebook.com/freebasics). With the explicit intention of helping to improve the digital divide and give people free access to the internet, it started its so-called Free Basics internet program - primarily in a number of countries in the “Global South”.

A study conducted in 2017 highlights the ambiguity and also arguably the freedom/diversity of the danger of the Free Basics program⁵⁶:

- It does not meet the linguistic needs of target users as, besides English, it deals with only one local language in each market including Columbia, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan and the Philippines.
- It is imbalanced insofar as it only features Facebook among social media and links to journalistic material are limited to a few major western media sites.
- It does not allow users to browse the open internet, but only a few sites in a “walled garden”.
- Facebook gains unique access to all private metadata that is also generated through third party apps.

The last point, about access to private data, gives Facebook the upper hand and potentially an instant leadership role in developing so-called emerging local and regional advertising markets - a position that is likely to undermine the viability of local media even further, in a similar fashion to more mature internet markets.

To stem criticism towards Facebook’s control of sensitive personal data, the company felt obliged to accept the new European Union data legislation lock stock and barrel. Mr. Zuckerberg stated in interviews, perhaps afraid of more severe political interventions by Congress, that the EU’s more penetrating personal data restriction would also be an excellent blueprint for the U.S.A.

In addition, as a response to harsh new penalties in Germany against publishing what is considered hate material and harassment, Facebook also announced it would improve its self-regulation and furthermore would not allow any political advertising or use of data by third parties. It would also employ tens of thousands of new moderators to track down and

remove hate material and disinformation, as well as ban perpetrators.

In yet another move, in June 2018, Facebook announced new regulations for political advertising, in which all ads of this nature would carry clear warning signs.

Sceptics and critics state, however - as discussed in other parts of this report - that the very core of social media business models, and the algorithms that support them, tend to support sensational and conflict-prone language as this is what draws attention, thereby increasing advertising revenue. Thus, to expect a profit-making entity to self-regulate itself to such an extent that it gives away its own version of the Coca Cola formula is over optimistic.

The criticism goes even further. Some data analysts point out that Facebook in particular has taken ownership of data it does not have the right to own and that users should be reimbursed. Others would regard Facebook as a U.S propaganda tool, a kind of global commercial Stasi, capable of manipulating consumer behaviour as well as opinion.

Facebook’s remarkable size makes it almost immune to control measures, to the extent that the perception is that Facebook, like major banks, is too big to fail without bringing down the system in its core commercial markets. Even in Facebook’s largest individual market, the EU, it’s hard to see how the world’s largest social network can be reined in without causing a storm from the very users to which Facebook has so successfully both supplied a service and deceived in equal or unequal measures.

Since January 2017, Facebook has been running a so-called Facebook Journalism Project with which it wishes to establish stronger “ties with the news industry”.

The company is also employing more and more moderators. Facebook’s 7,500 moderators around the world sift through 10 million potentially rule-breaking posts per week.

#DearMark - Facebook’s sensitivity to advocacy

In Canada in May 2018, on the side-line of RightsCon, touting itself as the world’s leading conference on human rights in the digital age, a coalition of organisations from the Global South slammed Facebook’s lack of action in addressing the problems it encountered in developing nations, as well as its “reckless push for expansion” in these countries.

Members of the group are from Myanmar,

⁵⁶ Free Basics in Real Life, Global Voices, July 2017, https://advox.globalvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/FreeBasicsinRealLife_FINALJuly27.pdf

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, India, Syria, the Philippines, and Ethiopia.

“Countries outside of North America and Europe represent 72% of Facebook’s daily users. Between them, the coalition countries include the world’s largest democracy, the first social media-enabled genocide, state-sponsored troll armies, and the devastation of the Syrian War. In each of our countries Facebook has been weaponized by bad actors against our citizens. In each case Facebook has failed to put adequate protections into practice,” the coalition said in a statement after a #DearMark press conference.

The hashtag #DearMark refers to the letters written by various groups to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Through these #DearMark letters, critics have voiced their dismay about social media “being used to shrink democracies across the world”. The Philippines constitutes a poignant example of how Facebook plays along on both sides - trolls do the job for President Duterte by pushing hate speech and

fake news through Facebook, while the independent media is supported by Facebook to counter the very same fake news.⁵⁷

Facebook appears to have taken the strategic decision of consolidating its gains and trying to repair some of its damaged reputation. This is seen as a gain by media freedom advocates.⁵⁸

The market, is however, not impressed, as the share price in July 2018 dropped by USD 119 billion in one day - 19 %, the largest one-day drop by one company in recent US stock market history - when Facebook’s quarterly report was released with info that it would make more of an effort to satisfy critics and lawmakers in the aftermath of the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

New York Times reports how its journalists were invited to Facebook in September 2018 to have a first look at yet another effort by the social network, this time to set up a “war room” where 400 people are engaged in monitoring and blocking attempts to influence elections across the world.⁵⁹

WHAT TWITTER DOES

Twitter, used extensively by journalists, experienced a similar drop in share prices and was also hit by a negative sentiment among investors due to its vulnerability to advocacy.

Twitter has a more immediate impact on the news cycle than other social media - a point driven home by the extensive use of Twitter for communiques to the world by Donald Trump.

Twitter has become the de facto, go to virtual news agency, which marries legacy and social media news (in the wider interpretation of the word in which gatekeeping is less guarded and opinion or disinformation festers).

As for trolling, therefore, Twitter is the go-to-place if you want to cause major reputational damage instantly across the globe. Tweets can be manipulated by political campaigners to make them spread like wildfire using a combination of techniques.

The good news is that Twitter is, albeit not fully transparent in particular not about its algorithms, more accessible to social media analysis than Facebook’s platforms. Twitter’s 320 million profiles can be analysed by a great number of open source

programmes, albeit mostly for marketing purposes.⁶⁰ For example, the content in a Twitter profile can be analysed with open source applications. Followers can be mapped and traced. Followers cannot be blocked - most famously Donald Trump tried to block NY Times.

Twitter plays a decisive role in picking up what is trending in much the same way as shares fluctuate on markets. As with shares, the Twittersphere is even more open to manipulation. As opposed to shares, where insider manipulation is forbidden, there are few restrictions on manipulation of the Twittersphere.

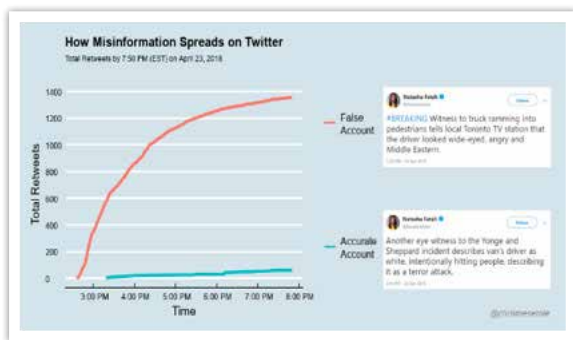
The real weakness of Twitter is the propensity of its algorithms to push sensational news, which can be fabricated by trolls and fed into the news media cycle. The graphs below show how Twitter users reacted to dis/misinformation during the perceived terrorist attack in Toronto on 23 April 2018. The first tweet, the false one, stated that a driver looking “wide-eyed, angry and Middle Eastern” had rammed into pedestrians. The red graph, the false tweet, skyrocketed, fuelled by a combination

57 Facebook partners with Rappler, Vera Files for fact-checking program. <https://www.rappler.com/technology/social-media/200060-facebook-partnership-fact-checking-program>

58 For Facebook the bill comes due. Columbia Journalism Review, July 27 2018, https://www.cjr.org/the_media_today/facebook-stock.php

59 Inside Facebook’s ‘War Room’, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/19/technology/facebook-election-war-room.html>

60 Including by Foller.me, <https://botometer.iuni.iu.edu/#/> and <http://botnot.co/>



Source: <https://github.com/chrismeserole/blog-posts/tree/master/How%20Misinformation%20Spreads>

of misinformation and probably bots. The tweet showing the real situation, the green line, had miniscule uptake.

Twitter has admitted to the US Congress that accounts linked to Russia had used the site during the US elections. To avoid penalties or tighter Government regulations, in May, Twitter started closing down fake accounts. 70 million fake accounts were closed in May and June alone.⁶¹

The company also reported it had introduced a new policy for “world leaders” stating that it could not remove controversial tweets by Trump and others as it would “hide important information people should be able to see and debate”.

Twitter’s own rules stipulate that an account can be shut down if an account holder uses “specific threats of violence or wish for serious physical harm,

death or disease to an individual or group of people”. A New York Times article points out that Trump has done exactly this a number of times without Twitter taking action.⁶²

Twitter too has introduced new rules for political ads in order to clean up its act after revelations of Russian influence: advertisers must identify themselves and prove that they are located in the U.S.⁶³ Twitter has also banned Russian state media from buying ads, plus it is setting up a “transparency center” that shows how much political campaigns are spending on Twitter, as well as who is spending. As Bloomberg points out, ad regulation does not take care of the bot problem or that closed fake accounts are replaced by new ones almost instantly.

For the same reason as with Facebook, the business model itself is problematic, few analysts believe that Twitter is able to deal with the conundrum through self-regulation. In fact Twitter stepped up its regulation game as “early” as 2014 when it teamed up with Women, Action and the Media to deal with abuse and then announced changes that should make it “easier to flag problematic messages and accounts”⁶⁴. Twitter management’s position, however, points to an unwillingness to shut down hate speech websites. It was the last of the social media majors to shut down the infamous Infowars, excluded from Facebook and YouTube in early August 2018, on the pretext that Infowars was not breaking the platform’s rules. Others say that Twitter is hesitating because it would lose power.⁶⁵

WHAT GOOGLE DOES

Google is the leading online search engine in the world, the owner of YouTube, the second largest social media platform globally and the world’s top online video site, the number one email service and mapping service, etc.

Over 16 years, Google has become the world’s largest media company with combined sales of USD 109 billion. It derives most of its revenue from selling ads and data.

On the issue of hate speech and propaganda, the

principal criticism against Google is that the overall business model to maximise advertising sales favours algorithms that rank hate speech and controversial issues comparatively higher, thus pushing up volumes - a situation that trolls and bots are exploiting through manipulation, thereby gaining a much higher ranking and visibility than they would with tighter controls. To deal with the criticism and avoid tougher regulation at a state level, Google is employing tens of thousands more curators to monitor out-of-line behaviour.

61 <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/7/7/17544344/donald-trump-twitter-bots-delete-your-account>

62 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/03/technology/twitter-trump-rules.html>

63 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-24/twitter-rolls-out-political-ad-rules-ahead-of-midterm-elections>

64 The fight back against rape and death threats online, New Scientist, 10 December 2014. <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22429996.000-the-fight-back-against-rape-and-death-threats-online/>

65 Twitter is the last major host for Alex Jones’s rants. Why does he get to break their rules?, The Guardian, 12 August 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/12/twitter-last-major-host-for-alex-jones-rants-why-does-he-get-to-break-their-rules>

Google has not disclosed how many accounts it has closed or if they have been found manually by curators respectively by AI, artificial intelligence.

The way Google censors arrive at one decision or another about what is acting in contravention of its rules, be it about hate speech or decency in other areas, is still a murky subject. As with Facebook, critics are unhappy that there is little transparency about how the company is changing its algorithms - in fact, how the algorithms work in general.

Google's business model and the data the company stores on individuals is, like Facebook, used by political interests to assess political affiliations or voter preference. However, the company has not yet had its Cambridge Analytica scandal.

Google's intelligence on users is not as penetrating on an individual level as Facebook's because its social media venture (Google+) has not been as successful. Thus, data scraping Google to find receptive individuals to influence may be less effective.

Using Google's search engine for propaganda purposes is primarily via advertising, which is inexpensive and reaches far and wide, particularly in combination with publishing extreme content online - which continues to embarrass leading corporate brands when they appear in searches together with e.g. Nazi-leaning concentration camps denying content.

The YouTube video platform is also wide open to abuse and continues to be widely used by extremists for propaganda and recruitment purposes. Although Google employs tens of thousands of new censors to deal with the massive volumes uploaded on YouTube alone every minute of the day, it battles with how the uploaders are moving from one IP address to another to avoid being detected.

Google is in the frontline of AI. However, the technology is still unable to understand context for both words and images - human curators are still needed.

Like Facebook, Google's business model is built on users relinquishing their rights to the data the company stores, processes and explores through algorithmic research and development.

Google, the most desirable employer by graduates among the tech companies, also needs to show some

humility towards the media. To improve its standing Google, together with Facebook, is among the top global funders of new media projects.

Google - a prime target

Google has been targeted for not doing enough to reduce the use of hate speech on its search engine and YouTube, even including location services for hate speech and other propaganda purposes. Dagens Nyheter (DN), Sweden's most influential newspaper, ran a series of articles on Google's lack of activity on hate and harassment in March 2018 stating in an editorial "Not only does Google lay out the digital track, it also decides which trains have the right of way and which trains are switched to side tracks. Hence, the net giant must assume responsibility for hate and harassment".⁶⁶

Recently, Google set up Google News Lab, which offers journalists and the public at large online and offline courses and tools to make use of Google and YouTube in storytelling and data research.

Google has also made changes to make it easier, although not easy enough according to consumer organisations, to change privacy settings.⁶⁷ The Norwegian Consumer Council points to a well-known pattern whereby Google, like others, makes it unnecessarily complicated for users to understand how to deal with their privacy and data rights: "By giving users an overwhelming amount of granular choices to micro manage, Google has designed a privacy dashboard that, according to our analysis, actually discourages users from changing or taking control of the settings, or deleting bulks of data. Simultaneously (...), the presence and claims of complete user control may incentivise users to share more personal data."⁶⁸

However, with more stringent penalties and adverse publicity, checking out what data Google stores and also erasing own data has become easier. To erase what has already been posted on Google's own sites i.e. hate speech is still a cumbersome process.

Dagens Nyheter pushed Google all out in its editorial to remove hate speech articles linked to Nazi groups and to introduce more stringent but still transparent controls. The newspaper had great difficulty in gaining access to Google at a level in

⁶⁶ Ledare: Google är inte bara digital rallare, Dagens Nyheter 15 March 2018, <https://www.dn.se/ledare/ledare-google-ar-inte-bara-en-digital-rallare/>

⁶⁷ A graph by the Norwegian Consumer Council shows the complexity of how to deal with your own privacy on Google, <https://fil.forbrukerradet.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-06-27-deceived-by-design-final.pdf>, p. 41

⁶⁸ <https://fil.forbrukerradet.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2018-06-27-deceived-by-design-final.pdf>

the hierarchy at which tough decisions are made that are above country level.⁶⁹ Much less influential newspaper editors interviewed for this report have

made similar complaints. They find it virtually impossible to gain access to the decision makers at Google and other Internet tech companies.

WHAT MESSAGING APPS ARE UP TO

Facebook-owned WhatsApp is the clear frontrunner among messaging apps with a 1.7 billion user footprint. The WhatsApp platform has the advantage for its users of being encrypted. Another clear plus is that it therefore cannot be harvested so easily as with Facebook's main platform or Twitter.

This doesn't mean that the platform is free from manipulation and trolling. Far from it. One way to harvest data about individuals is to join WhatsApp groups that are used as a social media tool. Also, although WhatsApp does not integrate with Facebook's social media platform, contact info is shared between the platforms, which concerned the founder of the messaging service and made him resign in protest from the boards of the two companies earlier in 2018.

Another matter is government attempts at gaining access to WhatsApp's encryption keys. Some services, such as Telegram and Signal, have not allowed Russia and Iran, for example, to gain access despite heavy pressure. Facebook appears to have been more cooperative with the authorities, as it has not been shut down, although FB does not publicly disclose the terms of its deals with governments.

It is fair to say, although the situation is changing rapidly, that messaging apps do not play in the same league as more clear-cut social media platforms in terms of being used for propaganda purposes.

Telegram, originally Russian but which was relocated to Dubai, has been blocked in Russia since

April. This makes sense as the popular message tool was set up as a shield to help people message and talk freely without the prying eyes of Russian spy agencies. The blocking, which resulted from the owners refusing to hand over encryption keys, caused some havoc as the Russian internet authority blocked Telegram's all 15.8 million IPs on Amazon's and Google's cloud platforms.⁷⁰ Telegram was also banned in Iran in June, which caused national protests, including the main market in Teheran closing down in protest. The app is extensively used by small traders.

In India, as an example, a very popular group function on WhatsApp has been used for hate speech that has led to sectarian deaths - in one case after fake pictures of desecrated shrines had been circulated by trolls. Political interest groups affiliated to the ruling party, use WhatsApp extensively to spread Hindu nationalist divisive messages. The Indian Government is considering blocking WhatsApp in "insurgency-hit" areas like (Muslim dominated) Kashmir.⁷¹



What can be said with great certainty is that Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg will never again say "Senator, we run ads" in a public hearing. The situation, as shown in some detail in the next chapter, has become much too grave for sarcasms.

⁶⁹ <https://www.dn.se/ledare/ledare-google-ar-inte-bara-en-digital-rallare/>

⁷⁰ The Verge, 17 April 2018, <https://www.theverge.com/2018/4/17/17246150/telegram-russia-ban>

⁷¹ Times of India, 11 June 2018 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/govt-to-examine-feasibility-of-blocking-whatsapp-calling-services-in-insurgency-hit-areas/articleshow/64544706.cms>



3

GLOBAL TROLLING - FIVE CASES

Trolling has almost become synonymous with Putin's cyber-warfare against Western democracies. But just as with President Trump, authoritarian minded paymasters in the five countries in this chapter have found that the social media environment is extremely friendly to their very unfriendly bullying.

Examples of Twitter hashtags of attackers and civil society responses are shown at the beginning of each country profile.

MEXICO

#LossecretosdeAristegui

Despite the fact that the Mexican government is providing a mechanism whereby journalists can receive protection, neither safety nor trust has improved. A record number of more than 28 000 people were murdered in Mexico in 2017.

The media landscape in Mexico is vibrant but divided and female journalists are exposed to an unprecedented level of hate and harassment online and offline. International pressure on the government to stop the impunity could be one effective way of strengthening independent media.

The situation is chilling. There is a very thin line whereby a journalist can be exposed to hate, harassment and threats on social media, or be murdered or just become a number added to the 150,000 people who have been killed or who have disappeared in Mexico between December 2006 and August 2015.

Human Rights group ARTICLE 19 states that more than 100 media employees have been murdered in Mexico since 2000, of which 11 were killed last year and 6 by September 2018⁷². The Committee to Protect Journalists lists 49 journalists murdered since 2000.

Such a situation causes journalists to watch what they say and hold back on what they write. Some, like Patricia Mayorgas - whose closest friend and colleague Miroslava Breach was brutally murdered for her reporting, have gone into exile to avoid the same fate as many of their colleagues.

Government propaganda and surveillance against journalists go hand in hand. Bots and troll farms were used extensively in the election although, no political party admitted to it.

Journalists are targeted by a government surveillance system called Pegasus that listens in on conversations and monitors computers and mobile phones.

Government-sponsored "spam bots" spread misinformation that targets journalists.⁷³ During the recent election, anonymous bots were

used extensively to amplify a specific candidate, for example, through a fake Gallup polls or by throwing dirt at an opponent.

Many independent-minded journalists have moved away from the mainstream press, which tends to be muzzled by government advertising. There are many examples of journalists who have been fired by their editors for being outspoken.

Female journalists who enter the public arena to give a voice to the voiceless are being targeted. Some have been brutally murdered, almost as a kind of double revenge, not only for disclosing corrupt politicians and criminals but also for simply being female journalists and thereby breaking away from underlying patriarchal codes.

The assassins and their collaborators have good reasons to censor those seeking to expose the names, methods and motives behind corruption, narcotics and other highly lucrative crimes.

A plethora of crime syndicates and drug cartels are being ruthlessly violent against civilians and their opponents, particularly those who want to change the status quo, be they elected officials, civil rights defenders or journalists.

While the authorities mostly blame the killings on organised crime, there are indications that government employees are also involved much more often than they would admit. A number of researchers even point to Government forces and

“ Several different government institutions have access to Pegasus but we can only speculate which of them is spying on us. What we need is an independent investigation. With all the evidence we have, I am sure we could identify who is responsible for this. But until there is an independent investigation, we will not get any further.”

CARMEN ARISTEGUI, MEXICAN JOURNALIST

⁷² Source: Committee to Protect Journalists, August 2018.

⁷³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-44252995>

its “war on drugs” as being the main culprit.⁷⁴

Corruption is everywhere, at federal, state and municipal levels - in the police and the judicial system. Eleven state governors have been investigated for corruption since 2010. Torture, extrajudicial executions and disappearances are also common.

A diplomatic dispatch concludes “Organised crime’s infiltration of authorities, in particular on a municipal, but also on a state and federal level, as well as rampant corruption among the police and judiciary, undermine the public’s trust and are the key reasons for widespread impunity”.

Journalists, perhaps the only professional group who independently can find out the truth behind the murders and disappearances, have themselves become major victims in this bloody war.

The Mexican government has, under pressure at home and abroad it all got completely out of hand, struck back, but with a lack of precision.

The results so far have made matters worse: with drug lords being jailed or eliminated, even more indiscriminate turf wars have broken out between different cartels fighting to fill the void - resulting in even more bloodshed and indiscriminate killing.

The political landscape

Elections in June 2018 delivered a new incoming president, left-wing candidate Andres Manuel López Obrador who did not belong to either of the old establish parties PRI or PAN.⁷⁵

Dissatisfaction with politicians is widespread. Only 62% of the voting-eligible population actually cast their vote. A change in electoral law, allowing independents to stand for office. The first such independent governor was elected in Nuevo Leon State in 2015.

A gender equality scheme was introduced in 2014. On a federal level, 43% of the House of Deputies and 38% of the Senate are women. On a state level there are 32 female governors and less than 10% of municipal mayors are women. In government, so far only three out of eight ministers are women.

“ In Mexico, with such a level of impunity and such high levels of violence, it is very likely that if you receive threats of physical violence online and if they threaten that they’re going to come and look for you, you would believe that it’s actually going to happen because it’s happened in so many cases”.

ANDALUSIA KNOLL SOLOFF, MEXICAN VIDEO JOURNALIST

Civil society, human rights

In an international context, Mexico is a champion of globalisation, be it clubbing through trade deals or protecting human rights in different UN fora.

On the home front the picture is sketchier. Between June 2012 and May 2015 there were more than 900 cases of abuse against human rights defenders.⁷⁶

2017 was the worst year to date in terms of murders of human rights defenders and journalists. 2018, an election year, is not expected to be any better.

98% of all crimes remain unsolved. Impunity continues to be one of the biggest problems in Mexico with the public’s confidence in federal and state authorities, prosecutors and courts at a very low level.

Activists and indigenous people, as well as those who defend women’s rights, are ongoing targets, particularly when they demand increased influence over major infrastructure projects.

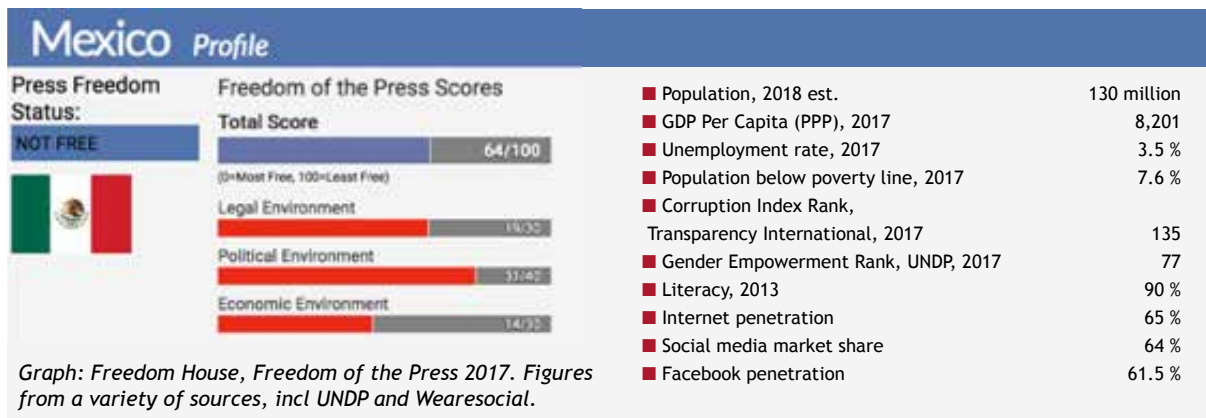
To identify solutions to the violence against human rights defenders and journalists alike, a governmental protection mechanism was introduced in 2012 to prevent threats and aggression against human rights defenders and journalists. There has been a great deal of mistrust in the mechanism as, according to a report by the Ministry of the Interior itself, more than 35% of the perpetrators are reported to be government representatives. To improve confidence in the mechanism, an Advisory Council chaired by a reputable journalist was finally set up in February 2018.⁷⁷

74 Molly Molloy, “The Mexican Undead: Toward a New History of the ‘Drug War’ Killing Fields | Small Wars Journal.” <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-mexican-undead-toward-a-new-history-of-the-%E2%80%9Cdrug-war%E2%80%9D-killing-fields>

75 Mexico’s presidential front-runner misunderstands his role model, The Economist, Nov 3 2017.

76 Swedish Embassy report, quoting Inter American Commission for human rights.

77 “Advisory Council Implemented in Order to Guarantee Efficiency of Mexico City’s Protection Mechanism for Journalists.” <https://>



Legal framework

The role of government, parliament and the judiciary has been strengthened. The Supreme Court is perceived as being independent. The ombudsman institutions have also shown surprising resilience.

Cronyism prevails: one of the more flagrant examples was when a PRI senator close to the president was appointed state prosecutor in 2016.

The government's primary security initiative in 2017, the Internal Security Law, passed in December, was intended to regulate the deployment of the military in fighting crime. However, numerous domestic and international rights observers denounced it, including UN and Organization of American States (OAS) officials, citing that it lacked safeguards against potential human rights abuses.

Media and freedom of speech

Freedom of expression is enshrined in the constitution, but journalists are still paying a high price for expressing themselves freely. The murders of journalists are largely unsolved, impunity is the norm as is the unwillingness of government officials to accept journalism-related motives for attacks and threats against journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists ranked Mexico in sixth place on its 2016 Global Impunity Index.

A general law on transparency and access to public information was adopted in 2015, but accessing information continues to be time consuming.

Media ownership is extremely concentrated, probably even more concentrated than in 2000. One of the world's richest men, Carlos Slim, and his group

Carso control 70% of Mexico's mobile phone market, 74% of its fixed broadband services and 80% of the country's landline telephone market.

Internet penetration is high, with 51 million internet users by mid-2015 - a 41% penetration rate. But the arrival of internet news and social media platforms has not slowed down media concentration.

The broadcasting market is controlled by Televisa, the largest Spanish-speaking television group in the world, led by Emilio Azcarraga. OEM, the Organización Editorial Mexicana, plays a dominant role in the newspaper sector although reading penetration figures show inflated circulation figures.

About 90% of the adult population is literate. 42% of households have access to multi-channel platforms while 90% have radio.⁷⁸ Analysts have partially concluded that newspaper readership is lower than expected due to the "hopelessly partisan" nature of most newspaper reporting in the country.⁷⁹

Those national mainstream newspapers that used to be independent, such as El Excelsior, suffered financially from the withdrawal of government advertising when they took a critical role against the domineering long-governing party PRI in the late 1970s.

David Kaye, the United Nations special representative for freedom of expression, noted that the problem with excessive government spending on advertising is particularly grave in Mexico.

Since 2000, the government - at all levels and regardless of which party was in power - has been the country's largest advertiser by far (and it continues to refrain from placing adverts in any media that criticises it).⁸⁰ According to data by a transparency

knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-19287-advisory-council-implemented-order-guarantee-efficiency-mexico-city%E2%80%99s-protection-mecha

78 Gómez García and Huerta-Wong, "Media Ownership and Concentration in Mexico.", January 7 2015, published in https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292148368_Media_Ownership_and_Concentration_in_Mexico

79 a a

80 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/25/world/americas/mexico-press-government-advertising.html>

group, President Peña's government "doled out" more than USD 2 billion to the Mexican media in return for positive news "in which federal and state officials routinely dictate the news, telling outlets what they should – and should not – report, according to dozens of interviews with executives, editors and reporters.

Hard-hitting stories are often softened, squashed or put off indefinitely, if they get reported at all. Two-thirds of Mexican journalists admit to censoring themselves."⁸¹

Readers shy away from political newspapers and the circulation of crime and sports-oriented newspapers is generally higher.

Not becoming an accomplice is almost impossible in a shrinking media economy. The media finds it hard to get revenue if they go ahead and investigate the darker sides of Mexican politics and the economy. Journalists are just playing along in order to hang on to their jobs.⁸²

A recently disclosed expose showed how the government had acquired a sophisticated surveillance system to intercept journalists, activists and their families. Among the alleged targets were lawyers probing the 2014 disappearance of 43 college students in Iguala, Guerrero and even international experts who visited Mexico to investigate the disappearance of teacher students. The government acknowledged possession of the spyware but denied specific abuses. The issue is under investigation (by the same authority that bought the Pegasus system).

“Public funds are used by the millions to benefit or punish the media. The President said that he wanted to regulate media funds, but he never did because the majority of the media was not interested. The media gets its main budget from such funds. The carrot keeps the donkey going.”

CARMEN ARISTEQUI

“Running a newspaper, radio station or television outlet in Mexico usually means relying on a single powerful client who spends exorbitant sums on advertising with a simple warning: ‘I don’t pay you to criticise me’. That client is the government of Mexico.”

AZAM AHMED, NEW YORK TIMES

Attacks against journalists

Perhaps more than in any other country right now, Mexican journalists risk their lives seeking the truth about murders and disappearances in Mexico. Mass graves containing anonymous victims have been found so often that it is rather the rule than the exception.

Indications are that 2018 may become the worst year on record for journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico, according to a spokesman for the UN High Commissioner in Mexico. Following the murder of 10 journalists in 2017, four have been murdered in 2018 until September.⁸³

One of the most famous murders, that of senior female journalist Miroslava Breach who was shot dead in March 2017 when leaving her home to drive her son to school, was linked in the media to her writing about the association of mayoral candidate Juan Salazar Ochoa with the Sinaloa drug cartel, causing him to lose the election.

On top of the financial dependency are plain physical threats against those journalists who dare to report injustices in a country which, according to Reporters Without Borders, is the “Western Hemisphere’s deadliest country for the media”.⁸⁴

Basically, speaking out or writing about organised crime or political corruption makes the journalist or human rights defender a clear target.

Carmen Aristegui, one of Mexico’s most renowned investigative

⁸¹ Azam Ahmed, “Using Billions in Government Cash, Mexico Controls News Media.” New York Times, Dec 25, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/25/world/americas/mexico-press-government-advertising.html>

⁸² Examining the Practices That Mexican Journalists Employ to Reduce Risk in a Context of Violence <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/5934/1913>

⁸³ Source : CPJ, <http://www.cpj.org>

⁸⁴ <https://rsf.org/en/mexico>

journalists, has a lawsuit against her and was fired twice from national radio for running an investigation into the acquisition of President Peña Nieto's house. Online attacks on her include the hashtag #LossecretosdeAristegui, claiming she had taken money from telecom tycoon Carlos Slim.

Journalists are assassinated in cold blood and the assassins are seldom caught. Institutionalised corruption is blamed for the impunity.

The situation is acute when it comes to impunity for various miscarriages and violent violations.

ARTICLE 19 has assessed that up until March 2017, 99.75% of cases involving the killing of journalists have remained unsolved since the start of President Peña Nieto's Government in December 2012.⁸⁵

Despite federal efforts to protect journalists and attempts to prosecute, the continued unhealthy alliance of federal state, states, paramilitary groups, police, military and drug cartels perpetrates an unbroken, vicious cycle of violence.

The President's attempt to break out the biggest cartels in 2014 backfired and resulted instead in fragmentation, more small cartels and increased violence.

Over 600 journalists receive protection from the so-called federal protection mechanism at a cost of more than USD 10 million per year. The protection includes improved home security and a remote panic button. There are no security personnel among the approx. 30 staffers.

Many of those exposed to threats and hate, directly or through the internet, feel no confidence in the protection mechanism. Many of them suspect they are even more exposed due to leaks and therefore choose to live without protection. Alternatively, they go into exile or are planning to leave the country.

Internet publishing - most independent, most exposed

Most independent reporting in Mexico presently takes place through low cost internet publishing in blogs, on YouTube and other platforms. Also, several prominent journalists have chosen to take this route.

“These attacks are everywhere because they want to silence us. So they use a number of tools including legally suing you or legally demanding you to be silent. I was sued for half a million dollars for defamation. Yes, of course there is self-censorship. We have to be careful.”

BROADCAST JOURNALIST LIVING UNDER THE PROTECTION SCHEME

Hence, they do not have access to state advertising and publish on shoestring budgets.

Online publishers and journalists active on social media are increasingly being threatened by bots and trolls of unknown origin. Alberto Escorcia, who has published articles about the interference of bots and trolls in Mexico's elections as far back as 2010, is one of the journalists who has signed up to the protection mechanism: “Many journalists don't dare to join as they fear there are moles in the system”. Mr Escorcia assesses that journalists who have been threatened on Twitter to “stop publishing critical things online, stop going to protests, and, even worse, sometimes stop going outside”.⁸⁶

An author of an Amnesty report on bots and trolls in Mexico, Tanya O'Carroll, concludes “The emerging pattern of well-funded and sophisticated cyberattacks and misinformation campaigns online are fuelling the climate of fear and silencing those who speak out”.⁸⁷

Alberto Escorcia calls it “techno censorship” and that it is, as a tech magazine puts it, “the latest frontline in a hidden war that aims to silence journalists and those who speak out”.⁸⁸ Twitter is aware of particularly nasty troll activities in Mexico but is reluctant to close accounts that may have people behind them expressing genuine views.⁸⁹

It's a cat and mouse game in which Twitter closes down some accounts that are then back up again in seconds under another name.

Violence against female journalists

Between 2002 and 2013, there were 184 cases of

⁸⁵ BBC World (in Spanish). 24 March 2017. Retrieved 2 April 2017/Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miroslava_Breach

⁸⁶ Soloff, “Mexico's Troll Bots Are Threatening the Lives of Activists.” https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/mg4b38/mexicos-troll-bots-are-threatening-the-lives-of-activists

⁸⁷ https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/mg4b38/mexicos-troll-bots-are-threatening-the-lives-of-activists

⁸⁸ Mexico's misinformation wars, Amnesty Insights, Jan 24 2017 <https://medium.com/amnesty-insights/mexico-s-misinformation-wars-cb748ecb32e9>

⁸⁹ a a

violence and discrimination against female journalists, according to the human rights organisation Cimac (Communication and Information of Women). Of these, there were 11 cases of “femicides”: murders of, in this case, female journalists, meaning that one in ten murdered journalists is female.

Ultimately, female journalists are targeted to statute example: speaking out has its price. The motive behind the killings is to suppress freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Human rights groups point out that although it is an obvious “duty of the state to support and ensure the safety of female journalists” in reality very little is done to protect journalists of any gender.

Female journalists tend to be more vulnerable than men because of their position in the workplace. There are few women in decision-making positions in newsrooms or media management. Sexual abuse is reportedly extremely common in media workplaces in Mexico.

The average salaries of journalists are low - USD 350 a month - with women being at the bottom of the scale.

“ When women start self-censoring or stop working on issues related to massacres, disappearances and femicide the voices disappear. Not just of the women who are covering the stories but of those women who are violated. Often their stories go unheard.”

ANDALUSIA KNOLL SOLOFF, MEXICAN VIDEO JOURNALIST

The general view is that female journalists exposed to threats, harassment and online hate only have themselves to blame. The cultural norm is that they should stay at home and look after the children, etc. while male journalists are the more likely heroes.

When freelance journalist Andrea Noel tweeted a surveillance video of a man who had lifted up her skirt and pulled down her underwear while walking in an upmarket Mexico City neighbourhood, she was flooded with bots and trolls showing her location and photos of armed men.⁹⁰

90 Soloff, a.a.

Murdered while driving her son to school

MEXICO CITY, MARCH 2018. Only a few days left and one year will have passed since Patricia Mayorga’s colleague and dear friend, Miroslava Breach, was murdered in their shared home province of Chihuahua. Miroslava was shot by gunmen as she drove her son to school on the 21 March 2017. Nobody has yet been convicted and an upcoming hearing with a suspect has been described by Patricia, as a “dirty process”. Impunity is the norm in Mexico and Patricia has little hope that those responsible for Miroslava’s death will be brought to justice.

“After the murder it took me two weeks to realise I had to leave. I wanted to stay in Chihuahua and demand justice. I am not a criminal, I shouldn’t have to run away. But the situation in our country forces us to run.”

Now she is planning to travel back

to Chihuahua for the anniversary, to honour Miroslava and the people of the mountains. It was the reality of forced removal and killings that the two female journalists were investigating. They believed that their combined published stories would protect them against the criminal and political interests they exposed.

“They killed one of the best journalists. And then I left. I want to be there for the anniversary, to show the public that we are still present”.

As we meet, only a handful of people know that Patricia is back in Mexico for a brief visit. She is living in exile for her own safety and the safety of her family.

Patricia talks about many incidents involving online and offline threats and the heavy toll it has taken, i.e. depression and crises. However, they were determined to keep going. They

often talked about why they always wanted to continue despite the risks to their lives.

“We had no other option than to go on. If we became silent we would be accomplices to these criminals. We earned the trust from the indigenous people in the mountain range.”

During her time in exile, Patricia started to practice self-defense following the advice of a fellow journalist.

“It changed my life. I gained inner strength and it translated into something real. I always used to say I am courageous but now I can admit to fear, pain and anger. But I am not scared, they cannot defeat us, they cannot make us stop being journalists.”

“When violence comes to your home region you must write about what is wrong. It is our own country, our own people.”

EGYPT

#Sissi_leave
#myleaderisSissiandproud

“No freedom, no justice, no education, no country, no humanity ... it’s time to go away!!!”, tweeted the hashtag #Sissi_leave in June 2018.

It gained 279,000 followers, gravely upsetting President al-Sisi. One month later, in late July, a new law stipulated that any website with more than 5,000 followers must obey new fake news laws.⁹¹

Freedom of speech in Egypt has taken a turn for the worst since 25 January 2011 when tens of thousands of Egyptians gathered in Cairo’s Tahrir Square to protest against President Hosni Mubarak’s government. Within weeks millions had taken to the streets across the country, which forced the president to resign.

For journalism, a brief period of freedom of speech and freedom of the press followed in Egypt. Journalists were able to discard years of humiliating self-censorship and take control of public broadcasters. Citizens experienced a brief taste of democracy.

However, after subsequent governments, firstly the Muslim Brotherhood led by the Morsi government, and specifically after the military coup in 2013, which brought Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the then defence minister and commander in chief to power, the screws tightened again.

The al-Sisi government has gained a reputation for making journalists pay a high price for any reporting that is deemed to be “undermining the country’s security”. In order to keep their jobs, Egyptian journalists have found it for good to adopt the state narrative.

Trolling is the norm. Hate speech against female journalists raises few eyebrows publicly.

Overall, says an independent observer, Egypt has lost its status and prominence as a reasonably moderate and secular voice in the region. The government is spending vast amounts of money reining in the media, including individuals from the military elite and their cronies,

in order to gain control of whatever is left of the existing media.

The media and freedom of speech

Freedom House ranked Egypt’s press freedom as “not free” in 2017, with a total score of 77 out of 100 where 0 is “most free” and 100 is “least free”. The score is the same as in 2016, but deteriorated year on year from 2012-2015.

Egypt has a long tradition of state control of the media, during colonial times and after independence, when Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the newspapers and also started state-controlled television in 1960.

The 2011 revolution and the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak’s dictatorship created much optimism about the internet as being essentially a revolutionary freedom of speech tool and a democracy leveller.

News media in Egypt experienced a brief period of relative media freedom and the National Coalition for Media Freedom was established, which demanded the abolition of the Ministry of Information and the Government-led Supreme Press Council.

However, freedom of expression had already relaxed during President Mubarak’s final years in power and briefly thereafter.

New online papers like Mada Masr gained a huge following and were setting the agenda as people were thirsty for free, unbiased reporting.

“Harassment and trolling is a global trend and we are seeing it more and more. I come from a country where many female journalists and journalists in general are facing a very difficult situation, although women are particularly affected. Female journalists are targeted with threats of sexual violence and hate speech. Some of them have fallen silent but others continue because of their courage and resilience.”

ANONYMOUS EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST

91 Popular hashtag attack Egypt President’s leadership, The New Arab, 23 June 2018, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/6/23/popular-hashtags-attack-egypt-presidents-leadership>

Businessmen initially linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and then, after 2013, to the al-Sisi government soon started acquiring newspapers and broadcasters and turned them again into pro-government outlets.

After 2013, the Muslim Brotherhood media was shut down all together and had to move abroad. Journalists who were unwilling to toe the line were dismissed and thrown into jail on the grounds of supporting terrorism and extremism.

Despite the authorities and the Morsi Government's attempts to curtail media independence by not granting broadcasting licenses, shutting down television stations and arresting journalists, bloggers and activists, the situation was a lot better than during the Mubarak era.⁹² The transitional government that followed the overthrow of President Mubarak, allowed some 20 new private satellite channels to be established, including those close to the Muslim Brotherhood and to opposition political parties such as Al-Wafd.

President Morsi's Government, however, was not open to views other than those of the Muslim Brotherhood. After the overthrow of Morsi and with the Muslim Brotherhood again being declared a terrorist organisation, its media outlets and other Islamist outlets have relocated and are broadcasting from outside of Egypt.

The reshuffle of media control and ownership has benefitted those with a close relationship to the government. Business people with close ties to the government and security sector have acquired or started a number of new private television channels and newspapers.

Internet, social media

The internet and social media certainly were great levellers that contributed to increased diversity and a more independent media in Egypt. Although internet penetration is still relatively low (37%), it has grown considerably, for example, the use of Facebook has quadrupled since 2011.

Unlike many other authoritarian governments, the Egyptian government, following the 2011 revolution, understood the importance of controlling the internet.

Despite a high illiteracy rate, internet use is higher.

“ I will work until I face the end. Many people are in jail, I know I am under surveillance”.

ANONYMOUS FEMALE EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST

Around one third of the population uses the internet on a daily basis.

Facebook usage is particularly high, with 87% of respondents in one survey saying they used the social media site. Other popular social media platforms in Egypt are WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Messenger and Twitter.⁹³

The popularity of social media and blogging has been brought to the government's attention: in May 2017 the government started blocking individual websites, including the independent online newspaper Mada Masr, on the grounds that they “publish content that supports terrorists”.⁹⁴ A number of foreign media organisations, notably Al Jazeera and Huffington Post were also blocked.

Harassment of journalists

According to research by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Egypt had the third highest arrest record for journalists in the world in 2017 - half of them for allegedly spreading “fake news” which in an Egyptian government context is synonymous with supporting terrorism.

In a speech in February, the Egyptian President al-Sisi used the “fake news” mantra and urged Egyptian prosecutors to take action against dissident media. Later in February, the prosecutor Nabil Sadiq ordered state prosecutors to monitor and take action against “false news, statements and rumours”.

The timely action, part of an ongoing crackdown on media outlets, was taken only days before the Egyptian election.

Immediately following the announcement, the producers of a documentary film were apprehended. Ahmed Tarek Ibrahim Ziada was arrested and Selma Alaa Eddin was detained for making a rebuttal of a state propaganda film highlighting al-Sisi's 1,095 days in office, on the grounds that they had smeared the Egyptian State.

In February 2018, CPJ stated that “Egyptian

⁹² Mapping Digital Media - Egypt, Open Society Foundations 2013, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/mapping-digital-media-egypt-20130823.pdf>

⁹³ Northwestern University Qatar 2015 Survey, <https://fanack.com/egypt/society-media-culture/egypt-media/>

⁹⁴ “Google-Affiliated Accelerated Mobile Pages Project Blocked in Egypt | MadaMasr.”, <http://web.archive.org/web/20180209011813/https://www.madamasr.com/en/2018/02/04/news/u/google-affiliated-accelerated-mobile-pages-project-blocked-in-egypt/>

EGYPT

Press Freedom Status:



Freedom of the Press Scores

Total Score

77/100

(0=Most Free, 100=Least Free)

Legal Environment (11)

65/25

Political Environment (11)

64/41

Economic Environment

17/26

Graph: Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2017

Population, July 2017	94.3 million
GDP Per Capita (PPP), 2017	10,550
Human Development Index Rank, UNDP, 2017	111
Unemployment rate, 2017	12.8 %
Population below poverty line, 2017	27.8 %
Corruption Index Rank, Transparency International, 2017	117/180
Gender Empowerment Rank, UNDP, 2017	135
Literacy, 2013	75 %
Internet penetration	37 %
Social media market share	37 %
Facebook penetration	37 %

authorities should immediately cease their intimidation campaign against independent news outlets, and let journalists report freely”.⁹⁵

Journalists said they are clearing their laptops of articles critical of the government as being in possession of such articles could give the authorities an excuse to arrest them. A female journalist said: “I deleted e-mails between me and my editors. Any e-mails that, if seen by the government, could land me in prison”.

In January 2018, the BBC reported that an increasing number of journalists had disappeared. The story was refuted as being “false” by the State Information Service, which urged Egyptians to boycott the BBC until it apologised. Also in January 2018, the New York Times, in turn, stated that a popular talk show host had been ordered to talk positively about the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, which led to Prosecutor Sadiq ordering a criminal investigation.

The journalism protection agency pointed to a range of new surveillance techniques and scare tactics. Trolling on social media, hacking and taping phone calls are allegedly being used which, all together, create a climate of fear and a sense that Big Brother is watching you.

One female blogger, Esraa Abdel Fattah, was trolled in January on social media and pro-government news websites, including publishing personal photos of her aimed at shaming her in public.⁹⁶

A senior research technologist at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Ramy Raouf, said

there were signs of state sponsorship of “reverse engineering” whereby journalists were lured into using fake Dropbox and Google Docs invitations, thereby leaving their login and password information behind. Shortly afterwards, the journalists would be arrested. An outlet called NilePhish appeared to be behind the attacks. Mr. Raouf suggested that the attacks had either been conducted by the state or in conjunction with the state.⁹⁷

Since mid-2016, journalists have also complained that another method used to gain access to journalists records is to hack into their computers by manipulating two-step verification.

In a proposed bill to parliament, access to social media platforms should be regulated through a state-controlled registration process with the intention, according to the parliamentarian who submitted the bill, of “facilitating state surveillance of social networks”. Internet service providers are already obliged to hand over the equipment and software necessary for the Armed Forces and security police to “exercise their powers”.⁹⁸

Toronto-based Citizen Lab states that the Egyptian government already owns and uses interception products that make it possible to monitor telecom traffic. Also, the government allegedly has the capacity, through “deep packet inspection”, to monitor social media and even has access to the so-called Deep Internet, which includes the ability to block and re-route internet traffic.⁹⁹

The consequences for journalists is that they are “living in constant fear”, that every full stop and

⁹⁵ Committee to Protect Journalists, “How Surveillance, Trolls, and Fear of Arrest Affect Egypt’s Journalists.”, June 12 2017, <https://cpj.org/blog/2017/06/how-surveillance-trolls-and-fear-of-arrest-is-affecting-egypt-journalists/>

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Committee to protect journalists, “How Surveillance, Trolls, and Fear of Arrest Affect Egypt’s Journalists.”, June 12 2017, <https://cpj.org/blog/2017/06/how-surveillance-trolls-and-fear-of-arrest-is-affecting-egypt-journalists/>

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Ibid

“ Sisi says ‘there is no torture in this regime’. We know they’re lying.”

UNKNOWN

“ We have a new authoritarian regime. Concentration of the media is a fact. Now the media ownership is mainly pro-government.”

ANONYMOUS EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST

comma that they add is being monitored. Journalists must be very careful about what they write and how they protect their sources.

Independent-minded journalists fear that if, as a consequence of the government’s “electronic armies of trolls” they are forced to tone down their reporting, they run the risk of losing credibility among their audiences.

The standing of female journalists

Female journalists in Egypt are, like in society at large, subjected to a strong patriarchal culture. The prevalent culture finds it hard to stomach the very existence of female journalists, particularly those who are politically minded.

The participation of women in the labour market decreased 26% in 1990 compared to 23% in 2016. Literacy rates for women in 2016 were 15% compared to 82% for men.

What is most problematic for women on a day-to-day basis is domestic violence, sexual harassment and the aforementioned female genital mutilation. Also, rape within marriage is not considered a crime.

Despite decades of relative secularisation, apart from the brief period of Muslim Brotherhood rule, Muslim women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men.

However, despite the government’s rhetoric, on the ground it appears as if the situation for women has actually become more perilous since the 2011 uprising, according to a survey by the Thomson Reuters Foundation. In 2017, Cairo was named the world’s worst megacity for women in terms of sexual harassment.¹⁰⁰

The media industry and women’s standing in the industry has also regressed, according to most interviews for this report.

However, since 2013, there has been some progress on the political front: there are now more women in parliament and there are more female ministers. Also, female genital mutilation is taken seriously. Harsh legislation since 2008 has been followed up and prioritised.

Nonetheless, the backdrop - the environment in which female journalists operate - is far from encouraging.

Female Egyptian journalists are by and large discriminated against, have lower pay than their male counterparts and must be prepared to be ridiculed. Those who manage to get ahead tend to come from well-connected and thereby protected, wealthy backgrounds. For editors to be on the safe side, they tend to assign female journalists to cover what are considered “women’s topics”, i.e. issues relating to home and family.¹⁰¹

One typical case involved female journalist Hana, who wanted to remain anonymous. She explained how she had moved away from restrictions at home, how her father and other random men from outside her office beat her up.

During the Eid holiday in 2015, a sexual rights group counted more than 200 incidents of women who had experienced verbal sexual abuse or physical sexual assault. By law, however, women are equal to men, except in the case of marital matters that are influenced by religious law. 8% of men and one third of women believe that women should have the same right to live alone before they are married.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ “Egypt: Networking women journalists”, Deutsche Welle, Dec 15 2014, <http://www.dw.com/en/egypt-networking-women-journalists/a-18126393>

Distrust Al-Sisi's new currency - women's voices silenced

Never before have Egyptian journalists been so afraid, not even under Mubarak.

There is a narrative of a country at war, that the government saved the country (in 2013). The options - return to the Muslim Brotherhood, a left-wing revolution or end up in a Syrian situation - are far from appealing.

Women journalists and human rights defenders confirm the picture of a government that is using harsh methods to impose its version of the current situation in Egypt. Self-censorship, caution and plain fear are daily issues for journalists.

The government urges people to report on their neighbours. The level of hate speech and sexual threats against women online have effectively silenced women journalists.

There are many issues that are taboo. LGBTQ, refugees, anything that could be seen as criticism of the government.

The level of hate speech and sexual threats against women online has effectively silenced women journalists.

Women journalists and female internet publishers/entrepreneurs are at the forefront of using social media and the internet to highlight gender issues, such as female genital mutilation.

During the revolution, people believed that the digital media could do something. As journalists, they were on an internet cloud.

Now, the internet is tapped, people are taken from their homes because of what they wrote on Facebook.

Citizens are urged to report if they spot anyone or anything suspicious. Distrust is Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's new currency.

The paradox: The Egyptian government was one of the first countries in the world to adopt Agenda 2030 and has made women's issue one of its priorities.

The government's position at least, for the time being, enables young women journalists and bloggers in particular to write and talk about e.g. female genital mutilation.

“ There is a perception of a country at war. The rhetoric by the government is that it saved the country (in 2013).”

FEMALE EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST

“ The Egyptian government has bought a spy surveillance system for the internet from a French company. The government has also injected malware into the networks.”

INDEPENDENT INTERNET SECURITY SPECIALIST

“ We have to think about what kind of clothes to wear to protect ourselves. When covering demonstrations, I wear a swimsuit, bicycle shorts, tights and then jeans.”

FEMALE EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST

“ The most important thing would be to have a support network for female journalists. If they feel they are on their own, are intimidated and scared they may fall silent and stop reporting.”

FEMALE EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST

“ I see myself as strong. I know this is not an easy job. The truth for women is different than the truth for men. My role is to ask women to speak up.”

ANONYMOUS FEMALE EGYPTIAN JOURNALIST

“ We have seen female journalists killed because they had spoken out. Mapping, knowing the scale of the problem, is extremely important. Sharing, having a support system and sometimes naming and shaming works. But sometimes it doesn't.”

ANONYMOUS FEMALE JOURNALIST

“ Journalists in Egypt have a special word for government-aligned journalists. They are called “drummers”. Drummers are journalists who lead hate campaigns against their female colleagues.”

INTERNET SECURITY SPECIALIST

UKRAINE

#stopwarinUkraine
#freeUkraine
#StopPutin
#нимінхуйло
#SaveDonbassPeople

Ukrainian journalists are painfully familiar with disinformation, propaganda and pressure from media owners, pushing for a specific angle or topic through the practice of “jeansa”, paid PR writing disguised as journalism. Nevertheless, the level of hate, harassment and threats have taken many by surprise and have led to a stepping up of self-censorship and trauma. Independent female publishers are specifically being targeted.

Any cyberwar and troll factory strategies Russia carries out to manipulate Western democracies - to sow doubt and discontent - are first tested on Ukraine’s civil society, media and journalists who are immediate targets for the Kremlin’s strong-arm language and harassment.

Although the Ukrainian media is relatively free on the low-intensity front -and the propaganda war with Russia is taking its toll - the Kiev government has become tougher on the media and wants to introduce media restrictions.

Female journalists in Ukraine are particularly exposed. Many of the independent media outlets are established and run by female journalists who, for various reasons, have either stepped out of oligarch-owned patriarchal media structures or have been kicked out. Most of these media entrepreneurs are doubly vulnerable by being targeted by trolling and being completely dependent on global internet tech platforms for the distribution of their content.

The political landscape

Ukraine’s politics is almost entirely subject to its location, which is on top of highly-sensitive post-Cold War geopolitical tectonic plates.

The movement of these plates determines Ukrainian politics much more than ideology. The main

political blocs are defined as personality driven, elite rather than mass based. They are the pro-Western, pro-European liberals (now in power), the Ukrainian nationalists (pro-NATO but Eurosceptic), and the pro-Russian bloc (Eurosceptic and anti-liberal).

The country’s electoral system comprises a blend of proportional and constituency-based elections. The latest presidential election, in May 2014, when the incumbent President Petro Poroshenko emerged as the winner after Viktor Yanukovich had to escape to Russia, was deemed fair by international observers. A government crisis in 2016 led to a shakeup and a new prime minister and cabinet taking office.

The Kremlin-controlled Russian media plays on Ukraine’s weaknesses and ambivalence and bombards Ukraine with devious “fake news” messaging made by its trolling industry.¹⁰²

Another inheritance from Russia, an opaque relationship between politics, the judiciary and business (the oligarchs) has arguably contributed to making Ukraine the most corrupt country in Europe. Ukrainian’s attitude to corruption is described as “fatalistic”; it is simply taken for granted that political decisions are tainted by money and self-interest.¹⁰³

Parliamentary politics is characterised as being

“ We didn’t have much cyberbullying until around two years ago when we disclosed Ukrainians who appeared in the Panama Papers. The targeted bullying that followed, with lists of journalists circulating, was systemic and not just an angry public lashing out at us. It was an organised campaign.”

KATYA GORCHINSKAYA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HROMADSKIE.UA

102 “Words and Wars. Ukraine Facing Kremlin Propaganda.Pdf.”, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UZdG4jp9SkHbtLU811aqYIDh37Xt7KPP/view?usp=drive_web&usp=embed_facebook, Internews book, Nov 29 2017.

103 Swedish Embassy, Kiev, “Reformläget i Ukraina hösten 2017, D-post: Kiev/2017-11-13/1119

“chaotic” by diplomatic and independent analysts. There are numerous political parties floating between blocs controlled or heavily influenced by a small group of oligarchs.

12% of parliamentarians are female, among the bottom three in Europe. Reforms that benefit women, such as criminalising domestic violence, have yet to gain enough support to pass among parliamentarians. Words such as “genus” or “sexual orientation” are seen by many politicians as going against the grain of “traditional” Ukrainian values, in other words, similar types of arguments as used in Putin’s Russia.¹⁰⁴

Although corruption is the main theme among protesters, who yet again occupied Maidan Square in late 2017, there have been areas of improvement: The army is in a better shape (with the war effort it has to be), the corrupt police are a bit less corrupt and Ukrainians can benefit from some improvement in civil service.¹⁰⁵

The EU fulfilled a highly publicised promise and permitted visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens from June 2017 - an acknowledgment that the Ukraine Government had fulfilled its part of a deal and introduced education, health care and pension reforms.¹⁰⁶

One highly contentious political issue, frequently used by the Kremlin to reignite sentiments that Ukrainian leaders critical to Russia’s meddling in its affairs are fascist and not to be trusted, was the genocide of about 1.5 million Ukrainian Jews during WW2, mostly shot and buried on Ukrainian soil. The genocide has been largely blocked out of the new nation’s history writing.

The role of civil society

In a country with a dysfunctional state, riddled with conflicts of regional, ideological, ethnic and pure social despair, there is no end to what NGOs like Odesa Dialogue and Dignity Space can get involved in. Civil society is, simply, where things happen.

Civil society, with some 60,000 NGOs of different shapes and sizes, is credited with saving the country from yet again falling back into a vassal relationship with Russia.

“ In 2013 they hacked my e-mail and created a video which was broadcast on national television. I was divorced and lived alone. It was broadcast across the country, including the village where my grandmother lives. She was 86 at the time and her neighbours told her that her granddaughter was immoral.”

OKSANA ROMANIUK, INSTITUTE FOR MASS INFORMATION

It should be said that the boundaries between “civil society” and officialdom are blurred, with parliamentarians sometimes joining civil society street manifestations.

Civil society organisations are, like political parties, largely free to operate with few legal constraints.

The media landscape

The media in Ukraine is partly in the Ukrainian mother tongue for nearly 80% of the population, and partly in Russian which, although the number of Ukrainians with Russian as their home language is far below 20%, is understood by most adult Ukrainians.

Much of the press, radio and television is in private hands, often controlled by individual oligarchs directly or indirectly, which see media ownership as an instrument to consolidate their own power base and erode others. As for television, ten out of twelve national television stations are linked to “political figures or individuals with strong political affiliations”. Viewership studies show that more than 75% of TV viewers watch channels owned by four leading businessmen who control, respectively, StarLight Media, 1+1 Media, Inter Media and Media Group Ukraine.

Radio listenership is even more concentrated, with 92% of the audience listening to four radio stations: Tavr Radio Group, Ukrainian Media Holding, Business Radio Group and TRK Lux, which belong to the four largest private groups.¹⁰⁷

The online media scene in particular is more diversified, as there are no particular regulations on online publishing (exceptions mentioned below). Ukrainians have taken to the internet, with 52.5% of

104 “Underlag om feministisk utrikespolitik inför kabinettssekreterare Annika Söders besök i Ukraina 15-17 november 2017, Swedish Embassy, Kiev

105 Kramer, “Protesters in Ukraine Camp Out Over an Old Issue.”, New York Times Oct 27 2017

106 Pekar, “Ukraine in 2017: A Summary - New Eastern Europe.”

107 “Media Ownership in Ukraine: Informal Influence through Murky Business Schemes - IMI.”

UKRAINE

Press Freedom Status:

PARTLY FREE



Freedom of the Press Scores

Total Score

53/100
(0=Most Free, 100=Least Free)

Legal Environment

13/30

Political Environment (11)

25/40

Economic Environment (11)

15/30

Graph: Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2017

Population, July 2017 est.	44.51 mill
GDP Per Capita (PPP), 2017 - World Bank	\$ 8,667
Unemployment rate, est 2017 - CIA The World Fact Book	9.5 %
Population below poverty line, est 2016 - CIA the World Fact Book	3.8 %
Corruption perceptions index 2017, Transparency Intern.	130
Gender Empowerment Rank, UNDP, 2017	55
Literacy - Wear social	99.8 %
Internet penetration - We are social	49 %
Facebook penetration - Wearesocial	17.1 %

the population having online access.¹⁰⁸

News media can be hard-hitting, but tendentious. The practice of “jeansa” journalism, essentially meaning that journalists are paid directly to their pockets for writing PR stories, is widespread but also well monitored and understood by generally cynical Ukrainian readers.

Media finance, like everywhere, is a serious obstacle to independent media in Ukraine. In particular, when the economy took a nosedive after the Euromaidan revolution, the advertising market halved in size in 2014 and only those with deep pockets could afford to keep their media intact. As an observer quipped, only billionaires can run media under such conditions as they see their ownership as a PR activity.

The Ukrainian media has a constant uphill battle to keep pace with Russian influencers, including pure propaganda, and has developed a number of media projects such as Stop Fake in order to fight back.¹⁰⁹

Ukraine is deemed to have one of the most progressive forms of constitutional protection for freedom of speech in Eastern Europe. Journalists in Ukraine are not subject to state censorship. The media landscape is pluralistic.

Law enforcement in the media sector is considered weak. Legislation to ensure transparency of mass media ownership and policy guidelines for television and broadcasting were adopted in 2015. Ownership has, however, been diluted through the forming of “football teams” whereby every owner goes below 10% ownership, the threshold for disclosure to the National Council.

The capacity of the legislature and the lack of regulation of the authorities - including the police - mean that many constitutional rights are far from being implemented.

Pressure is being applied by the European Union for the country to speed up and institute reforms across

the whole spectrum if it wants to have a chance of becoming an EU member in the foreseeable future.

However, legislative measures to uproot corruption is the one major area of reform where there are already doubts. Many of the recently appointed 100 or so judges to the Supreme Court had question marks over their heads and were not approved by civil society participants.

Freedom of the press

Print, radio and TV media must be registered, while websites are not subject to regulation and can therefore publish news without any restrictions.

There is relative freedom of speech in Ukraine; there is no apparent opaque censorship. News media constantly publishes investigative and sensational stories of varying quality.

The ceiling for critical reporting on government affairs, although not taken lightly, is high - particularly compared with the media situation in Russia.

Freedom House classified Ukraine's print media as “partly free” in 2017 compared to Russia, which has a “not free” classification.

Internet media, which is not registered and

“ Oligarchs have the money and they put pressure on journalists. All media outlets are subsided by the oligarchs. It's difficult to make ends meet for all mediahouses.”

**DIANA DUTSKY,
DEPUTY DEAN OF KIEV SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM**

¹⁰⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2017/ukraine>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.stopfake.org/en/news/>

therefore not subject to regulation, is classified as “free” by Freedom House in its 2017 report.

Journalists are regularly threatened, in particular those trying to report independently about the war between the Ukrainian army and Russian-supported insurgents in the Donbas region of Luhansk and Donetsk. The independent Institute of Mass Information registered 173 media freedom violations during the first eight months of 2017, slightly less than the year before.

The most common violation against journalists carrying out their duty was “impeding professional activities” followed by “intimidations” and “assaults”.

In 2016, a Ukrainian website, Myrotvorets, published the names and details of 5,000 Ukrainian and foreign journalists who had been accredited by the separatists to cover the war in the occupied region in a clear attempt to scare them by making them targets.¹¹⁰ The measure was highly criticised by the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Valeria Lutkovska, who appealed to the security police to shut it down.¹¹¹

Silencing journalists

The safety of journalists deteriorated dramatically during and after the Euromaidan protests. The total number of violations against journalists peaked at 995 incidents in 2013, compared to 94 in 2011 (excluding Russian-supported insurgency areas).

Male and female journalists alike were beaten up, taken hostage, threatened and harassed. Cases of female journalists being raped, sexually harassed and threatened were reported in Lutsk, Odessa and Slovyansk.

Attackers tended to target those journalists who were seen as being part of the enemy or working for the “fascists in Kiev”, a common Russian troll-factory expression.

Although the press is threatened and harassed, there are few reported killings of journalists. In July 2016, investigative journalist Pavel Sheremet of the Ukrayinska Pravda website was murdered in a car bomb attack in Kiev. The murder was seen as a retaliation for his reporting and was therefore linked to Russia. However, there have been no

“ On at least one occasion a deputy minister wrote a message to one female journalist reminding her that she had a kid, not like a direct threat, but rather ‘I have to remind you that you do have a child’. When I saw that on the screen, I couldn’t believe it. And bear in mind this person holds a public office. And what makes matters worse is that he is still in that office.”

UKRAINIAN JOURNALIST

breakthroughs in the Ukrainian police investigation of the case.

In late May 2018, the staged murder of a dissident Russian journalist in Kiev highlighted the problem.

In a survey on harassment of journalists the respondents were asked to indicate where exactly they had encountered assaults, threats and other types of obstruction. It transpired that the majority of those surveyed encountered threats when covering conflict topics (41%) and protest actions (28%), 6.4% were obstructed as they interviewed people in power. In addition, IMI experts point out that 6.4% of the respondents indicated that they encountered threats in the offices of their own media outlets.

Trolling

In 2017 (first nine months), there were 14 registered cyberattacks against journalists according to the Kiev-based Institute of Mass Information (IMI).

The survey demonstrated that one in five women journalists encountered various types of sexual harassment when performing their professional journalist duties.

The surveyed journalists indicated that they required additional security training specifically for women (43%), training in the evaluation of risks and planning for same (36%), and improved security of media outlet offices (10%).

The survey was conducted via anonymous questionnaires. In total, 110 answers were received from the journalists, of which 88% are representatives of all regions of Ukraine and 12% are from the city of Kiev.¹¹²

110 “Scandalous Ukrainian Website Publishes New List of Reporters ‘Collaborating with Russia.’” <https://www.unian.info/society/1354325-scandalous-ukrainian-website-publishes-new-list-of-reporters-collaborating-with-russia.html>

111 “Ukrainian Ombudswoman Calls for Blocking Website That Leaked Data on Journos.” <https://www.unian.info/society/1343347-ukrainian-ombudswoman-calls-for-blocking-website-that-leaked-data-on-journos.html>

112 This is the data from an anonymous survey, conducted by Institute for Mass Information (IMI), Kiev, among female journalists in all regions of Ukraine. March 2018

Hard-hitting newswomen are hardest to hit

KIEV, JANUARY 2018. Female Ukrainian journalists Katya Gorchinskaya and Nataliya Gumenyuk embody a phenomenon I came across in all countries I visited for this report: they are high-powered women in charge of independent hard-hitting news websites who are under fire by governments, trolls and who are not getting the support they deserve by the social media platforms they are dependent on for their publishing.

Katya Gorchinskaya and Nataliya Gumenyuk run Hromadske.ua, a small but influential alternative voice in Ukraine that was founded in 2014. Hromadske.ua, meaning “The Public”, produces text, TV programmes and documentaries in Ukrainian and English.

Like their female colleagues in the Philippines, Egypt, and Mexico, Katya Gorchinskaya and Nataliya Gumenyuk stick their necks out on a daily basis. They publish unwelcome news about corruption scandals and socio-economic realities in a media landscape riddled with disinformation and repressive acts by authoritarian regimes trying to silence them.

To stay afloat, these independent outlets turned to the social media platforms as a means of reaching a broader audience. This meant that, in a very short space of time, they have become dependent on the giant social media platforms for their distribution. The very same social media giants are making huge profits but, at this point, are giving very little back from their record-breaking profits to secure freedom of speech or protection against authoritarian regimes in what are, from a human rights point of view, very vulnerable countries.

Hromadske female journalists are under constant surveillance and attack by troll factories and bots spewing out hate speech in particular as soon as they raise the issue of cyber-

war and disinformation. “They’re watching us and using every chance to discredit us. We are aware of it; it is more and more obvious to everyone”, says Katya Gorchinskaya.

As many other outspoken female journalists in this report, Katya Gorchinskaya and Nataliya Gumenyuk left the so-called established press so they could report more freely on topics that are crucial to society’s development.

Katya Gorchinskaya and Nataliya Gumenyuk are living proof how women-led media organisations are particularly vulnerable to hate and harassment.

Their mailboxes and Facebook accounts are often flooded by very personal, sexualised threats, which often also include threats against their children and other family members.

The hate and the threats are a serious concern for Hromadske: “We don’t have enough resources to strengthen security, for example, assigning a security guard to a threatened journalist. We spend many hours, days after day, thinking and preparing for the consequences of hardline reporting”, says Katya Gorchinskaya.

She says undisclosed attacks have become “as natural as breathing”.

The situation became really bad after Hromadske published a story - following the global release of the Panama Papers - about how several Ukrainian politicians and

media-owning oligarchs had hidden their fortunes in offshore paradises.

Katya Gorchinskaya says: “When we tried to show that the attacks were systematic and not incidental, nobody believed us; we were met with scorn and ridicule”. At least after the Panama Papers scandal it became more obvious where the threats were originating from.

Nataliya Gumenyuk adds: “The whole management team is totally consumed by such attacks. They paralyse the entire operation. For a small company like ours, it’s really tough”.

The relationship to the internet platform providers is an ongoing and time-consuming struggle.

“Google and platform providers are yet to understand the difference between trustworthy media and propaganda”, says Nataliya Gumenyuk.

Also, part of the problem is that Hromadske, like online news organisations in Mexico, Egypt and the Philippines, is dependent on publishing on Facebook to reach out to a wider audience.

Who is responsible and what do you think should be done?

“We need to identify the individual culprits and groups that send hate and harassment and stop impunity. But we also need to raise critical issues with tech companies like Facebook and Google. They have been unregulated for far too long. When these companies decide to change their algorithms, it affects us directly - on one occasion we lost half of our traffic. When we try to raise this directly with Facebook, we are met with a huge wall. It can take months to get a reply”, says Nataliya Gumenyuk.

MARIKA GRIESEL

TROLLING AGAINST WOMEN JOURNALISTS IN UKRAINE

- **60%** of female journalists, who work in Ukraine, had encountered threats, assaults, or other form of physical violence due to their professional activities.
- **29%** had called police for protection.
- **46%** of the respondents indicated that they encountered threats, compared to assaults, interrogations, and other types of physical violence.
- Trolling and online bot attacks was the second category by frequency, mentioned by the surveyed journalists (**34%** of the surveyed mentioned this type of threats).
- **12%** of journalists mentioned hacking of accounts.
- **9.4%** of journalists received letters with threats.
- **4.3%** experienced phishing attacks.

“ We need research that raises questions about self-censorship because female journalists are suppressing themselves when being attacked by trolls. They are afraid to reveal the names of those harassing them as such people sometimes are in high places and have the power to have them fired.”

OKSANA RUMANIUK,
INSTITUTE FOR MASS INFORMATION

“ There is a lot of aggression on the internet nowadays. It's very difficult to say that there is solidarity in the profession because journalists work for various major media holdings and the groups behind these holdings (oligarchs) pursue their own interests. It takes a really strong personality to rise above this and present the information without any compromise.”

DIANA DUTSKY,
DEPUTY DEAN OF KIEV SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

“ We are affected by the war and self-censorship in ways we had not expected. We have to think about our professional ethics and patriotism. Journalists need to understand how they can find a reasonable balance.”

DIANA DUTSKY,
DEPUTY DEAN OF KIEV SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

“ I have worked out a rule for myself when it comes to social networks. There is only so much I can do and the best way to avoid these people is to simply not start any discussion whatsoever.”

NATALIA LIGASHOVA,
DETECTOR MEDIA

PAKISTAN

#Election2018 #BBKaWaadaNibhanaHai

The use of trolls and bots to spread hate speech and violence increased significantly ahead of Pakistan's election in July 2018.^{112, 113} This report's limited survey also found support for a higher rate of hate posts against female journalists than males via Twitter, Facebook and email over the last six months. Facebook, aware of the problem, introduced new tactics by linking up with AFP to take action. A company representative in Pakistan said Facebook would reduce harmful and misleading content by 80% and more in Pakistan.¹¹⁴

Pakistan's media - squeezed by geopolitics, fundamentalism and an omnipresent security apparatus - went through a particularly rough patch ahead of the elections on 25 July.

The military or the authorities - it is always unclear who is responsible - abducted or attacked journalists without the judiciary stepping in to support the media, which could have acted if it had wanted to.¹¹⁵ Arbitrary distribution restrictions were imposed on two of the country's largest liberally-minded outlets - Geo TV and Dawn.

Authorities have introduced laws to keep a close eye on "dishonest" news. Laws are also in place that make blasphemy and defamation - with very unpredictable interpretations - a crime. Religious sensibilities and legislation on the one hand, and real or imagined national security concerns on the other, have been the two most restricting parameters for opinion makers in general and female journalists in particular.

The political landscape

Pakistan's political institutions have been weak since

their inception - after the partition of India, West- and East Pakistan in 1947 - and have been overshadowed, when not explicitly run, by the Pakistani military and security agencies.

The civil bureaucracy is ineffective, prone to corruption and uneven in its capacity. Certain parts of the country are governed by special regulations where administrative and political authority is concentrated on a small number of government offices. Political parties are totally or partially banned from campaigning or holding office in these specific areas.¹¹⁶

Only once in the history of Pakistan has a democratically-elected government completed a full term in office before handing over power to another elected government. This happened in 2013. The historic occasion was followed by little over two years of less volatility and high economic growth.¹¹⁷ In 2017, however, the incumbent PM, Nawaz Sharif, was forced to resign after a court judgement prematurely ended his term in response to accusations of corruption, which were revealed by the Panama Papers.

Civil society

Pakistani civil society is multifaceted and, in some ways, vigorous, yet not always progressive. Civil society could be divided into national organisations and regional or local organisations. While the former often have a national or international agenda, the latter look to local needs.

Strict socially-conservative sentiments are being projected on civil society and domestic spheres by religious networks and groups, whose views

112 Politico-religious hate speech steers social media ahead of polls. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/07/21/politico-religious-hate-speech-steers-social-media-ahead-of-polls/>

113 Trends Monitor, 20 July 2018, Media Matters for Democracy, Pakistan, supported by Facebook. <http://digitalrightsmonitor.pk/investigative-study-finds-custom-made-bot-platforms-contributing-to-trending-political-hashtags-in-pakistan/>

114 Facebook seeks to stem fake news ahead of Pakistan general elections, The Express Tribune, 21 July 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1762710/8-facebook-seeks-stem-fake-news-ahead-pakistan-general-elections/>

115 Committee to Protect Journalists, <https://cpj.org/blog/2018/07/silence-from-judiciary-over-media-attacks-increase.php>

116 Hayat, Arif. "KP Assembly approves landmark bill merging Fata with province", <https://www.dawn.com/news/1410351>. Accessed 28 May 2018.

117 Illangovan, Patchamuthu; Francisco, Manuela. 2017. Managing risks for sustained growth : Pakistan development update (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/386771510146349984/Managing-risks-for-sustained-growth-Pakistan-development-update>

and ideology are, in turn, upheld through social vigilantism, violence and community control. Islamic extremist sentiments do not need to be linked to political parties, but sometimes are. Hence, they operate both outside of and within the political system.

Fringe sectors of civil society thereby set the limits for the majority of the population. However, a restrictive social environment is also underpinned by the active use of discriminating legislation. There are also clear indications that extremist social forces have been used for ulterior motives. These forces may or may not be militant but have been mobilised by both political parties and the security agencies as proxies to silence opposition, as well as reporting.

Progressive segments of civil society exist on both local and national levels. There are minority rights groups, women groups, unions and interest groups that organise constituents to amplify influence. Some of these organisations have access to international funding and networks through bilateral or multilateral aid organisations or other forms of international linkages.

The media

Pakistan has several indigenous and English language media outlets. The English language media caters to urbanites with higher education, while the rest of the country mostly gets its news through local language press. Publishing houses often run both English-speaking and local language editions, as well as TV channels in various languages.

Freedom House ranks the Pakistani press as being “not free” and internet freedom is declining. In the most recent ranking published by Freedom House, Pakistan is rated 71 out of 100, where 0 is most free. Internet penetration is 18% and is unevenly distributed in the country.

In terms of safety parameters for journalists, Reporters without Borders’ global index ranks Pakistan as 139 out of 180, which marks an improvement by 8 places over the previous year. There have, however, been several instances of violence and harassment instigated against journalists during the past year. In early January 2017, five bloggers were abducted for several weeks. After their release, three of the bloggers reported that they had been held by organisations linked to the military. In January 2018, a prominent Pakistani journalist was again held at gunpoint by masked men after having received threats from a government agency.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, around 60 journalists have been killed in Pakistan

since 1992. Only one (1) journalist, however, was killed with an established motive in 2017.

The Pakistani organisation Freedom Network Pakistan, in association with Pakistani media workers, has set up safety hubs for journalists in several locations. Media workers in general and journalists in particular can receive assistance in distressing situations through these hubs. The exact location of the hubs has been kept secret to outsiders due to security concerns.¹¹⁸

There are geographical areas from where reporting is restricted and strictly policed by security agencies and media watchdogs. The tribal areas bordering Afghanistan and Baluchistan stand out as being particularly difficult. In Karachi, reporting is restricted by lawlessness and criminality linked to political parties.

The regulatory body for the internet and telecom in Pakistan, the Pakistan Telecom Authority (PTA), has been vested with the authority to intervene in traditional activities and social media activities on the internet. Since March 2015, it is the PTA that is responsible for management of internet content in Pakistan and, with scant if any motivation, can impose blocking and filtering of sites.

Another agency, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), has been vested with the authority to remove content that it understands as being “anti-national or anti-state”, as well as being against cultural values or morality. PEMRA also has a mandate to shut down networks because of national security concerns, as well as ban TV channels or specific programmes for the reasons mentioned above.

The media and freedom of speech

Two sets of laws, the blasphemy laws of the Pakistani penal code and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), severely impact freedom of speech, independent journalism and social media activity.

The blasphemy laws: these laws are explicitly discriminatory and prohibit expression that might wound religious “feeling”, defile the Quran, insult the prophet Muhammed, his relatives or companions, and misuse epithets and so forth that are used to describe holy places or persons. Using derogatory language against the Prophet Muhammed could be punishable by death. Although many have been sentenced to death or life imprisonment due to alleged blasphemy, no one has ever been executed.

The blasphemy laws have specifically targeted Ahmadis, a group accused in Pakistan of being heretics and have been disproportionately applied to

118 For details, visit: <http://www.fnkp.org/>

PAKISTAN

Press Freedom Status:

NOT FREE



Freedom of the Press Scores

Total Score (↓1)

65/100
(0=Most Free, 100=Least Free)

Legal Environment

19/30

Political Environment (↓1)

30/40

Economic Environment

16/30

Population, July 2017	208 million
GDP Per Capita (PPP), 2017	\$5,246
Unemployment rate, 2017	5.9%
Population below poverty line, 2017	24.3
Corruption Index Rank, Transparency International, 2017	117/180
Gender Empowerment Rank, UNDP, 2017	130
Literacy, 2017	56%
Internet penetration, 2017	22%
Mobile Internet penetration, 2017	21%
Facebook penetration, 2017	12.9%
Twitter penetration, 2017	1.6%

Graph: Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2017

Unless otherwise stated, statistics are from the Wearesocial Digital Handbook, 2018.

non-Muslims. Journalists and media workers from minorities are at constant risk of being accused of blasphemy.¹¹⁹

Accusations of blasphemy are often used in petty disputes unrelated to religious issues. They are raised in disputes regarding land, neighbourhood conflicts or even family feuds. Accusations of blasphemy are sometimes levelled at people who hold convictions that oppose mainstream views.

Expressing divergent opinions in public, especially on religious matters, may therefore be risky. The increasing use of social media complicates the situation. In a recent case a teenager was arrested and accused of blasphemy, simply for “liking” an allegedly blasphemous Facebook post. Blasphemy was also the stated reason for the Pakistani Supreme Court issuing a 3-year ban on the media platform YouTube in 2012.

Someone once accused of blasphemy, even when not convicted, may face a life time of harassment - and even death by lynching - by fellow citizens or inmates in custody or in jail. The risk of being accused of blasphemy causes self-censorship among journalists and social media activists.

PECA, passed by the Pakistani Parliament in 2016, gives the Pakistani authorities provisions to impose censorship and surveillance online. It has been used to block or filter sites that are critical of the military and the security services as institutions, as well as critical views on their activities in conflict-

ridden parts of the country. PECA has also been used to arrest media workers for allegedly maligning the judiciary.¹²⁰

Use of the PECA provisions has been heavily criticised by Pakistani journalists and parts of civil society, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Speech, but to no avail. PECA is used to limit reporting online about issues perceived as sensitive to the Pakistani state and is therefore used against journalists in their daily work.

Digital gender gap

Pakistan's digital gender gap - the country has the world's second largest gender gap¹²¹ - is also among the highest in the world. General gender discrimination and outright misogyny mirrors society as a whole and is reflected in the working environment for women, and especially female journalists who move in public. This said, there are many active and influential women journalists, as well as activists on both local and national levels.

Trolling of female public figures is common, but ordinary Pakistani women also face harassment online.¹²² The Pakistani NGO Digital Right's Foundation has shown that blackmailing, impersonation, non-consensual information and unsolicited messages amount to the most common forms of harassment. In some reported cases, relatives or unknown persons have set up fake accounts in the name of a female victim, posting insulting or personal information

119 Amnesty International. “‘As Good as Dead’: The impact of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan”, 2016.

120 Digital Rights Foundation, “Content Regulation in Pakistan's Digital Space: June 2018 Human Rights Council Report”.

121 World Economic Forum, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/#economy=PAK>, Accessed March 2018.

122 Digital Rights Foundation, “Surveillance of Female Journalists in Pakistan”, 2016; “Measuring Pakistani Women's Experience of Online Violence”, 2017.

without the consent of the women concerned.

Female journalists are often victims of this kind of harassment but are also experiencing various forms of surveillance online. One report suggests that surveillance is gendered, i.e. although both male and female media workers face surveillance, it takes a different form for women compared to men. Attacks on women are sexualised and concern the character and appearance of the victim.¹²³

According to this report, different actors take part in the surveillance. State agencies, media audiences, political parties, as well as family members and colleagues, participate in the activities.¹²⁴ Here too self-censorship is an issue and security concerns caused by online harassment and surveillance

severely restricts female journalists in their daily work.

Paradoxically PECA, the regulation used to silence journalists on sensitive issues also has provisions for protecting women from harassment online. However, although the law in theory gives such protection, law enforcement agencies are not usually following through with the provisions.

The National Response Centre for Cyber Crime, which has been designated to investigate allegations of crime online, is severely understaffed. The existing staff lack gender sensitisation and women often feel insecure about interacting with them when filing complaints about, for example, sexual harassment online.

¹²³ Digital Rights Foundation, "Content Regulation in Pakistan's Digital Space: June 2018 Human Rights Council Report", p3.

¹²⁴ Aa a, p. 7

PHILIPPINES

#defendpressfreedom
#mariaressa
#EveryWoman
#Duterte2016
#ArrestMariaRessa

The Philippines can be said to be the mother of massive social media manipulation of an election.

The Philippine online newspaper Rappler in 2016 published three ground-breaking articles about how President Rodrigo Duterte had won the elections by waging a propaganda war where his campaign exploited Facebook's algorithms and flooded social media with fake accounts delivering "manufactured reality".

Through the use of bots and a troll army it could reach millions of Filipinos and win the election and, since this time, continue while in power to transform perception into reality and sway opinion based on the perceived number and power.

The methods used during the election campaign were many and spectacular. Rodrigo Duterte's daughter shaved her head and propagated for her father with the Twitter hashtag #justdulT.¹²⁵

Some 30,000 tweets were generated to support Duterte's campaign. Some 500 trolls were engaged to win over Filipinos at home and abroad.^{126, 127}

The #defendpressfreedom and #mariaressa represent civil society's fight back against Duterte's authoritarian rule, backed by ever more intense, hateful trolling.

The Philippine independent online newspaper Rappler and the like have built a global support base and following. But they are battling with their dependence on Facebook, the very same social media platform the pro-Government trolls are using

“ Perhaps we need to accept the fact that larger forces are at play that want to rearrange the values we hold dear and what we want to be as a democracy in the Philippines. Thus, we are not just fighting our local politicians, but we are also standing up against a re-ordering of values in the world.”

MELINDA DE JESUS, JOURNALIST AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR MEDIA FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

for their distribution.

Maria Ressa, founder of Rappler states: “We need help!”.

The political landscape

Duterte's misogynist remarks and violent language have set the tone in the political debate online, not least in social media. At his first press conference after the election in 2016, he claimed that many journalists that had been killed were either corrupt or “took sides or attacked their victims needlessly”.¹²⁸ Journalists weren't his only target. He has also accused politicians and other persons in powerful positions of corruption, being involved in the drug trade and other crimes.

To put it mildly, the democratic system in the Philippines is fragile. The constitution gives a lot of power to the president and opposition in the congress is usually weak. Whoever rules the country will have difficulties controlling several different political

¹²⁵ Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism. Nicole Cirato, Centre for Deliberative Democracy & Global Governance, University of Canberra, Australia, Journal of Contemporary Asia

¹²⁶ <https://www.rappler.com/technology/social-media/127920-kathniel-twitter-bots-elections-quality-buzz>

¹²⁷ <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/rich-media/134979-rodrigo-duterte-social-media-campaign-nic-gabunada>

¹²⁸ <https://ipi.media/journalists-still-under-pressure-in-dutertes-philippines/>

actors: the political dynasties that dominate politics, clans, oligarchs, business leaders, the military and all the different militias, apart from the Muslim separatists and leftist guerrillas. Vote buying is common, especially in the provinces.

The 2016 election campaign

Officially, Duterte seemed reluctant to run for president. An online petition asking him to stand was launched by his supporters. During the campaign, Duterte made only one specific promise: to solve the drug problem and criminality within six months.

There was also genuine support. In his campaign, Duterte could build on his 20 years as mayor in Davao City on Mindanao, which was transformed into a relatively prosperous and peaceful city in the violent Mindanao during his rule¹²⁹ (and with the help of the Davao Death Squads).¹³⁰ During the campaign, Duterte, styling himself as “Duterte Harry” or “the Punisher”, made several controversial statements – promising a “dirty rule”, admitting having mistresses and cursing the Pope and so on – and was widely quoted by Filipino and international media.

What made millions of Filipinos vote for this man? Nicole Cirato argues that he won the election because, despite his violent language, he made them believe he understood their needs and offered them hope of a better life.¹³¹

Thousands killed and Duterte still popular

Duterte won the election with 39.1% of the votes and became the first Filipino president from Mindanao and not Manila. Not long after, he was able to take control of the House of Representatives, when the former ruling Liberal Party joined forces with his party PDP-Laban (around 30 members of the Liberal Party stayed in opposition), and the Senate.¹³² (This is a common characteristic of Filipino politics).

19 months later, around 12,000 people have been killed as part of Duterte’s war on drugs. Nobody keeps track or is allowed to keep track of how many victims there are.

At least a few thousand have been killed in police

“It’s really disturbing because we are dealing with spin masters and people who are very good at propaganda and their ability to use the internet and exploit the group bias. The us versus them thing. It is really scary, and I ask myself, how do we deal with this?”

ANONYMOUS JOURNALIST

operations, officially because they resisted arrest, and the rest have been killed by “vigilantes”.¹³³

Some commentators claim that Duterte doesn’t seem to have a plan, that he behaves like he’s still mayor and not president. Others, like those in a Stratfor analysis in August 2016, claim that there is a method in the madness, despite his “populist theatrics”. By accusing officials and business leaders of corruption Duterte, without a strong base in Manila, can gain support from ordinary Filipinos while also fight his political rivals.

“The truth of his accusations – and the collateral damage and human rights abuses they may bring – matter little so long as he continues to be seen publicly as the antidote to the country’s overwhelmed legal system, sclerotic public institutions and corrupt elites”.

And seen in this light Duterte needs to stay popular – in December 2017, 79% of Filipinos were satisfied with his government – and look like he tries to make peace with Muslim separatists and the NPA, the Maoist rebellion.

The Media

The media scene in the Philippines is vibrant and defiant but also divided and has problems trying to raise public awareness. The hateful tone on- and offline from the Duterte side is likely to have severe consequences for the country’s democratic future.

There has been troubling news about an increasing threat to press freedom. Not least, the Securities and Exchange Commission’s decision in January 2018 to revoke the registration of Rappler, one of few media outlets openly criticising Duterte’s government, is a

129 Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism. Nicole Cirato, Centre for Deliberative Democracy & Global Governance, University of Canberra, Australia, Journal of Contemporary Asia

130 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/17/rodrigo-duterte-rise-philippines-death-squad-mayor>

131 Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism. Nicole Cirato, Centre for Deliberative Democracy & Global Governance, University of Canberra, Australia, Journal of Contemporary Asia

132 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/140789-liberal-party-joins-pdp-laban-house-representatives-supermajority>

133 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte-police-specialrep/special-report-police-describe-kill-rewards-staged-crime-scenes-in-dutertes-drug-war-idUSKBN17K1F4>

PHILIPPINES



Graph: Freedom House, Freedom of the Press 2017

Population, July 2017 est.	105.7 million
GDP Per Capita (PPP), 2017 est. USD	7,819
Human Development Index Rank, UNDP, 2015	116
Unemployment rate, 2017 est	9.5 %
Population below poverty line, 2010 est	24.1 %
Corruption Index Rank, Transparency Intern, 2017	111
Gender Empowerment Rank, UNDP, 2017	96
Literacy	96 %
Internet penetration	63 %
Facebook penetration	63.4 %

cause of concern. The television network ABS-CBN and Philippine Daily Inquirer, the country's second largest newspaper, have also been under heavy Government propaganda fire.

Freedom House ranks the Philippines press as being "partly free". In the most recent report published by the think tank in January 2018, the Philippines is rated 62 out of 100, where 0 is most free.

When it comes to the internet, Freedom House ranks the Philippines as free and rates it 28 of 100, a downgrade from 23 in 2012. Thus far, urban areas are better served than rural areas.

Social media has become an increasingly important news source for Filipinos. According to a Bloomberg article, smartphones currently outnumber people, and 97% of Filipinos online have a Facebook account.¹³⁴ Filipinos spend 3.7 hours a day on social media.¹³⁵

Ever since the first newspapers were published in the country during colonial times as under the Marcos' years, there has been alternative media, of different sorts, that has challenged mainstream reporting too close to the power holders.

Most newspapers and broadcasting media are privately owned, controlled by a small number of wealthy families. The media market is dominated by two big companies, ABS-CBN Corporation and GMA Network Inc, that broadcast both TV and radio, but also offer popular online news websites.¹³⁶ There are also TV-stations run by the state, like PTV4.

The Catholic Church has its own radio station Radyo Veritas and the authoritarian Iglesia ni Cristo runs the TV-station INCTV.

There are hundreds of radio stations. In the countryside, many radio stations are owned by influential local families. TV is the most important source for national news, but most Filipinos get their local news through radio.

There are several hundred newspapers and competition is tough. About ten daily national papers, among them The Philippine Star, The Philippine Daily Inquirer and The Manila Bulletin, are published in English, and mainly read by an elite of well-educated readers. Several tabloids are published in Tagalog and Cebuano often with sensational material.

Self-censorship is a serious problem. It's fairly common that media outlets publish official statements without questioning them. There are subtle, but strong, ties between business interests and political actors, which, limits the media's independence according to a new report Media Ownership Monitor, MOM.¹³⁷ Some commentators talk about a "tabloidization of news and public affairs", with media's strong focus on politics, crime, sex and celebrities.¹³⁸ Often the reporting is coloured by the views of the owners of the media company. The media still report on more controversial topics, like election fraud and corruption in the political and economic elite.¹³⁹

As in other parts of the world new technology is

134 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2017-12-07/how-rodrico-duterte-turned-facebook-into-a-weapon-with-a-little-help-from-facebook>

135 http://www.mom-rsf.org/uploads/tx_lfrogmom/documents/1-167_import.pdf

136 MDIF Philippines - country overview

137 <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/01/17/578610243/a-fraught-time-for-press-freedom-in-the-philippines>

138 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1218298?journalCode=rjos20>

139 MDIF Philippines - country overview

“ We know that the trolls are state sponsored. It’s the president who sets the tone. The big issue is press freedom.”

FILIPINO JOURNALIST

transforming the media landscape. The Philippines has vibrant community of bloggers who take part in the political debate. The last few years has seen the rise of new online sites, with aggressive support of president Duterte. Sheila S. Coronel, Director of the Toni Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, argues that Duterte has been able to play on the weaknesses of traditional media because “his tirades against sensationalist journalists and elitist media owners resonated among many Filipinos”.¹⁴⁰

Few journalists have the necessary education, and pay is usually low, especially outside Metro Manila. One problem is that politicians and others pay local journalist for positive reporting (which in a play of words is called “envelopmental journalism”), which also means that those who refuse to be bribed might risk their lives. In a survey made in 2015 media workers listed what they saw as their biggest problems. 38.2 % answered low pay, 20.9 violence, lack of information 9.5 % and lack of professionalism 8.5 %. For younger journalists the question of pay was most important, while those in more well-paid positions pointed at lack of professionalism.¹⁴¹

Women in media

Women have a fairly strong position in the media industry, especially compared to other Asian countries. According to a study made by International Women’s Media Foundation in 2011 including 2 newspapers, 2 television stations and 2 radio stations about 44 % of the senior staff were women, and their share was higher in the middle management level (50 %) and almost 46 % at junior levels. The report states that there seem to be a glass ceiling, to reach the positions in the very top (at this level only 34.5 % are women, and few women reach the company’s board rooms).¹⁴²

“ I have given talks to about 1,000 students, asked them about the most basic security measures on the internet. There is no awareness or very little awareness. It has to start with digital hygiene”

FILIPINO JOURNALIST

Natashya Gutierrez states in Rappler that “head major networks, run newsrooms, and report from the field”. But also stress the fact that if female journalists are successful, doubts are raised if they achieved this by “sheer hard work”. She also claims that Duterte’s rape jokes and inappropriate language when talking about female opponents breeds a culture where other powerful actors think they can do the same”.¹⁴³

Civil society

Despite weak political institutions a strong civil society has developed since the fall of Marcos. The Catholic Church has taken the lead in criticizing the government’s crimes against Human Rights. The Archdiocese of Manila launched a campaign *Huwag Kang Papatay* (Thou Shall Not Kill) campaign in July 2016.¹⁴⁴

There are several organisations working to strengthen press freedom (Philippine Centre for Investigative journalism (PCIJ), National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) and College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP).

When Duterte declared martial law on Mindanao in 2017 many media organisations did their best to explain what it meant to younger citizens who hadn’t experienced the dictatorship.¹⁴⁵ At the time the military said they intended to censor media and social networks to protect “national security”.¹⁴⁶

Women in Politics

The Philippines is ranked as the 2nd best country for women in the East Asia and Pacific region, after New Zealand, having closed over 79% of its total gender gap.

140 <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/01/17/578610243/a-fraught-time-for-press-freedom-in-the-philippines>

141 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1218298>

142 <https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/IWMF-Global-Report.pdf>

143 <https://www.rappler.com/rappler-blogs/170047-social-media-feminism-women-empowerment>

144 <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/798551/church-thou-shall-not-kill>

145 <http://cmfr-phil.org/media-ethics-responsibility/journalism-review/martial-law-in-mindanao-the-press-steps-up/>

146 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/171029-afp-martial-law-censorship>

Discrimination because of gender is forbidden in law, but in practice women are discriminated against. Sexual harassment remains a problem, not least in workplaces.

In the 2016 election women got 29.8% of the seats in the House of Representatives and 25% of the 24 senators were women.¹⁴⁷ But minorities like Muslims and indigenous groups have few representatives in congress. And the gender divide is more visible at the local level. In 2013, there were 1269 male councillors and only 329 women.¹⁴⁸

Powerful women who dare challenge the president run huge risks. Following senator Leila de Lima challenging the president's war on drugs she was detained in February 2017, accused of - during her time as justice minister - being involved in drug trading.¹⁴⁹ And when Supreme Court Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno started examining allegations that Duterte hadn't disclosed the full extent of his wealth, which is mandatory, the president threatened to file an impeachment complaint against Sereno.¹⁵⁰ Both these women have suffered high-handed online smear campaigns¹⁵¹, but they also have fought back under the hash tag #EveryWoman.¹⁵²

Limitations to freedoms

The constitution guarantees the freedom of speech and also states that all Filipino media companies shall be Filipino controlled.¹⁵³

Libel laws also curtail the press freedom, not least under former presidents Estrada's and Arroyo's rule.

New legislation was approved in 2012 to fight online abuse, including a clause on libel, like those already in force for the press and broadcasting media, but with stricter penalties.

In 2017, a new Freedom of Information act was approved by congress (Duterte signed the Executive Order the year before), which cover "all government offices under the executive branch". There have been several complaints of limited access to documents, due to the many exceptions. A new police task force has been created to tackle violence against journalists but has so far made little difference.¹⁵⁴

“ Online attacks have a chilling effect and we must worry when this happens because who will tell the stories that need to be told, who will tell the stories that those in the power want to hide? Who will force them to tell the truth and speak the truth to those in power.”

MELINDA DE JESUS, JOURNALIST AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR MEDIA FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Silencing journalists

The Philippines has a history of impunity. Despite arrests, no one has to date been sentenced for the killing in 2009 of 58 people, among them 32 journalists and media workers, in the Maguindanao Province on Mindanao. At least five witnesses have been killed and about 70 of the accused are free on bail.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) Impunity Index the Philippines was the 4th most dangerous country for journalists in 2016 - 79 journalists have been killed since 1992.

Seven of the victims were female (four of them were killed in Maguindanao 2009), and most of the victims had been covering political issues like corruption.

More journalist, 138, have been killed during the period, but CPJ hasn't been able to confirm that their deaths were related to their work. The National Union of Journalists estimates that 177 Filipino reporters and media workers have been killed since 1986. The Philippine Centre for Investigative journalism (PCIJ) and the International Press Institute say six media workers were killed in 2017 while Reporters without Borders (RSF) report three murders of journalists the same year.

Many of the victims had been working for local radio stations. It's suspected that quite a few of

147 <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/WIP2016-e.pdf>

148 <https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/124248-women-politics-governance>

149 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39073468>

150 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-duterte/philippines-duterte-takes-aim-at-graft-agency-head-for-query-on-his-wealth-idUSKCN1C91N4?il=0>

151 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/07/rodrigo-duterte-strong-filipinas-philippines-cory-aquino-gloria-arroyo>

152 <https://www.esquiremag.ph/politics/everywoman-a1510-20160930-lfrm>

153 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/193772-doj-probe-rappler-criminal-liability-calida>

154 <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/621627/gov-t-task-force-to-probe-media-killings-doing-little-researcher/story/>

them were killed by private militias, hired by local politicians. Few perpetrators have been sentenced for the murders.¹⁵⁵

PCIJ, the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, also reports on several slay attempts and assaults, media workers receiving death threats and different forms of online attacks and libel suits against journalists in the past year (with at least two convictions 2017).¹⁵⁶

Since Duterte took power in June 2016 there have been several new threats to press freedom, and the situation has deteriorated in recent months.¹⁵⁷ One example is the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) decision in January 2018 to revoke the corporate registration of Rappler, citing the company had violated the constitutional ban on foreign media ownership.

RSF reports that Rappler has received foreign investment in the form of PDR's (Philippine Depositary Receipts) by philanthropic foundation Omidyar Network, but that it indeed is Filipino owned.

Rappler has appealed SEC's ruling and is still publishing on their site.¹⁵⁸ Rappler also risks being charged of breaching anti-Dummy laws and of violating the constitution. There is also a libel case against Rappler.¹⁵⁹

Other media organisations such as the Philippine Daily Inquirer and the television network ABS-CBN have also been singled out for criticism by the president.

Trolling

In 2016 Rappler published three articles where the journalists could show how a small number of fake accounts could reach millions of Filipinos.^{160, 161, 162}

"They can convincingly manufacture reality on social media as they wish, transforming perception to reality, and swaying opinion based on perceived number and power", Maria Ressa, the Rappler CEO, described in a UNESCO report.¹⁶³

Days after the publication of the report she received 90 social media hate messages an hour mainly in the form of gendered online harassment, threats of rape and murder. But Ressa has also been able to use her own network to fight these campaigns.

Another example is Gretchen Malalad, a former reporter for ABS-CBN. She has been accused in social media of sharing information with a foreign journalist who wrote a scathing report on Duterte's supposed connection to extrajudicial killing.

Another method to silence critics is technical attacks targeting media groups. PCIJ, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, had its website disabled in 2016 after publishing reports on Duterte's war on drugs.

In some major cities authorities temporarily shut down mobile services citing security reasons.¹⁶⁴

Reports on the regime's attempts to manipulate online information, using internet trolls, bloggers paid by the state, fake news sites and social media is common place.

The writer Miguel Syjuco describes the internet in the Philippines as a "morass of fake news and conspiracy theories, harassment and bullying" with trolls claiming Duterte gets the support from the pope and president Macron. (One claim was that even NASA named him the "best president in the solar system".)¹⁶⁵

The aforementioned study by Oxford University's Computational Propaganda Project determined that the Duterte campaign has paid 200 000 dollars for some 500 trolls used to attack dissenters and spread disinformation.¹⁶⁶

The most dedicated instigators have been rewarded with government positions or other employment with his allies.

155 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1218298?journalCode=rjos2010>

156 <http://pcij.org/stories/impunity-acute-and-benign-fettered-flow-of-information/>

157 <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2018/01/17/578610243/a-fraught-time-for-press-freedom-in-the-philippines>

158 <https://www.entrepreneur.com/ph/news-and-events/sec-revokes-incorporation-of-ph-s-pioneering-online-media-startup-rappler-a100055-20180115-lfrm?platform=hootsuite>

159 <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2018/01/20/group-defends-rappler-in-online-libel-case.html>

160 <https://www.rappler.com/nation/148007-propaganda-war-weaponizing-internet>

161 <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/148536-facebook-algorithms-impact-democracy>

162 <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/148347-fake-accounts-manufactured-reality-social-media>

163 UNESCO report: An attack on one is an attack on all, <https://en.unesco.org/an-attack-on-one>

164 <https://freedomhouse.org/print/49885#sdfootnote91sym>

165 Fake News Floods Philippines, New York Times

166 <http://comprom.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/07/Troops-Trolls-and-Troublemakers.pdf>

“Duterte has turned Facebook into a weapon”

MANILLA, MARCH 2018. The lecture hall at the College of Mass Communication in the University of the Philippines is absolutely packed. On stage are some of the nation’s most well-known senior female journalists. One after the other they recall how they overcame fear to write stories of human rights abuses, torture, disappearances and killings during the Marcos dictatorship.

The students are fervently taking notes on their mobile phones and are sending texts with the hashtag #DefendPressFreedom.

They are here to learn and get inspired.

The current Philippine State orchestrated backlash on the media is a grim reality. Everyone finds it difficult to know how to act and feel secure, in a fast-changing digital world of trolls, bots and hate speech. Former dictator Marco’s old martial laws to suppress and distort the truth are now being used by President

Duterte and his cronies to haunt the country on the internet.

Melinda Quintos de Jesus, journalist and Executive Director of the

Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility stands up. She expresses deep concern for the self-censorship that is spreading through the Philippine media.

“As journalists we see how screens are grabbed in front of our eyes when we are writing. These kind of attacks are chilling but journalists still continue to cover stories that must be told. It scares them, it endangers

members of their families. We worry but still need to continue telling the stories. Otherwise, who will tell the stories that those in power want to hide? Who will otherwise force them to tell the truth?”.

President Duterte has turned Facebook into a weapon against the people according to Maria Ressa, founder of the popular and government-critical internet news-site Rappler, which started in 2012. Maria and many of her employees have been directly targeted and attacked. At one point Maria, received 90 threats an hour through social media.

It is difficult to prove the president’s direct involvement but Rappler has proof that Facebook accounts linked to the government have been used in these attacks.

“Male journalists are great craftsmen but sometimes they don’t really have the balls. Female journalists tend to stay longer on the ground and find out the stories. They have an eye for detail.”

ANONYMOUS FILIPINO JOURNALIST

“I have worked in war zones, then you can take cover. But with online threats, you don’t know what’s for real and what isn’t. I don’t know when it jumps from the virtual world to the real world.”

MARIA RESSA,
JOURNALIST AND FOUNDER OF RAPPLER

TO SUM IT UP

Covert and anonymous propaganda against journalists online, primarily through social media, is, as shown in this chapter, a cause of growing concern globally.

Hate, threats and harassment, commonly specifically targeting female journalists with sexualised language, has spread and is pushing journalists - in particular those who are not working for well-known mainstream media - to be very careful about what they dare report about. The phenomenon is worldwide and encompasses rich and poor countries alike.

In Mexico the old war against drugs and a system of political rulers being the country's largest advertisers are corrupting the media.

In Egypt President al-Sisi has muzzled the media, including social media, and there is no longer an independent press.

In Ukraine homegrown cyberbullying escalated after the release of the Panama Papers where the country's oligarchs, who control mainstream media through the "jeansa" system - with propagandists masquerading as journalists - were exposed. Ukraine is also, importantly, a primary target for the Kremlin's cyber-war effort.

In Pakistan there is a tendency from the security apparatus to replace brutal repression with all the more effective social media trolling. Harsh blasphemy and security legislation are there to further discourage spirited writers.

In the Philippines serious journalism is a very dangerous pursuit and is countered by President Duterte's army of some 500 trolls that confuse the public by pumping out fictitious news.

A common denominator in all investigated countries is how freedom of expression is perverted via social media. There is a lack of transparent regulation of

social media that respects freedom of expression and users data.

Organised hate and harassment against journalists - with very similar features appearing in all five countries here - is strategic by nature and is largely anonymous and aimed at lowering the ceiling for freedom of speech and making journalists reluctant or afraid to write about perceived controversial issues - in particular what the powers to be are up to in terms of enriching themselves.

In most of the researched countries, mainstream media is directly or indirectly controlled by government - which can sometimes be the perpetrator or financier of hate and harassment against journalists.

Another common denominator is that in Mexico, Ukraine and the Philippines in particular, female journalists have gained online prominence and built significant audiences by setting up their own noisy independent media to fight for freedom of speech, human rights, greater transparency and democracy - which has made them even more vulnerable to hate and harassment.

These small online news outlets run by women founders have, in most cases, gained their audiences with the help of Facebook's friend-to-friend-algorithms.

After Facebook downgraded its news media strategy - after it discovered the drawbacks of news publishing in terms of responsibility and pressure from authoritarian governments and political interests - independent news media with a dependence on Facebook for its publishing has suffered serious audience setbacks. This has made them even more exposed to attacks from online marauders.



4

JOURNALISTS - LIVE SURVEY

This live, ongoing, survey on hate, harassment and threats against women, transgender and non-binary journalists started off in six countries - Mexico, Egypt, Ukraine, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sweden. Respondents from Egypt are still too few, hence there are only five countries presented in the various graphs below.

The results so far (with 142 responses so indeed early days):

- 73 % of journalist respondents have received hate, harassment or threats against them.
- 67 % of journalist respondents in the six countries surveyed think hate, harassment and threats are done to distort their reporting.
- 60 % think that it can be part of a campaign.
- 66 % believe that there should be harsher penalties against social media companies (25 %) political instigators (23 %) and individuals (18 %).

THE SURVEY

The survey across very different countries, was launched in May 2018 and is ongoing. By end September 142 journalists had participated across all continents.

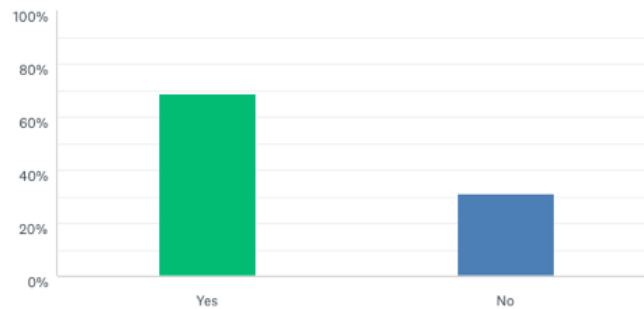
The survey, albeit still limited, shows significant differences in how women, transgender and non-binary journalists are treated online compared with men as far as hate, harassment and threats are concerned.

The results of the survey suggest a whole range of real and perceived differences in how trolling affects journalists depending on gender, political environment and culture.

Some of the preliminary findings are shown in Graphs 1-18 with commentary below.

Have you (linked to your journalism profession) experienced online hate, harassment or threats

Answered: 137 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	68.61%	94
▼ No	31.39%	43
TOTAL		137

Graph 1: 68.6 percent of journalist respondents stated that they had been subjected to hate, harassment and threats linked to their journalism profession.

Have you (linked to your journalism profession) experienced online hate, harassment or threats

Answered: 135 Skipped: 0

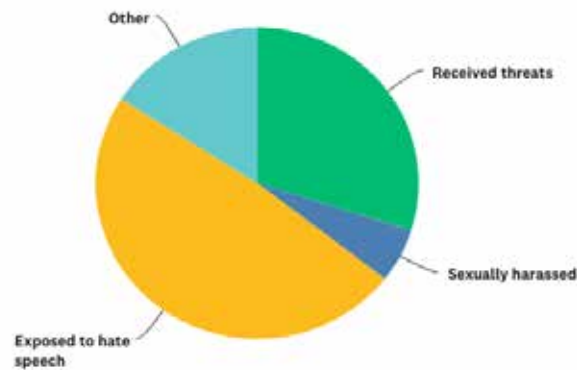


	YES	NO	TOTAL
▼ Q1: Woman (A)	71.29% 72	28.71% 29	74.81% 101
▼ Q1: Man (B)	61.76% 21	38.24% 13	25.19% 34
▼ Total Respondents	93	42	135

Graph 2: Within their segment 71.3 percent of women and 61.8 percent of men had experienced hate, harassment and threats.

If you answered Yes on Q5: What kind of online hate, harassment or threats have you experienced

Answered: 107 Skipped: 32

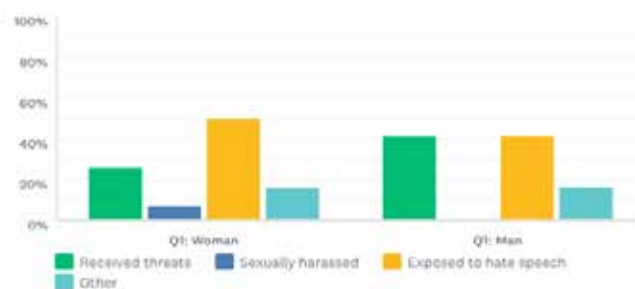


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Received threats	29.91% 32
Sexually harassed	5.61% 6
Exposed to hate speech	48.60% 52
Other	15.89% 17
TOTAL	107

Graph 3 and 4 (below): The overall majority of respondents, 48 percent, stated they had been exposed to hate, more women than men, while men had received considerably more threats than women.

If you answered Yes on Q5: What kind of online hate, harassment or threats have you experienced

Answered: 105 Skipped: 30

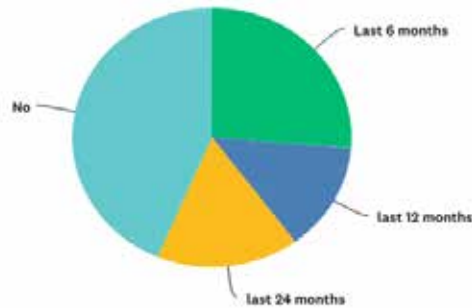


	RECEIVED THREATS	SEXUALLY HARASSED	EXPOSED TO HATE SPEECH	OTHER	TOTAL
Q1: Woman (A)	25.93% 21	7.41% 6	50.62% 41	16.05% 13	77.14% 81
Q1: Man (B)	41.67% 10	0.00% 0	41.67% 10	16.67% 4	22.86% 24
Total Respondents	31	6	51	17	105

Graph 4: A minority, 7.4 percent, of women - no men - said they had been sexually harassed.

Have you experienced more hate, harassment and threats during the

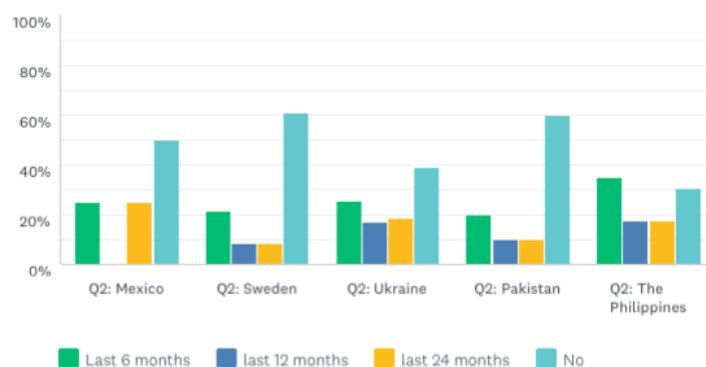
Answered: 133 Skipped: 0



Graph 5: By and large most respondents stated there had been no significant change in hate, harassment and threats during the last 24 months.

Have you experienced more hate, harassment and threats during the

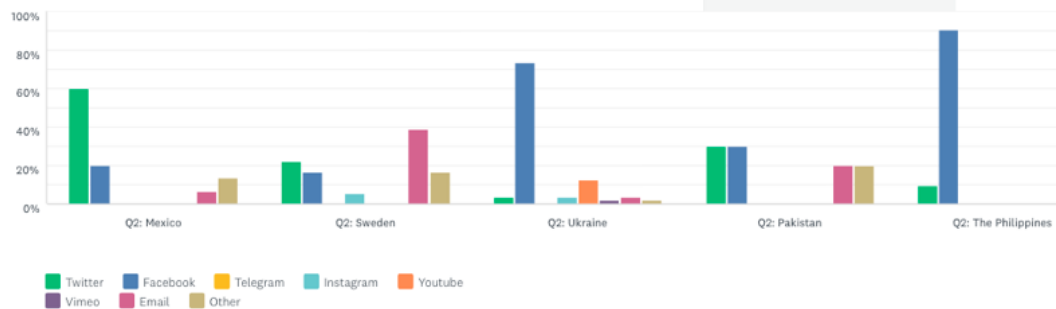
Answered: 131 Skipped: 0



Graph 6: However, in particular journalists in the Philippines but also Ukraine appeared to be more exposed to trolling perhaps due to more intense political activities than the others.

Which online media was mainly used to communicate messages with hate, harassment or threats

Answered: 121 Skipped: 10



Graph 7: There were significant differences in how the trolling was distributed. In Mexico Twitter was the top means of harassing particularly women journalists followed by Facebook. In the Philippines an extreme amount of the trolling was done through Facebook, 90.5 % which is not surprising as the country is the more hooked up to Facebook than any other country in the world and most independent media uses Facebook for their unique publishing.

To what degree do you think you consciously or unconsciously (have) censored yourself

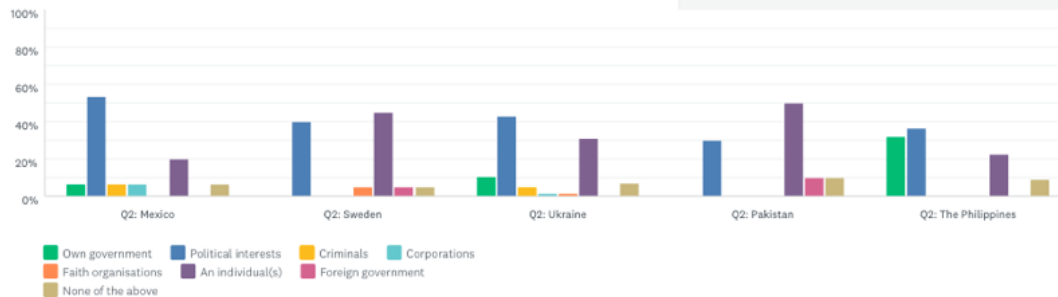
Answered: 128 Skipped: 3



Graph 8: The question to what extent journalists consciously or unconsciously censored themselves due to hate, harassments and threats gave some interesting differences between the countries, with Mexico and Pakistan journalists saying they censored themselves “an awful lot” or “a lot” followed by Ukrainians and Philippine journalists saying the censored themselves a lot. No Swedish journalists said they censored themselves ‘an awful lot’ but 14.2 % said they did so “a lot”.

Where do you think hate, harassment and threats against you mainly come from

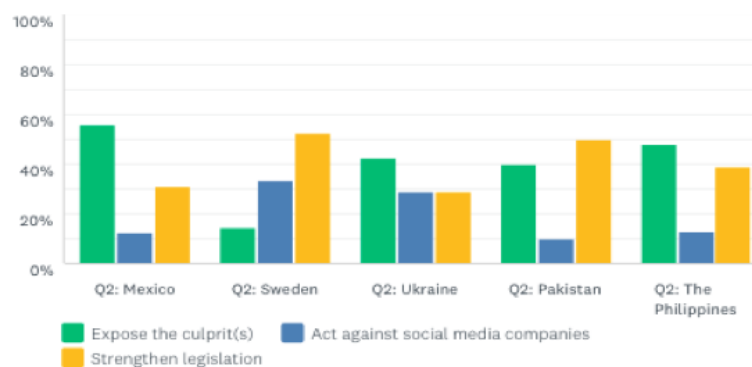
Answered: 125 Skipped: 6



Graph 9: On the sensitive matter of where the trolling came from there were also some significant differences. Journalists in all countries agreed that political interests were behind a lot of the trolling. In the Philippines journalists also thought their own Government had considerable responsibility for the trolling, while neither Sweden nor Pakistan thought there was any Government involvement (probably saying so for very different reasons) .

In your opinion what would be the most effective way of decreasing hate, harassment and threats

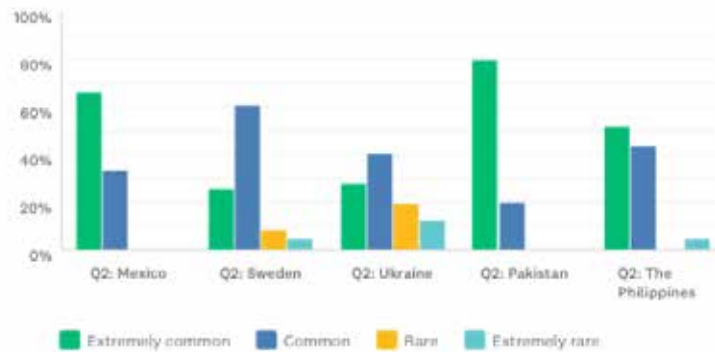
Answered: 129 Skipped: 2



Graph 10: There were considerable differences from country to country in how journalists suggested hate, harassment and threats could be dealt with. In Mexico a clear majority, 56 %, and almost as many in the Philippines, believed that the culprits primarily should be exposed. This also had the highest score in the Ukraine. In Sweden very few believed in primarily exposing the culprits, instead a majority, 52.4 %, suggested that strengthening the legislation was the way to go, something that Pakistan, and to a degree also Philippines liked.

Do you think online hate, harassment, threats against women, transgender and non-binary journalists in your country is

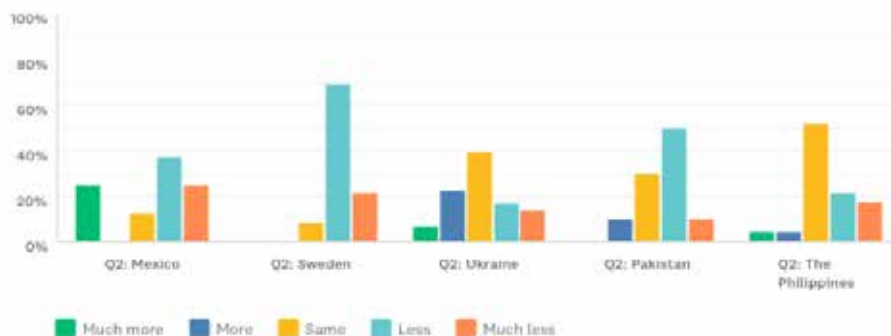
Answered: 128 Skipped: 3



Graph 11: More than 50 % of journalists in Pakistan, followed by Mexico and the Philippines believed online hate, harassment and threats against women, transgender and non-binary journalists is “extremely common”. No-one in Mexico or Pakistan believed such trolling was “extremely rare”.

Do you think male journalists are more or less exposed than women, transgender and non-binary journalists to private and sexually explicit online hate, harassment or threats

Answered: 130 Skipped: 1



Graph 12: Journalists in Sweden are considerably clearer that male journalists are significantly less often attacked using sexual language than other countries.

Do you think that hate, harassment or threats against you is part of a campaign

Answered: 123 Skipped: 8



Graph 13: The politically sensitive question whether trolling is engineered by campaigns splits the field. A clear majority of Philippine journalists believed that that definitely is the case, while a majority in Mexico, Sweden, Ukraine and Pakistan also thought it was possible (yes, maybe) that there was some sort of conspiracy at play.

What do you think is the main purpose of you receiving hate, harassment and threats

Answered: 120 Skipped: 11



Graph 14: An over-whelming majority of journalists believe that hate, harassment and threats are aimed at distorting reporting, with Mexico taking the lead followed by Sweden and the Philippines.

How often are you exposed to hate, harassment or threats

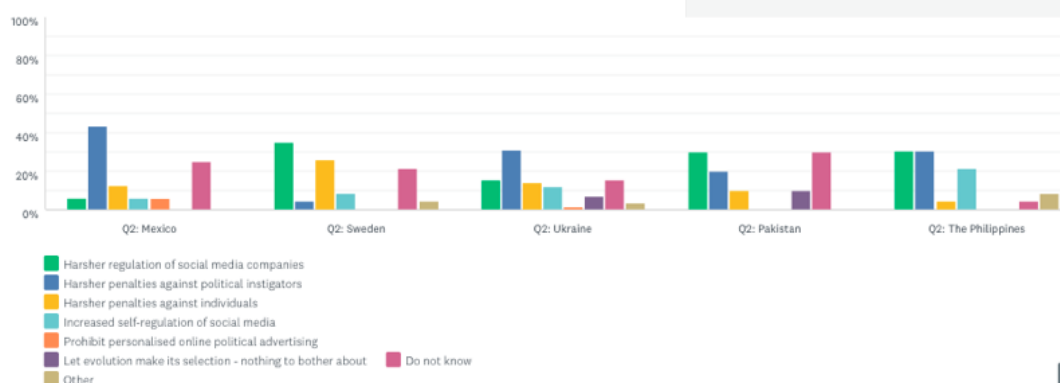
Answered: 129 Skipped: 2



Graph 15: On the delicate matter of frequency, how often journalists received various kinds of threats online Mexico sticks out with 26.7 % stating they receive threats daily, while Sweden also came high up with 34.8 % - of which more than 70 % were women journalists - saying they were trolled on a monthly basis.

How do you think the question of hate, harassment and threats against journalists should be dealt with - select one option that you find most important?

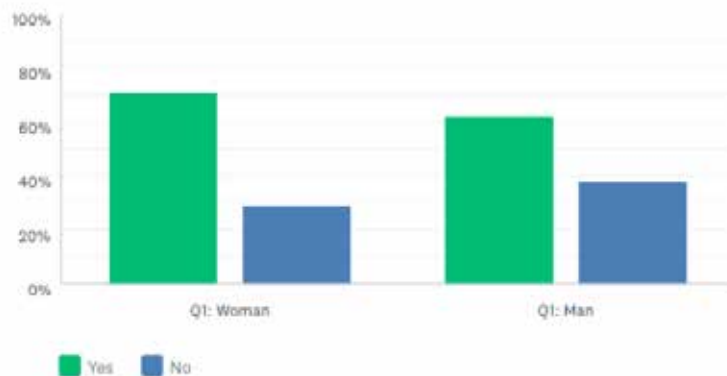
Answered: 130 Skipped: 1



Graph 16: In a variation on a previous question, how to deal with the problem, there were as before significant differences between the countries. Mexican journalists, an overwhelming majority woman, wanted to see “harsher penalties against political instigators”, something a fair amount of Philippine journalists also wanted. Sweden and Pakistan were primarily keen on harsher regulation of social media companies.

Have you (linked to your journalism profession) experienced online hate, harassment or threats

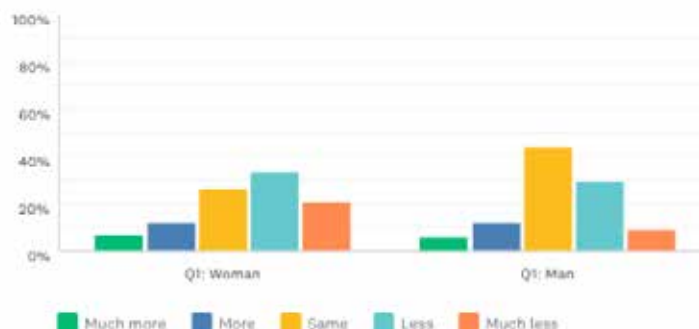
Answered: 134 Skipped: 1



Graph 17: In Graph 17 Question 5, if the journalists have experienced online hate, harassment or threats linked to their profession, women and men were divided. The graph appears to suggest that women themselves say they are more exposed than men and that men are indeed less affected.

Do you think male journalists are more or less exposed than women, transgender and non-binary journalists to private and sexually explicit online hate, harassment or threats

Answered: 135 Skipped: 0



Graph 18: However, in Question 18 it appears as women and male journalists beg to differ on the intensity between the genders. More men believe the genders are equally exposed while women think men are leaning towards being “less” exposed to hate, harassment and threats.

There are peculiar differences between what women and male journalists in various countries think on a number of issues, most significantly Swedish men to a much higher degree than men in other countries in the survey think that women journalists are more exposed to hate, harassment and threats.

Conclusions

The main takeout from this limited survey is that there is, although clear differences in the perception of who is trolling and what to do about it, unity among journalists that trolling is affecting journalism and is a serious menace. The majority of journalists in all environments believe that hate, harassment and threats against them are meant to subdue them.

Predictably, political propaganda and conspiracy against journalists online is perceived to be much worse in Mexico and the Philippines, where there is a clear fear of being attacked physically, than in Sweden. Few Swedish journalists have been attacked in person.

It is also clear that women journalists are worse off than men in all countries participating in the survey.



5

POLICING HATERS AND FAKERS

#JOURNODEFENDER
#DEMOKRATIJOUREN
#FAKTAJOUREN

The number of countries where internet trolling and automated so-called bots have been used to influence voter constituencies in a clandestine, sometimes illegal, manner over the last 12 months alone has risen from around 28 to at least 48 countries.¹⁶⁷

Ahead of the tampering of the US election and the Brexit referendum, the winning parties in the latest elections in the Philippines, India and Myanmar used social media as a centrepiece and resorted to encouraging - or at the best not discouraging - vengefulness against the opposition and minorities - leading to varying degrees of human rights atrocities before and after elections covered up by propaganda and the suppression of journalist coverage.

Journalists, the messengers of societal news, are a “natural” primary target for such trolling.

The trend, making hate against journalists a business opportunity, has very rapidly led to new forms of informal censorship, sometimes shoulder to shoulder with conventional censorship. Among the five countries we have surveyed in this report, Egypt, Pakistan and the Philippines are particularly badly affected.

What we are dealing with, as hopefully is made clear in this report, are politically-motivated forces that aim to lower the ceiling for the freedom of speech and freedom of the press through scare-mongering, by sowing doubt, division and generally move the needle.

As senior Philippine journalist Melinda de Jesus so poignantly said in an interview for this report: “Perhaps we need to accept the fact that larger forces are at play that want to rearrange the values we hold dear and what we want to be as a democracy in the Philippines. Thus, we are not just fighting our local politicians, but we are also standing up against a re-ordering of values in the world”.

This may sound too conspiratorial for some, but the reality is that the new behavioural techniques available to influence citizens with custom made messages on social media - often in the form of spiteful propaganda impregnated with racist, misogynist and sexist trigger words and markers with hidden codes aimed at pressing emotional buttons, as well as political (in)action - have come to influence political outcomes and the overall political environment across the world.

Most of the time, the culprits are not identifiable. This has been a clear tendency in the five countries targeted. There are clear signs, however, that governments, in particular those with authoritarian

and (perceived) nationalist agendas, and political interests, sometimes in tandem with outright criminals, are financing and justifying trolling to convince constituencies and to frighten off the opposition and journalists in particular.

The perception among 75% of journalist respondents in our survey, covering six countries, is that hate, harassment and threats are masterminded by often invisible political interests.

Social media as a political battleground and control instrument has gone beyond being a nuisance to become a serious structural problem threatening liberal democracy and freedom of speech. A whole range of state agencies and political interest groups across the world are, as our tentative survey in this report suggests, targeting journalists - in particular female journalists - by using violent “weaponised” language authorised by their paymasters.

The ability to neutralise mainstream and independent journalists by threatening them and by describing them as “fake news” and being “enemies of the people” has proven to be at least partially successful - and has further legitimised attacks against journalists online and offline in certain quarters.

Although journalists are resistant to self-censoring themselves they have become more aware of what can trigger hate, harassment and threats against them and would rather avoid touching upon subjects that could trigger an unpleasant reaction from, again, often anonymous sources. 80% of journalists at the New York Times admit to having felt a need to avoid certain subjects or tone down their copy.

Ultimately, if left unanswered, it is clear that structural intimidation of journalists and journalism, pushed and paid for by forces beyond the public eye, will lower the bar for independent reporting.

Social media companies have a special responsibility for cleaning up their act. It is the meteoric rise of social media - with 4.4 billion people signed up to Facebook and its subsidiaries (Instagram, WhatsApp) alone - that has created a global communications vehicle that has fundamentally changed the way freedom of expression and freedom of the press is exercised.

So far social media and tech corporations’ willingness to take any kind of meaningful action to restrict misuse of these corporations’ platforms and data have almost entirely been based on public, media and political pressure which lately also, through dramatic drops in share prices, has translated into pressure from investors and the market.

New EU legislation to deal with private data

167 Computational Propaganda Project, University of Oxford, <http://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2018-07-20-social-media-manipulation-rising-globally-new-report-warns>

and recent billion-dollar fines against Google has impacted on tech companies. They are hiring thousands of new staff to chase down trolls to not only impress on politicians but also to show investors that they are able to reduce subversive social media interference in political processes.

Likewise, there are, as exemplified in the case of Facebook in Myanmar, extraordinary and in some instances frightening human rights aspects at stake. The UN Special Rapporteur's verdict that Facebook, through its inaction, played a "determining role" in whipping up anger against Myanmar's Rohingya population, does not bode well if and when similar negligence is repeated in other countries where a combination of ethnic tension, cynical governments and irresponsible social media administrators can cause irreparable damage to people and societies.¹⁶⁸

The U.N. Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, report, ahead of the 38th session of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva in July 2018, sent a strong signal that human rights are in serious danger and emphasised the importance of online human rights being on par with offline rights. "At a minimum, companies and states should pursue radically improved transparency, from rule-making to enforcement of the rules, to ensure user autonomy as individuals increasingly exercise fundamental rights online."¹⁶⁹

The recommendations stated: "Opaque forces are shaping the ability of individuals worldwide to exercise their freedom of expression. This moment calls for radical transparency, meaningful accountability and a commitment to remedy in order to protect the ability of individuals to use online platforms as forums for free expression, access to information and engagement in public life". The report goes on to identify a range of steps for states and ICT companies:

- It recommends that states do not involve themselves in the regulation of content but that this should be left to the courts.
- States shall also not delegate responsibility to companies as adjudicators of content. States and ICT companies shall publish detailed

transparency reports on all content-related requests issued to intermediaries (e.g. social media companies).

- ICT companies shall adhere to international human rights law as a "tool to articulate and develop policies and processes that respect democratic norms and counter authoritarian demands".
- ICT companies shall also engage themselves in a number of established international guiding principles developed by civil society, intergovernmental bodies, the Global Network Initiative and others¹⁷⁰

Freedom of expression organisation Article 19, among others, applauded Sweden, Brazil, Nigeria and Tunisia for sponsoring a resolution on "the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet" - adopted on 5 July by more than 60 states co-sponsoring at the 38th session of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) in Geneva. China, Russia and the USA were not among the co-sponsors.

Taking action

There is an urgent need for international coordinated action to support and protect journalists, in particular, female journalists and non-binary journalists, from hate, harassment and threats - with serious consequences to liberal democracy itself.

As shown in this report propaganda against journalists is not limited to a specific area but moves across national borders, just as the consequences of climate change represent a threat to the survival of democracy and humankind.

Social media companies have a clear responsibility to modify their product offerings so that their technologies do not favour hate speech and conflict, with dramatic and negative results for human rights and democratic behaviour.

Democratic countries that take a serious view on the freedom of expression and freedom of the press need to have an open, constructive debate on how to deal with the rise of social media, and the implications for democracy itself.

The issues of regulation and self-regulation need to

¹⁶⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-facebook/u-n-investigators-cite-facebook-role-in-myanmar-crisis-idUSKCN1GO2PN>

¹⁶⁹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Commission, A/HRC/38/35, Distr. 6 April 2018.

¹⁷⁰ aa. Pp 19-20

be balanced against the freedom of speech and how to ensure that professional independent reporting not only survives but flourishes. The dramatic effect of how a new technology changes our mindset and behaviour is playing itself out as we speak. The very nature of power, who is in charge and who is manipulated, is changing at lightning speed.

This does not mean that there is not light at the end of the tunnel. Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) commissioned by the Swedish newspaper industry showed in a survey that out of the hate mail against 40% of the 752 journalists mentioned on these websites, it appeared that the same 10 IP-addresses were responsible for one-third of all hate comments. Although it is unclear if they were real individuals, composites or bots - these and similar results point towards the conclusion that most of the worst propaganda online against journalist and indeed others who stick their neck out are attacked by a limited number of instigators that could and should be identified in public.¹⁷¹

Urgent and decisive action is needed across the global political and media landscape:

- Democratic governments and international authorities need to modernise state and international legislation so that ALL news media operates from the same page and, most importantly, is aligned with international human rights law. To catch up with and bring culprits to justice takes coordinated action because media and data know no borders.
- Internet tech companies, in particular social media and micro-news platforms and search engines, must take legal responsibility for their publishing and subject themselves to public scrutiny through non-governmental, transparent monitoring and audits regarding if and how they are carrying out their duty to act against hate, harassment and threats online

without restricting human rights laws on the matter of freedom of expression and freedom of the press.

It is imperative that independent journalism traces and exposes the originators of misinformation/propaganda, including hate speech, harassment and threats against female journalists.

News media globally have lost 50% or more of their legacy revenue to internet tech platforms, in particular to the Facebook and Google groups, who now jointly command some 75% of global digital advertising revenue. To be able to report back to a wider public about the dramatic political, economic and technological changes ahead, the actual state of our democracy, and about who is pulling the strings and lurking behind the scenes, new finance vehicles, backed by government, civil society and philanthropic entities, are required. Catching up with the politics behind such commonalities will go a long way to coming up with solutions.

There is a lack of and therefore a need for continuity in overall monitoring, investigation and coordination - with a gender focus - of hate speech, disinformation and overall computational propaganda against journalists, in particular regarding female journalists.

It is imperative to urgently uncover trolling in social media and the effects thereof in order to strengthen journalism, in particular in politically fragile countries, and its role as an independent interface between citizens, the state and parliamentary institutions.

Much of what is suggested here to proactively defend journalism in the interest of freedom of the press also applies to everyone else who is being subject to extreme action online, be it political representatives, government officials, academics and any citizen who is standing up for human rights.

¹⁷¹ <https://www.medievarlden.se/2018/06/nathatet-mot-journalister-kommer-fran-ett-fatal/>

Facebook's 'determining role' in Rohingya refugee tragedy

When the UN Special Rapporteur on Human rights in Myanmar, Yang-
hee Lee, and, Marzuki Darusman,
chairman of the U.N. Independent
Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, pre-
sented their findings to the Human
Rights Council, as the preeminent UN
body charged with looking after basic
rights for all living human beings, in
Geneva in March 2018, they described
how Facebook had a "'determining
role' in whipping up anger against the
Rohingya minority" in Myanmar. "I am

afraid", said Ms Lee, "that Facebook
has now turned into a beast, and not
what it originally intended."

The refugee and human rights trag-
edy in Myanmar, with between 700 000
and 1 million people forced into exile
and thousands slaughtered, drives
home the urgency of bringing global
social media companies to task, to
take editorial responsibility of what is
published on their platforms.

Facebook pledged ignorance but
was warned at senior level about the

explosive hate speech situation in My-
anmar already in 2015.

Despite the warnings the company
did not take necessary measures to
bring down the levels of hate speech
on its platform.

As in most countries where Face-
book rolled out its Free Basics, it did
so with a skeleton staff. The situation
in Myanmar was special as the military
junta had kept cellphones and the in-
ternet away from its citizens until the
market was liberalised in 2013.



EPILOGUE

FOJO MEDIA INSTITUTE - #JOURNODEFENDER

There is, this is the view of Fojo Media Institute, a need for a global hub, a clearing house, with the vision to protect and support news media professionals against trolling.

The hub is the go-to place for media practitioners to check facts and figures around trolling, how it is spread, who lurks behind the scene and what methods are used.

Independence from sponsors, be it state and philanthropic funding, is crucial for the hub to operate with much needed credibility and trust. The expertise required includes journalists with an international perspective on freedom of the press, data journalists, data scientists and digital security experts, legal assistance and mediators between the media and social media platforms.

The proposed Hub is, of course, not the answer to every kind of hatred, harassment and threat that is thrown at the journalism community. However, it could make a vital contribution to coordinating some of the action taken to protect and assist journalists in carrying out their work in the interest of democracy: by encouraging and improving awareness, resilience, as well as a calibrated response within the journalistic community.

It is important to emphasise that the proposed Hub is intended to play a cross-border support function for all organisations involved in freedom of the press and protection of journalists by creating continuity and coordinating the monitoring, analysing and action taken vis-a-vis offending governments, political interests and tech companies.

Fojo Media Institute, the publisher of this report, operates #Demokratijouren, the Swedish equivalent of the proposed #journodefender global hub, and #Faktajouren, a fact-finding hub for Swedish journalists. Fojo Media Institute is Sweden's leading institution for international media development.



ACRONYMS, ONLINE MEDIA AND PROPAGANDA INDUSTRY TERMINOLOGY

With the digital media age comes a whole range of new vocabulary that is becoming all the more important to grasp to make us understand how the handling of private data is a new currency that changes journalism and our lives

AI	Artificial intelligence is used and can be used even more extensively e.g. to make believe that there is a human being sending or answering a post. In marketing AI integrated into targeted advertising platforms and complex data analytics speeds up machine learning or algorithms. A new generation will greatly increase the potency of disinformation operations by enhancing the effectiveness of behavioural data tracking, audience segmentation, message targeting/testing, and systemic campaign management. (also see Digital deceit.)
Astroturfing	E.g. a bot (automated robot) that pretends to be a grassroots sponsor or organisation.
Big data	The use of digital data to extract new categories of information, used by governments and corporations for intelligence, planning, marketing and psychometric behavioural influencing.
Bots	Short for robot, an automated or semi-automated Internet account or twitter hashtag sending out content en masse, used to make it look like there are many more followers than there are, and that way cause a posting to go viral. Here we are primarily interested in bots that send out intentional, polarising content via social media that can, if on Twitter, be re-tweets that then are exponentially re-tweeted by either other bots or individuals who are sympathising with or are carrying out their paid-for duties by sending messages to often data-harvested individuals. Tweetdeck and many other apps for Twitter can easily be used for automated mass tweets.
Computational propaganda	See disinformation, misinformation, propaganda.
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists, New York based journalism rights organisation with a focus on attacks, arrests and murders of journalists worldwide.
Cyborgs	Accounts with “human conductors” that are partly automated and linked to networks that automatically amplify content.
Cyber troops	“Government, military or political party teams committed to manipulating public opinion over social media” ¹⁷²
Data harvesting	To extract data from the internet/social media with the help of various analytical and marketing tools of which there are very many.
Dark money	Cybermoney such as Bitcoin used as a currency pay for undercover services.
Darknet	A highly encrypted overlay network such as TOR, The Onion Router, which conceals a user’s location and usage was once - ironically - set up by the US Office of Naval Research and DARPA, the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency.
Dark post	Social media ads that do not show up on your timeline and are only seen by targeted users (microtargeting).
Dark social	Traffic on your website from social media that is not detected by analytics tools.
Doxxing	A form of harassment in which personal information such as phone numbers and street addresses are released online.
Deep Internet	The encrypted side of the internet where hackers, intelligence agencies and the likes are pursuing their business.
Digital deceit	A number of techniques used commercially and for propaganda purposes serve the purpose of tweaking or manipulate search engines to push a particular post to the top. Mainstream digital advertising industry is using exactly the same technology

¹⁷² Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: a Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation, Working Paper No 217.12, Computational Propaganda Project, University of Oxford, <http://comprop.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/89/2017/07/Troops-Trolls-and-Troublemakers.pdf>

as Putin's almost mythological troll factories are be it Search engine optimization (SEO), social media management services (SMMS) or Artificial intelligence (AI) in marketing.

Disinformation	The dissemination of intentionally false information - can include mostly true facts blended with falsehoods - to deliberately confuse or mislead public opinion, probably from the Russian word <i>dezinformatsiya</i> introduced in the 1950s by Soviet planners. Is part of a larger plan or agenda. The word overlaps with propaganda and misinformation but distinguishes itself by leaning more towards an intention to create an environment of cynicism, distrust, uncertainty and to disincentivise the public to get actively engaged or mobilised politically or socially. ¹⁷³
Echo chamber/system	A metaphorical description of a site/chamber where people are able to seek out information that reinforces their views. ¹⁷⁴
Disinformation ecosystem	The various actors in the disinformation world. What this report is aiming at from a journalism/democracy point of view.
Fake account operators	Operators who are operating fake profiles to infiltrate communities and manipulate news media.
Fake news, deep fake news	False information, deliberate misinformation or hoaxes that is mainly spread via social media. Fake news has always been around, can now spread like wildfire and cause considerable personal and political damage.
Fan	A user liking an FB business page and subscribing to it.
Facebook	Does not need any presentation on the user side. What goes on under the bonnet is an entirely different thing. Facebook has accumulated the largest personal preference data bank ever.
Facebook Messenger	Facebook's messaging service, integrated with Facebook. Since 2017 encrypted but with data harvested and used by Facebook's and (at least until April 2018) its partners to assign content and advertising on an individual profile basis.
Filter bubble	Caused by web searches and website algorithms, the user becomes (more) intellectually isolated, has some (not yet fully understood) effect on democracy. ¹⁷⁵
Freedom House	Since the 1920's a leading US bipartisan global democracy and freedom of the press rating institute.
Friend	People connected on Facebook, what friends use and like is extremely important when assigning individual content and advertising.
GDPR	The General Data Protection Regulation, EU's new data privacy legislation introduced in May 2018.
Geoblock	Used by Governments to block its citizens from accessing certain sites or issues.
Google Analytics	A web analytics service offered by Google that tracks and reports website traffic.
Handle	Your username on Twitter e.g. @MarikaG
HootSuite	Helps you manage all social media marketing from one platform.

¹⁷³ <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/disinformation>; <https://www.ned.org/issue-brief-distinguishing-disinformation-from-propaganda-misinformation-and-fake-news/>

¹⁷⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echo_chamber_\(media\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Echo_chamber_(media))

¹⁷⁵ In 2011 Eli Parisier published the book *The Filter Bubble*, which promoted the idea that filtered searches "create the impression that our narrow self-interest is all that exists" and that, in a Wikipedia note, it is potentially harmful to both individuals and society. Furthermore that "invisible algorithmic editing of the web" may limit our exposure to new information and narrow our outlook. Such algorithmic editing has, according to Parisier, the possibility of "undermining civic discourse" and making people more vulnerable to "propaganda and manipulation". His views are disputed by others, suggesting that users choose their own filters.

Internet	The beginning of a new digital era where a global system of inter-connected computer networks is linked up globally through the Internet protocol suite (TCP/IP).
Hate speech	Hate speech, as interpreted by Wikipedia, “lies in a complex nexus with freedom of expression, individual, group and minority rights, as well as concepts of dignity, liberty and equality. Its definition is often contested. Here we deal with online hate speech, defined by Wikipedia as follows: “Online hate speech is a type of speech that takes place online (e.g. the Internet, social media platforms) with the purpose to attack a person or a group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, or gender”.
Independent media	The term here stands for media with a mission to advocate and report on democracy in an open-minded way according to journalistic ethics. Not owned by media groups or special interests with primarily commercial or propagandistic intentions.
IP	Internet Protocol, the detectable address for a computer or cell phone hooked up to the Internet. To avoid being easily traced VPN’s, Virtual Private Networks, are used to link up to the Internet anonymously.
IJJ	International Union of Journalists, the global body for national journalist unions.
Kompromat	Short for “compromising material”. The good o’l KGB word for compromising somebody to damage their reputation or make them collaborate.
KUMU	A popular visualisation data software package to map social networks and connections.
Legacy media	Established media from the era before the internet.
Like	The Facebook way of showing appreciation, very easy to inflate and manipulate for commercial or political purposes even Facebook itself offers like-inflation packages.
Lulz	Internet slang for amusement value.
Marker	We are focusing here mainly on identifiable markers put down in the media landscape aimed at establishing connections online and activating emotional response.
Metanarrative	A narrative that organises many smaller narratives and operates as a guiding mechanism. Postmodernism introduced some healthy scepticism to too totalitarian metanarratives. Metamodernists reopen some space to manoeuvre to be able to do good without actually believing too strongly in an overarching ideology. ¹⁷⁶
Malware	Software sneaked into your computer or cell phone via e.g. an email or as a download for the purpose of spying or highjack your data.
Misinformation	Information that is incorrect, inadvertent sharing of false information.
Narrative	We are here focusing on political narratives and various online techniques used to force prevalent post-WW2 liberal journalism towards increased self-censorship.
Patriotic trolling	When states play a hand in online harassment campaigns with a patriotic slant. About 15 different countries (e.g. Ecuador, Venezuela, Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, China, Iran).
Personal ecosystem	Personalised content assembled by algorithms registering the individuals clicking links, viewing friends, content reads, purchases, personal data, geodata, etc.
Political Parody Accounts	Lookalike accounts pretending to be the original website of e.g. Vice president Mike Pence and often used to encourage re-tweeted tweets.

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphbenko/2017/06/30/trigger-warning-how-the-trolls-occupied-politics-and-what-to-do-about-it/2/#4eca18f6d06f>

Propaganda	Selective use of information to achieve political effect.
OSCE	The Vienna based Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe runs various democracy-oriented media projects particularly in former Eastern Europe and the Balkan.
RSF	Reporters without Borders, in French Reporters sans Frontières.
Scrape, scraping	Web scraping, web harvesting, or web data eradication is data scraping used for extracting data from websites; web scraping is a tool to extract data from a web site. ¹⁷⁷
SEO	To optimize a post to make it rate as high as possible in a search engine. There is a multi-billion-dollar industry dedicated to optimizing search engine results by reverse engineering the Google search page rank algorithm. Disinformation operators use techniques known as “black hat SEO” to trick the algorithm and dominate search results for a few hours of the news cycle before Google corrects the distortion (also see digital deceit).
Shadow profiles	These are profiles on people not signed up on Facebook but that the network nevertheless manages to get access to through the information someone who is a Facebook member have (probably unintentionally by e.g. allowing access to contacts) provided already. Facebook’s CEO Mark Zuckerberg was questioned about the shadow profile issue by US politicians on Capitol Hill during a hearing in April 2018, and by EU in May same year, but dodged the question “I’m not - I’m not familiar with that”. ¹⁷⁸
Snapchat	Encrypted social media for publishing of messages, photos and videos with a sell by date. Increased popularity among the very many that do not want to be on Facebook.
Social media	Normally a perceived free Internet platform where originally friends could invite friends. There was a plethora of options battling to achieve first-strike-advantage and become the go to site - a battle Facebook won. The not so free lunch often, as in the case of Facebook, that the user gives away the right to use their data for marketing purposes. Lately social medias role in influencing culture, shopping and voting behaviour have become a hot political potato.
SMMS	Social media management services, a new kind of digital marketing service at the intersection of machine learning algorithms and advertising technology. The SMMS offers advertisers a fully-integrated solution that pre-configures messages for different target audiences across multiple media channels simultaneously and automatically. It is a finely tuned disinformation machine for the precision propagandist (also see digital deceit).
Techno censorship	The latest frontline in a hidden war that aims to silence journalists and those who speak out by using online propaganda and (perceived) surveillance that can replace physical confrontation and punishment.
Troll, trolling	To deliberately make offensive or provocative online postings with the aim of upsetting someone or eliciting an angry response from them; also to trolling for mackerel (see also patriotic trolling) Wikipedia: In Internet slang, a troll is a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people, by posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community (such as a newsgroup, forum, chat room, or blog) with the intent of provoking readers into an emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal, on-topic discussion, often for the troll’s amusement.

¹⁷⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_scraping

¹⁷⁸ <http://theconversation.com/shadow-profiles-facebook-knows-about-you-even-if-youre-not-on-facebook-94804>; <https://www.cnet.com/news/shadow-profiles-facebook-has-information-you-didnt-hand-over/>

Tweetdeck	A social media dashboard application for management of Twitter accounts.
Twitter	The most popular social media platform for breaking news and announcements among journalists.
Viral	A social media post goes viral when it is picked up by thousands of viewers within a very short space of time.
Weaponization	Information commonly in a propaganda campaign on social media that stands counter to real events - most often its implied that it's a foreign state (Russia) attacking the liberal democratic world order to influence and undermine.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN organisation responsible to deal with freedom of speech and freedom of the press.
WAN-INFRA	The World Association of News Papers and News Publishers. The leading global organisation for news publishers, where national publishing organisations are members.