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MEET THE TEAM



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SAM PHILLIPS

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Lora is a third year International Relations student; she is originally from Kansas City, but feels lucky to call Edinburgh her second home. She loves to travel and learn about other cultures, which has fueled her interest in global studies.



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Jelena is a first year, studying Politics alongside Philosophy and Sociology. Born in England to Yugoslavian parents, she credits her inquisitive nature and desire to seek the untold side of a story to her upbringing.



MICHAEL DRAX

Copy Editor

Michael is a first year student of Arabic and History from Northumberland. He is very involved with the Debates Union and is a proud member of Murder Mystery Society. Michael reserves a particular interest in the affairs of the Middle East and Asia.



Welcome to Issue Two, Volume Seven of Leviathan,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I present to you an issue on 'Media and Perception.'

This issue covers one of the most pressing, 'Media and Perception.' By choosing this theme, we hoped to help critically examine the role of the media in society, while also unpacking some of the broader claims such as the 'decline of journalism' or 'the rise of fake news.' Moreover, the 'Not in the News' profiles for each region showcase stories from around the world which were overshadowed by more popular topics or even forgotten about by the mainstream media. Writers for this issue chose topics from across the spectrum, covering issues from the decline of journalistic responsibility, to how the media can be used to reinforce or alter perceptions, and the importance of the freedom of the press.

Some writers chose to focus on how developments in the functioning of the media have created new dimensions of old problems. In the International section, Julio Othon analyses the tension between journalistic responsibility and the need to reach readers effectively. On a related topic, in the Europe and Russia Section, Ross Gale highlights how the securitisation of the Media can make it difficult for them to fulfil their obligations to the public, and he notes the inadequate freedoms of the British press in a comparative analysis with Finland. Similarly, in the Africa section, Marco Bauder argues how the media focus on President Trump's 'Muslim Ban' is part of wider trend of legitimising action by demonising refugees. He further laments the securitisation of refugees in previously liberal African refugee regimes and draws on several examples to highlight how such policies are often counter-intuitive.

In the Middle East and North Africa profile, Viktoria Hinderks examines the communicative power of the media, and how terror groups such as ISIS can draw strength from broadcasting their cultural destruction through new channels worldwide. In the same section, Elisabeth Dietz observes the flip side of this phenomenon, noting the rise of so-called 'citizen journalism' in Syria and the uses and abuses by the mainstream media of information drawn from these grassroots sources. In the Asia Pacific section, Arjun Jacob also illustrates the power of the media, analysing how it can be used by the upper castes in India to oppress those in the lower castes. He speculates as to whether increased attention on journalistic responsibility worldwide might precipitate an alteration to this status quo.

Other writers chose to focus on how the modern media has given rise to new problems. In the Africa section, recurring contributor Matthew Pflaum illustrates how a bias toward covering events in certain African countries in the mainstream media correlates with a bias in aid distribution in Africa. Similarly, Hannah Stanley shows how media bias can shape collective perceptions according to country, noting specifically the development of competing legacies of Fidel Castro in the United States and other countries. In the International profile, Maria Gharisefard observes a related phenomenon, noting how the role of the media influences perceptions of climate change, and notes how statements made by the leaders of Russia, China, and the US can have severe implications on environmentalism.

Let me conclude by offering massive thanks to my Deputy Kanzanira Thorington, my Production Chief Betzy Hänninen, and the entire Leviathan staff, without whom the publication of this issue would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the President of the Edinburgh Political Union Darya Gnidash, as well as Dr. Ailsa Henderson and Dr. Sara Dorman of the School of Social and Political Science, for their continued advice and support.

As noted on the back cover, the theme for our next issue will be 'The New Generation,' and the deadline for submissions is March 19, 2017. For more information on how to submit and to see a copy of our submission guidelines, please see the 'Submit' page at www.leviathanjournal.org.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles compiled in this issue as much as I did, and I cannot wait to read the submissions for our next issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicholas G. Pugh". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Editor-in-Chief



Media's coverage of Africa has long been an object of debate, as the coverage is often both criticized for being lacking in depth and misinformed. In a time of fake news and the politicisation of media in the West, we must ensure that this focus on media includes debates on African media as well. Media can play a critical role in defining Africa's place in the global discussion, and the narratives coming out of Africa rely on a strong Fourth Estate.

For our profile theme, 'Not in the News' Samuel Phillips presents an exposé of the unrecognized autonomous region of Somaliland, situated within the northern borders of Somalia. Samuel examines the political reasons behind Somaliland's untold story, and how this lack of formal recognition has exacerbated Somaliland's development concerns.

Edinburgh alumni Marco Bauder critically assesses the normative framework

surrounding refugees and immigrants, examining the AU's criticism of Donald Trump's so called 'Muslim ban.' He provides several alternative conceptions of refugees and immigrants that are necessary to adapt to a world with increased human migration.

Continuing this theoretical bent, Matthew Pflaum observes historical patterns of development financing, and highlights the relationship between the media and development funding. He addresses the vast inequalities in development resource allocation and the dangerous role that media can play in exacerbating these inequalities.

As alternative media sources become more prevalent, we will surely see a change in the way Africa appears in the media. One hopes that an increase in both mainstream and alternative coverage will better highlight some of the positive developments on the continent while simultaneously drawing the global public's attention to some of the forgotten stories, such as that of Somaliland.

Profile: Malign Neglect

With a well-regulated and uniformed police force, functioning democratic institutions, and a noticeable absence of African Union (AU) troops, the cities of Berbera and Hargeisa on the Red Sea coast of Somalia seem like a different country from the corruption-eaten and war-torn streets of Mogadishu and Galkayo.¹ Moreover, according to the residents of these cities, they are. On 18 May 1991, amid the ruins of Burao and from the turmoil of the Somali civil war, a collection of delegates and militia leaders declared that the Republic of Somaliland – a former British colonial possession which had unified with the rest of Somalia in 1960 only five days after declaring its own independence² – had been restored as an independent and sovereign state.³ When the first Republic of Somaliland began its brief five-day affair with independence in June 1960, it was recognised by 35 different countries and lauded by African patriots the likes of Abdel Nasser and Kwame Nkrumah.⁴ Conversely, in the 26 years since its second declaration of independence in 1990, not a single member of the United Nations has recognised the second Republic as a distinct country from the Federal Republic of Somalia.⁵ This lack of international recognition, somewhat mitigated by several ad hoc arrangements with countries and international organisations still wishing to operate on Somalia's Red Sea coast,⁶ has detrimental effects on the development of Somaliland. It has condemned many Somalilanders to the continued damaging effects of drought and poverty, all because an obdurate world refuses to recognise that Somalia is no longer whole.

Even Somaliland's most loyal allies, such as Ethiopia – which has provided a modicum of protection for the Republic from the government in Mogadishu – have refused to formally recognise the country.⁷ The obstacles to international recognition have little to do with governance issues in Somaliland, which African diplomats, NGOs, and UN officials all agree meets the basic criteria for an independent country.⁸ Instead, worries of precedent and reputation have prevented any nation from recognising Somaliland's independence. The issue very much depends on the AU, which is responsible for the peacekeeping and state-building operations in Somalia. Major international actors such as the US say that they will defer to the AU's decision on the matter.⁹ Among AU member states, many different factors have created an institutional inertia around Somaliland's independence. For the many African states with breakaway regions, like Nigeria or the Democratic Republic of Congo, accepting Somaliland's independence would set a dangerous precedent of civil wars giving birth to free states.¹⁰ It could easily embolden domestic opposition – many powerful international backers of the AU are sympathetic to these concerns; Russia, for example, has worries about the implications of Somaliland's independence for Chechnya.¹¹ This fear is institutionalised in the AU's policy of maintaining colonial borders, a

powerful barrier to Somaliland's independence.¹² For the AU leadership in the Horn of Africa, Somaliland's independence also has major consequences for their international standing. The reconstruction of Somalia from a 'failed state' into a governable country has been the pet project of the AU, and recognising the independence of Somaliland would be tantamount to admitting that the Mogadishu government, so painstakingly fought for, has failed to live up to expectations.¹³ The continued political influence of regional actors like Djibouti on the Mogadishu government incentivises many other backers of the AU mission in Somalia to preserve the status quo and deny recognition to Somaliland.¹⁴

Somaliland smarts under the current regime of non-recognition, which for many Somalilanders represents an international refusal to recognise the scale of the crimes committed by the Somali government against those in the northern part of the country.¹⁵ For the government of Somaliland, their unilateral independence is a result of the crimes of the Barre administration during the civil war. When the Somali government carpet-bombed Hargeisa in 1988 and butchered thousands of civilians during the retreat, they broke any common ties of nationhood that had previously bound Somaliland to Somalia.¹⁶ In addition to Somaliland's conflictual history with the Mogadishu government, Somaliland's government has presented a legal argument arguing that its independence would violate neither the AU nor the UN's rules. Technically, Somaliland did not declare independence in 1991, but rather annulled the act of union signed between Somaliland and Somalia in 1960.¹⁷ According to the Somalilanders, this nuance means that Somaliland would not set a precedent for self-determination trumping the right of sovereignty, because Somaliland is simply evoking a legal right of separation it always possessed.¹⁸ The Somaliland government's proposal also accommodates the AU policy on maintaining colonial borders, arguing that their independence is a return to the colonial borders between British Somaliland and Italian Somalia.¹⁹ So far, however, these entreaties have been ineffective, as too many influential states have a strategic interest in either propping up the Mogadishu government or maintaining good ties with its supporters.

In spite of the continued non-recognition of its sovereignty, Somaliland has grown as a nation to a remarkable degree, especially compared to the rest of Somalia. While the southern regions of Somalia descended further into civil war after Siad Barre's flight into Kenya, Somaliland has constructed a functional democracy with stable governance and the rule of law; two traits noticeably absent from Somalia since the 1990s.²⁰ The stellar trajectory of Somaliland compared to Somalia raises questions about whether non-recognition has truly hindered the Hargeisa government in its pursuit of development and democracy. Some scholars even suggest that Somaliland has succeeded because of, rather than despite, its lack of international recognition. This non-recognition forced the resource-poor region to settle disputes peacefully without the complicating hand of foreign government

intervention or supply.²¹ However, this comparative perspective of Somaliland with its neighbouring failed state is dangerous, and gives a flawed impression of the country's development. While the development of Somaliland into a stable and democratic state is laudable, the conditions of this development have been immensely difficult. Much of that difficulty is attributable to a lack of foreign assistance or aid to rebuild the shattered country. Despite its remarkable successes, Somaliland is still desperately poor, with the cash-strapped government barely able to provide basic services.²² This is partially because the major revenue-generating areas, like the port of Berbera, are too powerful to coerce into taxation.²³ Rates of school attendance are low,²⁴ the government lacks funds necessary for drought planning in the arid region,²⁵ and healthcare is rudimentary, suffering from a lack of personnel and equipment.²⁶ In many measurable aspects of development, Somaliland performs worse than its disenfranchised neighbours in Ogaden, Ethiopia.²⁷ Without international recognition, Somaliland is unable to tap into the wealth of foreign aid and international assistance that sustains the rest of Somalia.²⁸ This leaves its development dependent on the finite resources of the Somaliland diaspora in the West and the Persian Gulf.²⁹ Despite its political development, the Somaliland state remains perennially economically underdeveloped and unable to enforce its policies, largely as a result of the limited available capital.³⁰ While these are exactly the issues that the UNDP, World Bank, and IMF are designed to solve, they are effectively unable to provide these services in Somaliland because its official status as a part of Somalia forces the agencies to work through the Mogadishu government, a pointless endeavour for providing services in a region that Mogadishu does not control, as demonstrated by the utter lack of progress of World Bank projects in Somaliland.³¹ This legal mess has trapped Somaliland in poverty and weakened the governance of the most promising political development to come out of Somalia in decades.

The lack of formal recognition for Somaliland's independence continues to expose the country to sources of instability that would not affect the republic if it were to attain the status a sovereign nation. Not being a recognised nation, Somaliland is not privy to the protections received by other *de jure* states, including those protecting its territory from foreign meddling.³² While Somaliland is fortunate to have the support of Ethiopia, which profits handsomely from the trade between Ogaden and the port of Berbera,³³ its dependence on power politics rather than legal rights leaves it exposed to changes in the geopolitical climate of the Red Sea. Most recently, the promise of a lucrative deal stationing a military base in Berbera for the UAE, who were kicked out of Djibouti in 2015 after a spat with President Guelleh,³⁴ has foundered under pressure from Ethiopia, demonstrating the ease with which foreign powers can leverage Somaliland's legal limbo to their own benefit.³⁵ The greatest threat to Somaliland, and one which its neighbours in Djibouti and Addis Ababa are uniquely positioned to make, is that of a forced reunification with the Mogadishu government.³⁶ Ethiopia has been critical in the establishment of the transitional national government in Mogadishu, providing the vast majority of the manpower that keeps Al Shabab out of major areas.³⁷ Djibouti has essentially handpicked several members of the Mogadishu government.³⁸ Both countries maintain a large amount of political capital invested in keeping Somalia as a viable state. Although both countries have been willing to establish basic diplomatic relations with Somaliland,³⁹ their influence over Somali politics means that if Somaliland angers these countries, it could imperil any chance Somaliland has of establishing independence. A wrong move by Hargeisa could strip the territory of Ethiopian protection. This would allow for a future scenario where the Mogadishu government, including some of the same men who brutalised Somaliland during the Barre administration,⁴⁰ is given free reign to crush their 26-year aspirations of independence. Somaliland may have succeeded to a remarkable degree without the world's help, but its future is still very much determined by whether the international community perceives the state as

worth preserving.

Samuel Phillips is a second year MA Politics student at the University of Edinburgh

Why Doesn't Anybody Care About Chad?

MATTHEW PFLAUM examines the consequences of international media's unequal coverage of African states.

Global poverty and development remain critical priorities of the international community.¹ The role of international media in these issues is significant; countries which receive attention and coverage become more familiar to the international community, which subsequently becomes more aware of the issues of those countries, hence attracting greater investment and development.² Those popular and well-known countries – places like Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria – receive regular media coverage in *The Guardian*, BBC, and *The New York Times*, while others – Chad, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, etc. – receive far less.³ There are a number of explanations and factors contributing to these imbalances, including trade, language links, history, resources, culture, and geopolitics. Ultimately, it may simply come down to public perception, and the trends and preferences that guide global politics at any given time.⁴ Media coverage can only cover so much material, and publications tend to favour events and locations about which the public cares and knows. There is no rational reason for Kenya or Uganda to receive more attention than Chad, except that the former countries are perhaps deemed more familiar.

The global burden of poverty is staggering. About 160 nations remain part of the 'Global South' – nations that tend to be poorer and less industrialised than the wealthier Western ones.⁵ However, within this large group of nations, there is significant variation. This group includes upper low-income and middle-income countries,⁶ as well as the least-developed and poorest nations on Earth.⁷ International development's broad goal is to assuage global poverty in all its forms and locations equally – but does it? There is no direct correlation between a country's poverty levels and the amount of development aid it receives (Figure 1).⁸ This alone serves to demonstrate the convoluted and conflicting factors involved in policy and practice of international development – development itself is unequal in its resources, funding, projects, and attention to countries. It is a problem that, unfortunately, is rarely discussed, and receives scant attention. Thus it is important to ask the following questions; can and, more importantly, should mainstream media play a role in orienting public attention towards these least-developed countries? Should media and journalists be primarily accountable to their stakeholders – CEOs, readers, and advertisers – or do they also have a duty to report on places and events that might be less popular and familiar to their readership, but that are nonetheless in need of media coverage? This article was written under the assumption that the least developed region of Earth is the Sahel. For evidence, consider this: the nations of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Central African Republic are ranked 181, 183, 175, 186, and 187 respectively on the Human Development Index (out of 187).⁹ So, these five countries are all ranked in the bottom twelve of the world, and four in the bottom six: all happen to be in the same region.

There are many factors that contribute to the disparity in development aid and resource allocation.¹⁰ One factor could be historical ties that lead back to British and French colonialism. Many of the most familiar African

nations to the international public and the media are Anglophone and English-speaking, once colonised by Great Britain. British colonialism, and colonialism in general, left lingering relationships and structures – education, courts, healthcare, business, and diplomacy – that persist to this day in these countries.¹¹ Factors such as driving on the same side of the road, shared colonial languages, access to familiar television and radio stations, and historical ties may seem trivial reasons for countries and donors to select certain countries for development projects and assistance, but are actually quite influential.

Countries like Kenya and Tanzania have maintained reminiscent colonial structures (language, schools) and a foundation of decades of development projects, research, and professional relationships.¹² Analysed from any level or perspective, there are simply more resources dedicated to medium-income countries with similar colonial histories than to several of Africa's Least Developed Countries (LDCs).¹³ Most university departments at major institutions have faculty studying Kenya and Tanzania. This attracts students, who then go on to study these countries. But with this herd mentality rigidly in place, who will study Chad? Niger?¹⁴ Eritrea? Kenya and Tanzania also have the advantage of providing a relatively stable research environment, but the assumption and argument that media and development do not cover volatile or dangerous places is a spurious one. Plenty of media, research, and development aid is oriented towards Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan.¹⁵ Certain, specific, unstable areas receive plenty of resources and attention. But the conflict in northern Mali does not. Nor the failed state of Eritrea. The international community seems to make judgments that do not rely primarily on need or crisis about the significance of certain events or nations.

The top ten African nations receiving aid are not necessarily the poorest.¹⁶ Other than very poor nations like Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique, the remainder of the top ten recipients are middle-income by African standards.¹⁷ However, comparing the top ten nations receiving aid to the list of former British colonies has significant overlap – six of the top ten recipients are former British colonies.¹⁸ Although it is infrequently discussed in global development forums, 'the global allocation of aid is very inequitable'.¹⁹ There are four possible reasons for this unequal distribution of aid. The first is 'herding':²⁰ donors and wealthy nations tend to focus and fixate on certain developing nations more than others, often related to resources, development goals, and perceived effectiveness. This can be seen in some universities as well, such as the University of Edinburgh, where many professors and students ultimately fixate on a few popular African nations, at the expense of many others.²¹ The second reason is economic growth. Countries like Ethiopia and Rwanda both receive lots of development aid, as well as foreign investment, because their economic growth rate is high. Third, poverty is only one factor involved in giving development aid, along with others like politics, education, and trade. Fourth, while many donors are committed to poverty reduction, there is no consensus about how to achieve this.

The fact remains that many experts continue to discuss matters like international development or media without much consideration towards its fundamental inequality. Recent criticism of the Western nations' media portrayals of Africa as reductive and biased are certainly valid, but belie even deeper problems. It is not just that media portrays Africa inaccurately, but that the attention given to different countries within Africa is often biased towards the factors discussed above. Major international publications provide regular coverage on the conflicts in Sudan and Nigeria, and one frequently finds news concerning protests and political struggle in Burundi, Ethiopia, and South Africa. Other places such as Mali, Eritrea, Chad, and Niger do not receive as much attention,²² and it is this lack of attention which serves to reinforce and sustain these countries' problems. The media's lack of coverage keeps these countries' problems silent and invisible by reducing awareness. The lack of coverage, along with development's neglect of them, isolates them from the international community, and maintains a sort of unfamiliarity and blindness

towards them. This sustains a lack of public knowledge about these places. This is not an argument that media and development shouldn't dedicate significant resources to Kenya, which is an economically and politically powerful regional actor. It is saying, rather, that media should not do so at the expense of Chad. If academics and development professionals focus their policies and research on a few specific countries, lesser known countries such as Chad will remain under-developed, impoverished, and desolate. This leads to less development aid and assistance and fewer research projects. In fact, over the past few years, nearly 100 percent of international aid received by Chad from the United States has gone towards specific anti-terrorism efforts, completely neglecting food insecurity, health issues, education, poverty, and political stability.^{23,24,25}

In the global debates surrounding international development, there is scant attention to the role of inequality in media and development resources. In one article, Nick Harvey examines why some conflicts receive more attention than others, discussing themes of geography, political significance, and media coverage.²⁶ Côte d'Ivoire, he notes, received far less attention during its 2011 massacre than other similar conflicts in Libya and Egypt. He maintains that many of the deadliest conflicts in history have been in Africa, yet media coverage has been only a fraction of that of other conflicts across the globe. The war across Central Africa – commonly known as the 'war in Congo', but actually involving up to ten nations – is the deadliest conflict of the past 50 years, but receives far less attention than other conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. During the past two decades since the start of the latest DRC conflict – which, as of today, has resulted in five million deaths – media has devoted 50 times more coverage to the Israel-Palestine conflict, with 7,000 deaths.²⁷ The Kosovo conflict, in which 2,000 people died, received more attention and aid money than all of Africa's humanitarian emergencies combined.²⁸

But it is not just conflicts that receive unequal attention, countries themselves do as well. Media, development, and the international public seem to be more interested in Nigeria and Kenya than Niger and Chad. The argument that Nigeria and Kenya are populous countries is valid, but does not fully explain the predicament. Many smaller African countries also receive a significant amount of aid and media coverage.²⁹ In trying to make the world more equal, international media must begin to try better to report equally. The argument can be made that, 'nothing happens' in Niger and Chad. This argument could be made because large development projects of the sort pervasive in Rwanda, Botswana, and Ethiopia, are not present in Niger and Chad. But media has a duty to report on everything important, not just economic growth or big industrial projects. An academic recently proposed building a wall of trees in the Sahel – Chad, Niger, Mali – which would stimulate agriculture and curtail aridity and desertification in one of the most desolate places on earth.³⁰ Food insecurity in the Sahel is greater than in any other place in the planet, with 25 percent of all households facing food shortages and malnourishment.³¹ This proposal has barely received any coverage or attention in the international media. The project will not make anyone rich, nor enhance trade between Africa and the West, but such innovation will save tens of millions of people in the Sahel from chronic malnourishment, hunger, and insecurity. In fact, many important and significant events are happening in these neglected countries – political developments, business expansion, social and cultural events, sports, etc. – but they don't receive as much attention. As we examine the role of media in society, we must more specifically examine its role in global development.

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Donald Trump, the AU, and Norms Discourse

MARCO BAUDER looks at the contradictions in how we discuss and treat refugees and migrants.

On 29 January 2017, President Donald Trump, issued an executive order suspending immigration into the US from seven Muslim-majority states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).¹ The executive order further halted the US Refugee Programme for 120 days, and the intake of refugees from Syria indefinitely.² A day later, the African Union formally responded to the policy. Though it received comparatively little coverage in traditional media, the rebuke issued by the African Union (AU) days later gained traction on social media. One particularly resounding soundbite read:

‘The very country to which many of our people were taken as slaves during the transatlantic slave trade has now decided to ban refugees from some of our countries.’³

The sharpness of the retort and its allusion to the USA’s colonialist past appeared to speak to a deep outrage among those opposed to the ban. However, the nature of the AU’s response, from its wording to its source and the way it was cast into the world, speaks to a deeper problem in the discourse and actions towards refugees. If the world is to resolve the currently unprecedented levels of displaced people, a successful response will require accepting two overarching principles. Firstly, we must treat refugees and survival migrants as human beings, rather than rhetorical grenades. Secondly, we must stop using security as a pretence to shirk our national and international obligations.

However, before discussing the issue above in detail, it is necessary to dispel the AU’s claim to the moral high ground. To put it bluntly, the African Union lecturing the US – or anyone for that matter – on the correct treatment of refugees is deeply ironic. The record of AU member states’ treatment of refugees is mixed at best, with several notable lowlights. Kenya, South Africa, Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, and others have failed, actively or passively, the refugees within their borders. This is especially poignant given that the AU and its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), have created one of the most progressive international legal frameworks for refugees.⁴ This framework even stretches to recognising the rights of ‘survival migrants’, a term proposed to take into account people forced to leave their own country as a result of dire economic or social conditions.⁵ This conception of a ‘refugee’ goes far beyond the recognized 1951 UN Refugee Convention definition, which focuses on safeguarding those who flee civil, political, or religious persecution.⁶ Yet while the OAU Convention sets the standard for the progressive treatment of refugees, unfortunately, that standard contrasts starkly with the history of its implementation.

Perhaps most striking is the situation in Angola. The borders of Angola have been understandably porous over the past twenty years. Since conflict has wreaked havoc in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the bordering provinces have taken in a large number of refugees.⁶ Successive Angolan governments, however, have failed to uphold their obligations to both international and regional refugee conventions. Congolese refugees have been largely ignored by the Angolan authorities, with the exception of the tens of thousands who were forcibly deported in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2008.⁷ Moreover, these deportations, totalling well over 100,000 people, are savage affairs, featuring physical abuse, rape, and torture.^{8,9} These actions have been legitimised by denouncing those deported as criminals and rejected refugees.¹⁰ Few efforts are made to register and process refugee applications at the border, and refugees who are processed receive few or none of the life necessities to which they are entitled in the OAU Convention.¹¹

A similarly ambiguous stance to both the 1951 and the OAU Conventions can be seen in Kenya and South Africa. Albeit, these operations are smaller in scope, but South Africa also has a record of relatively arbitrary deportation of refugees from neighbouring Zimbabwe and Mozambique.¹² Though they do not feature the atrocities of deportations in Angola, the actions of South Africa do not match with the high-minded rhetoric at the recent AU Summit.¹³ At one point, Kenya boasted one of the most expansive and liberal refugee regimes in Africa.¹⁴ Since 1993, however, this has changed to a policy of, ‘abdication and containment’.¹⁵ Confined to the vast Dadaab camps in the far-flung North Eastern Province, refugees in Kenya are forced into a fairly bleak existence.¹⁶ Cross-border raids from Somalia, gender-based violence, insecurity, and illness are all common occurrences, and movement within Kenya is restricted to those with ‘movement passes’.¹⁷ Any initiative to improve conditions by the Department for Refugee Affairs has been effectively stymied by the security rhetoric surrounding the issue of refugees. This securitisation of refugee affairs only intensified after 2012, when a series of terrorist attacks by Somali militant group Al-Shabab were linked (without any credible evidence) to Somali refugees.¹⁸ This ultimately led to the Kenyan government’s decision to close the Dadaab camps,¹⁹ creating even further insecurity and turmoil for the hundreds of thousands of refugees encamped there.

None of the examples do much to strengthen the glasshouse the AU that is throwing stones from. However, if there is any lesson to be drawn from these examples, it is that the AU – much like their interlocutors in the USA, the European Union (EU), and Europe more broadly – is not above using the plight of refugees to occupy the moral high ground. Accusing one’s international neighbours of lower moral standards is a trick as old as recorded history, but it has never yet solved an actual problem. The AU, EU, USA, and their neighbours would be better served working on a concerted effort to improve worldwide refugee conditions, and tackling emerging political and economic issues before they spiral out of control. Explaining this to the new US President may be a greater task than cleaning the Augean Stables, but the member states of the AU and the EU should probably hold themselves to higher standard before attempting to become normative leaders.

Moreover, there is a tendency to securitise the issue of refugees and survival migrants to an excessive degree. Since 11 September 2001, there have been no terror attacks or casualties caused by citizens of the countries affected by President Trump’s Immigration Ban in the US.¹⁹ While it could be argued, in cases such as Kenya, that large refugee concentrations do pose a security risk, it is equally probably that the appalling conditions of refugees and the ongoing conflict in Somalia create ideal conditions for radicalisation.²⁰ In the case of Angola, the only security risk posed by the migrants and refugees from the DRC was to the electoral prosperity of the MPLA.²¹ Yet, in all cases there is a tendency to justify actions against refugees and survival migrants in the name of national security, regardless of evidence to the contrary. While securitisation of refugees is complementary to the rhetorical game of claiming the moral high ground, it is just as counterproductive. A successful and sustainable solution to refugees relies on resolving the military, political, economic, and social problems causing the exodus. Random deportations, and hopeless living conditions may play well with the media, but only help to reinforce the security risks those policies allegedly strived to prevent.

Cicero reminds us that ‘Salus populi suprema lex’, and in this case the ‘good of the people’ is best served by avoiding securitisation of issues where possible, and treating refugees as other human beings, rather than rhetorical slings and arrows. Ultimately, it is only when countries stop using refugees as media tools and begin addressing the failures of their own migrant policies that the international community will finally be able to tackle the ever-growing refugee crisis.

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The Asia-Pacific, like the rest of the world, is no stranger to the media being used for political purposes. However, the increasing complexity of communications technology (especially within the sphere of social media) has made understanding how media effects political life more difficult. Indeed, contemporary news cycles are inundated with claims of 'fake-news' and 'alternative-facts.'

The articles in this section look at how the media shapes our perceptions of the world.

For our 'Not in the News' profile, Arjun Jacob looks at how the media in India is dominated by members of the upper castes. This domination is

concerning because it limits the views and experiences that are contained in the mainstream Indian media. In turn, there is the distinct possibility that the unrepresentative nature of India's media class could spill over into the same type of anti-elite populism currently being witnessed in the West.

Additionally, Daryl Tiglaio delves into how social media has been used in the Philippines under the government of Rodrigo Duterte. Interestingly, the article explores how the lack of internet access in the Philippines has resulted in a limited number of social media websites being used. This limits the information that Filipinos have access to. Given the turmoil that Duterte's drug war has unleashed on the country, a lack of reliable information is the last thing Filipinos need right now.

Profile: Upper Castes Bias in Indian Media

You can watch American news channels and see African-American faces – reporters, correspondents, editors, and anchors. You can watch the BBC and other UK channels and see Black and Asian faces. In the newspapers of both countries, you will find bylines of journalists from the minorities. In India, diversity comprises not only ethnic differences, but also caste differences, and you find that the media remains a fortress of the Hindu upper castes that also dominate other major institutions in the country.

Putting the numbers into perspective, Hindus form 80 percent of India's population of 1.3 billion, and of this, Dalits (formerly known as 'untouchables') number about 200 million, or about 16 percent of the population.¹ Dalits are the lowest caste in the caste system. For centuries, they have endured horrific exploitation and oppression by the Brahmins and other upper castes. That oppression still exists today, but in a more diluted form in metropolitan cities, and it is much more explicitly practiced in rural areas.²

Even today, nearly 70 years after independence, only a handful of Dalits can be found in newspapers and on TV news channels. In countries like the US, Britain, and Canada, media organisations have made a conscious effort to make their newsrooms diverse in order to reflect the diversity of their societies and offer equal opportunities, but in India no such effort has been made.³

There is no concrete data on how many Dalits work in the media. The Press Council of India has yet to conduct such a survey. That in itself is telling of how unimportant this issue is considered amongst those who work in the media. If you have not even measured the problem, how can it be fixed? However, there are anecdotal cases which point towards the chronic absence of lower-caste representation in the media.

In 1996, senior Indian journalist B.N Uniyal attempted to find a Dalit journalist when he was asked by a foreign correspondent who needed to speak to one. To his surprise, he found none.⁴

A decade later, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies conducted a survey of more than 300 senior journalists working for Hindi and English newspapers and TV channels. The results were very similar to what Uniyal came across in 1996. It found that 71 percent of them were upper-caste Hindu men. Such men form 8 percent of the population. The rest of them were from other castes, but not one was a Dalit.⁵

The most recent example is from 2013 when a New Delhi based journalist Ajaz Ashraf only managed to get a hold of 21 Dalit journalists across the country as part of his own informal survey.⁶

This alarmingly low number of Dalits in media houses has created an invisible community. The lives of Dalits are not chronicled by the media and their concerns and issues are not understood or shared by other Indians. Yes, one does not have to be a Dalit to report stories on Dalits, but a higher representation is bound to make media houses alter their agenda and bring in a different perspective. Moreover, Dalit journalists will be more likely to report stories from their communities than someone else might.

Hate crimes against Dalits are often reported in the print media, but plenty of other crimes are considered too trivial to report.⁷ Unfortunately, there is plenty going on to make Dalits newsworthy. Figures reported by the National Crime Records Bureau listed 45,003 cases of crime committed against 'Scheduled Castes' (comprising mostly Dalits). This amounts to 22 acts of crime every 100,000 people.⁸ Also mentioned in the report was that four Dalit women are raped every 24 hours. The media, justifiably so, gave saturation coverage to the infamous 2012 gang rape case in New Delhi which went on to make headlines worldwide. Yet the 1,574 Dalit women raped that same year were not deemed to be newsworthy.⁹

The tragedy is that apart from the outrageous crimes against Dalits, the day-to-day injustices and engrained prejudices towards Dalits are kept under wraps. To this day, mainly in rural India, Dalits are denied entry into Hindu temples,¹⁰ segregated in schools,¹¹ beaten and tied to cars to be paraded around,¹² among countless other barbaric crimes.

Equally limiting in terms of media coverage is the fact that on festive occasions when they celebrate an event of profound importance to them, they are not joined by the rest of the country. Groups that have been discriminated against for centuries need to celebrate their achievements too. Every October, thousands of Dalits gather in the state of Maharashtra to mark the day their hero, B.R. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism to escape the caste system and millions converted with him. Despite the importance of the occasion for 200 million Indians, it barely gets a mention in the news.¹³ On the other hand, other festivals, some of lesser importance, get more coverage.¹⁴ Some online media outlets have noticed the alarming lack of coverage of the event. In an article on The Hoot, a website that analyses the Indian media, Ravikiran Shinde notes: "This would be a great event to cover on television surely? No. As they have done every year, the mainstream media have boycotted this historic and gigantic gathering attended by millions."¹⁵

It is very harmful for the development of a peaceful, inclusive society for such a huge group of people to be overlooked, for its concerns, demands, and aspirations not to be aired and discussed. It can result in alienation and anger. Discussing Dalit concerns is vital so that this media coverage can compel the government to formulate policies to address their needs, and bring this 21st century quasi-apartheid into the spotlight and change the casteist mentality of the next generation

of Indians.

Media coverage of the daily realities of Dalits is also important to crush misconceptions among the upper castes. There has been a contentious debate over the policy of 'Reservation' (the Indian equivalent of Affirmative Action), which involves giving a certain percentage of government jobs and places in universities to people from lower castes. There is a sizable group of people who oppose the policy, arguing that reservation must be not be based solely on caste, instead, it should be based on the individual's economic situation.¹⁶ While that argument has merit, one cannot leave the historical context out of the equation. The upper castes argue that the 'Reservation' provides enough support for Dalits; however, what people do not realise, because the media does not cover it, is that it is not enough to just give Dalits jobs and university places. They are still not on an equal footing with the rest of the country due to centuries of extreme social ostracism, lack of education, and severe poverty. Many need extra support (for example their English might be poor or they might be socially boycotted by students or treated scornfully by lecturers) for the Reservations policy to be fruitful.¹⁷

As a secular democracy, India needs to pay attention to all its citizens. They all need to feel valued and a part of the mainstream to help ensure social harmony. If not the media, then who else can make this happen? Inattention from the media has led some Dalits to take to social media in order to get their stories heard. A good example is the YouTube channel dedicated to Dalits called Dalit Camera. The founder, Ravichandran Bathran, launched the channel in 2012 to document the experiences of Dalits generally ignored by the mainstream media.¹⁸ Not only has social media become an outlet for the Dalit voice, it also lets Dalits showcase their talents. They engage in political debates and argue about topics ranging from technology to social issues, thanks to the fact that social networking sites do not ask for your caste when making an account.¹⁹

Another glimmer of change is the 'vacancies' page of a new current affairs website called The Wire which states – 'Dalit, Adivasi and minority candidates are encouraged to apply.'²⁰

With India's socioeconomic map changing rapidly owing to economic growth, social progress should not be far behind. Nevertheless, the hierarchical mentality of the caste system still exists because it is deeply engrained in the Indian psyche. In a country with free speech, the media should operate as a powerful voice for the oppressed. If an entire community, downtrodden for centuries, numbering approximately 200 million still do not get their problems and grievances aired by the media, then the media are not doing their job.

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Social Media and Facebook in the Philippines

DARYL TIGLAO explains how social media is shaping the Philippines – in cyberspace and in reality.

It has been around six months since Rodrigo 'Digong' Duterte was elected as the newest President of the Philippines. In that time he has built a degree of notoriety around himself; it is safe to say he is definitely a polarising figure both in the Philippines and out of it.¹ So far, his list of achievements includes cursing the former US President Obama,² the Pope,³ and comparing himself to Adolf Hitler.⁴ That, and a homegrown 'War on Drugs', also known by its official name of Oplan 'Tokhang', which has seen death tolls climb past 7,000 people.⁵ More recently, the anti-drugs campaign's critics have increased, owing to an incident involving the death of a Korean businessman by elements linked to the Philippine National Police (PNP).⁶ As well as a supposed drug raid caught on CCTV, which apparently shows police units raiding an office, sorting through their possessions, and threatening to plant drugs on the people present if they do not comply.⁷ Not to mention that Duterte has now moved the goalposts of his campaign from, 'the first six months of his presidency,' until the end of his term.⁸

However, amidst all that has been happening in real life, there has been an ongoing battle for opinion in the Philippine corner of the Internet that has so far run in parallel with that in reality. The battle lines have been largely drawn around those supporting President Duterte and his administration, and those who are not. For Filipinos who have some form of access to the Internet or social media, whether on their phones, their home computers, or internet cafes, their names will be all too familiar. We will have a look at one example from each side for the sake of simplicity and brevity. On one hand, there is the likes of the Mocha Uson Blog started by the woman of the same name on Facebook.⁹ Prior to throwing her lot in with the administration she was known for, among other things, being a dancer, singer, entertainer, and leader of the 'Mocha Girls' and has now become one of the more vocal supporters of the President, mostly via her social media pages.¹⁰ On the other side you have groups like the 'Superficial Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines' that serve as the online critics of the government.¹¹ This one has an interesting backstory: it was set up to lampoon the actual Official Gazette in response to the latter being accused of historical revisionism when it made a post online describing the life and presidency of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.¹² In terms of each other's activities they tend to operate on reacting on what happens outside of social media: from the controversy regarding the 'Lenileaks', concerning a potential plot to oust the President,¹³ to Duterte's foreign policy announcements,¹⁴ to the drug war mentioned above, as well as reacting to each other's comments and posts.

What makes this interesting are two things: one is the fact that Filipinos like to use social media. A lot. According to its 'State of the Mobile Web' report,¹⁵ Opera found that in 2015, Filipinos were rated as the nation with the highest level of social media activity. The amount of exposure that these groups get amongst people there is magnified as a result of the high rate of social media usage and consumption. The second being that along with such a demand for social media, the state of telecommunications, or to be more precise, internet, infrastructure in the country is not as good compared to her neighbours in South East Asia.¹⁶ The Philippines is well known for lagging behind her neighbours both in terms of price and speed: to put it another way, Filipino internet users pay a high price for slow speed.¹⁷

When considering that, it is no surprise that many Filipinos have taken up the use of other methods of accessing their social media. One of the more prominent examples of this is Facebook Free Basics: an offshoot of Facebook, made by Facebook to allow people a means to access and make use of some of the social media website's functionalities without needing the conventional requirements such as a stable Internet connection.¹⁸ However, there are drawbacks to this form of Facebook. Chief among them, is that while free for the users, it also restricts their access to a select few services and apps available on that platform,¹⁹ as chosen by Facebook itself. Under this, only those that partner with the social media giant can have their services included as part of the Free Basics package. It is a fair point to ask what the problem is, but this forms a part of the wider global debate on net neutrality. This, to give the a very rough explanation, is the idea that all services, content and applications should be made equally available by internet service providers without being able to pick and choose favourites, irrespective of their source.²⁰ This debate around net neutrality has not been confined to the Philippines' borders when it comes to the Asia-Pacific. In fact due the controversy around Facebook Free Basics, IT regulators in India later banned the service in the country after concerns that it went against the open and equal nature of the Internet.²¹ This has not stopped its availability in over 30 other countries however, one of them being the Philippines; having partnered up with local telecoms company Smart Communications to make it available in country, with an initial choice of 24 websites to choose from under the application, with Facebook being one of them, unsurprisingly.²²

What connects these preceding elements: social media personalities, the ongoing debate in Philippine politics, inadequate internet access, and free (albeit constrained) Facebook? Firstly, the lack of choice in websites is troubling; it leaves a lot of power and influence in the hands of Facebook, a private company, to pick and choose what content will be available for Filipino consumers to well, consume; not to mention the aforementioned concerns that the content of the Internet should be made equal for all. Secondly, this fencing off of the Internet affords the various social media personalities on Facebook a large, captive audience with which they can spread their message, depending on whether they support the Philippine government and its actions or not; whether they are factually true or not matters little. After all, they have few other realistic options, given the lack of proper internet access for the many there. This leads to a concerning development – the fact that Filipino internet users are largely cut off from the Internet outside of the Free Basics package means that the ability for a Filipino 'netizen' to conduct their own research to reach their own, balanced, informed conclusions on matters of the nation and other things is held back. For they have two options: either be stuck with the websites offered for free, or pay up. For many Filipinos who struggle to make ends meet yet still want to take part in the world of social media, the former is an alluring option, even with all its drawbacks.

Thus, this leads us to the recent developments in Philippine cyberspace: with growing numbers of supporters, these social media personalities have been engaging in back and forth activities against each other, with online abuse slowly mounting. In the waning days of 2016 there were growing concerns about Filipino netizens breaching Facebook's community standards.²³ However, how the Philippine part of Facebook responded has been suspicious. They began by suspending several pages and groups on their site for the alleged breaches. What makes it concerning though, is that the moderators and administrators of the website have largely done this against those that are critical of the President, the administration, or both. This was mostly done via waves of reports through Facebook's moderation system.²⁴ Such

campaigns to get select pages and now, individual profiles, banned has ignited discussions on people's online security, free speech, as well as the reliability of the moderation system of Facebook – given that similar reports against pages supportive of the administration have largely been met with inaction. This has led to the series of bans on Facebook being dubbed 'Cyber Tokhang';²⁵ a nod to the real life anti-drug operations in the country that have recently been declared suspended by the PNP chief Ronald 'Bato' (Rock) Dela Rosa.²⁶

As the effects of Cyber Tokhang spread to cover more and more people, sometimes leading to people who had no part in the campaign getting themselves banned, it has become clear that there are ongoing attempts to manipulate, twist, and hijack the flow of the debate by online trolls, which soon reached the attention of the legislators. In October last year, calls were made by Senators Paolo Benigno 'Bam' Aquino IV and Leila De Lima for, 'concrete solutions';²⁷ to tackle this growing problem that also included false accounts as well as unverified news on social media.²⁸ Indeed, the administration has also taken notice of such trolls, although only admonishing those that sought to, 'undermine the government'; with Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar telling them to, 'go to hell'.²⁹ Recently, politicians have begun to directly address this trend. Senator Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan has demanded that local executives of Facebook attend Senate hearings to investigate how the social media platform is curbing the spread of fake news, as well as tackling trolls and their behaviour.³⁰ In fact, the week before, he sought a Senate inquiry into investigating ways that the company can be held liable for the spread of misinformation on their website.³¹ In response to this, Facebook has stated that they are taking this problem seriously, but cautioned that they are taking care not to end up being the judges of opinion.³² To that end, they have joined forces with fact checkers in the US to scour through content on their website in order to weed out false information.³³

It seems that the trend of misinformation in social media has now hit the Philippines, with the unique twist that most people there rely on free services to access them in a country which has a comparatively poor internet infrastructure in the region. While the Philippines has quite enough on its plate to deal with in terms of issues to solve, it seems that this problem is severe enough that the lawmakers are beginning to take action against those who seek to stifle discussion and debate critical of the sitting President. Good timing though: as the real life Tokhang begins to be wound up, its internet counterpart looks like it is just getting started.

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European media is a powerful machine. Across the continent, it has polarised opinions on issues such as Brexit, nationalist and far-right movements, and the refugee crisis. Social media's political role has also taken off. Much of the everyday Brexit debate occurred on Twitter, while social media users enthusiastically employ hashtags and profile picture filters in response to political events like the French burkini ban and the terrorist attacks in Paris and Nice.

In the aftermath of Brexit, the British media's role in democracy has been questioned. Rather than simply holding government to account and informing citizens, Britain's press played an active role in shaping referendum outcomes. Yet the British press is not as autonomous as it might seem. Ross Gale examines the British press's shortfalls in comparison to Finland's, showing that tighter terrorism legislation undermines its independent powers.

In the 'Not in the News' section, Bernardas Jurevicius analyses the UK Snooper's Charter. Parliament passed the Bill while the national press covered President Trump's victory, meaning it received little public attention. Many British citizens remain largely in the dark about the impact of the legislation on privacy and digital communication.

The Russian media attracted its fair share of attention during, and in the aftermath of, the US Presidential Election. Russia admitted to 'hacking' the election and proliferating fake news that influenced voter's perceptions of candidates. The Russian media threw its weight behind Donald Trump's campaign. As Shane McGlinchey argues, this was an interesting move regarding Russia's future foreign policy towards the United States.

The way European media interacts with politics is evolving. It will be interesting to see how political communication in Europe's democratic states, for which a free and reliable press is a necessity, will operate in the era of post-truth politics that the region appears to be entering.

Profile: The Realities and Implications of the Snooper's Charter

The Snoopers Charter, or, as it is formally known, the Draft Communications Data Bill (DCDB) was proposed by Theresa May in June 2012.¹ It aims to expand the surveillance and investigatory capabilities of the United Kingdom's government and has been the subject of controversy due to the invasiveness of digital privacy that it revolves around. Security experts such as Paul Bernal, an Information Technologies lecturer at the University of East Anglia, noted that, 'there is a danger the vast powers – which include the mass collection of phone records and internet data – will be misused by a future government.'² In the wake of the 2013 National Security Agency leaks, which uncovered the numerous abuses of mass surveillance and its ineffective prevention of domestic crime, the bill comes at a time where digital privacy and government intervention are becoming progressively more contentious topics.^{3,4} The Charter makes consistent references to the question of individual liberties and to the government's responsibility in weighing them up against national security. Although numerous comments, such as those made by the Internet Service Providers' Association, have highlighted potential issues regarding the bill, few media outlets have delved into the specific machinations of the legislation, demonstrating a need to examine it with an analytical lens.⁵

One of the most interesting features of the bill involves the nomenclature applied throughout. The Charter describes its central subject, communications data, as follows:

Communications data is information about a communication. The term... includes data about a subscriber to a mobile phone or email account, the time, duration, originator and recipient of a communication and the location of a communication device from which a communication is made.⁶

Although this could be interpreted as a new concept, buried in legal code, the concept has been around for a long time in the security field. The bill targets what would be dubbed 'metadata'.⁷

As elaborated upon by Privacy International, specific surveillance 'metadata' can contain quite revealing information. They state, 'taken alone, pieces of metadata may not seem to be of much consequence. However... [once] analysed, metadata can create a comprehensive profile of a person's life – where they are at all times, with whom they talk and for how long, their interests, medical conditions, political and religious viewpoints, and shopping habits.'⁸ In effect, assembling such data bears a striking similarity to methods used by hackers, particularly

those engaged in 'social engineering.'

Webroot, an American security company, describes social engineering as, 'the art of manipulating people so they give up confidential information.'⁹ However, this refers to the system of exploitation that occurs through malicious agents befriending a victim and slowly extracting private information for financial gain.¹⁰ In relation to the Snoopers Charter, the shifting of metadata from private commercial aims to governmental investigatory purposes eventually results in giving over a vast range of information that could be used to compromise not only a personal profile, but extend into potentially disastrous financial consequences if in the hands of a malicious agent. Social engineering relies on trust and on the victim giving up information to the hacker. The Charter, on the other hand, allows wholesale handovers through the Secretary of State for the sake of investigation. Simply put, in the wrong hands, the potential for exploitation of such data is immense.

Although this example may be considered catastrophic and potentially Orwellian, the 2013 leaks provided sufficient evidence that even regulated mass surveillance systems are subject to low-level exploitation. The National Security Agency was forced to admit that several its employees had to be reprimanded for abusing their access to networks to spy on their partners.¹¹ In such an environment, considering the potential for malicious use is key to critically examining legislation such as the Snoopers Charter. It is important to understand that although the internet falls under public domain, and is subject to the laws of the United Kingdom, it is still a decentralised communication tool. Investigatory mechanisms are not identical to the same provisions that would be given a police officer in profiling through the sheer difference in magnitude. In an open field, such as the internet, this effectively renders a senior officer with the same capabilities, tools, and procedures as would befit a malicious agent, with the only distinguishing feature being the respective imperative. It is not so much in a distrust of government that the concern stems from, but rather the concentration and flexibility of power given to a federal authority.

However, the bill does put forward countermeasures to prevent abuses of power. Unlike PRISM, which allowed for warrantless surveillance, the DCDB authorises searches primarily through a hierarchical structure. Searches must first be approved by an acting senior official, then the inquest must be considered against, and approved by, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, as well as being initially approved by a relevant judicial authority.^{12,13} In addition, the bill heavily stresses the importance of its purpose for the extraction and use of communications data, as well as storage. In reference to part one, it, 'Makes express provision for safeguards to ensure that the power in Clause 1 can only be exercised following consultation with operators and furthermore that any data held by virtue of Part 1 is adequately protected and destroyed when

no longer required.¹⁴ Furthermore, clause nine, section 43, subsection one, 'provides that an authorisation to obtain communications data may only be granted if a designated senior officer of a relevant public authority believes in respect of the data that [...] it is necessary to obtain the data for permitted purpose.'¹⁵ This structuralises the inquiry process and relies on sufficient oversight by integrated bodies of government to avoid the same problems faced by previous surveillance programs.

One of the main features of the PRISM disclosures was the fact that they were managed chiefly by the National Security Agency. Reshuffling surveillance in order to support authorities on a smaller, potentially municipal level through an integrated network should logically provide for more efficient investigatory powers that avoid the problems of behemoths like TEMPURA and XKEYSCORE, which revolved chiefly around size. Agents have pointed this out as its chief downfall.¹⁶ The organisational structure is laid out in the document as follows:

[P]rovides for arrangements to address these issues through a filtering process, [...] the purpose of [it] will be to: inform a public authority of the communications data which is available to resolve a specific enquiry; and enable that authority to judge whether in that context the request for data remains necessary and proportionate.¹⁷

Another section of the bill discusses the specific contexts in which the administration of the Request Filter is permitted. It lists them as follows: 'for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder, in the interests of the economic well-being of the United Kingdom, in the interests of public safety, for the purpose of protecting public health, for the purpose of assessing or collecting any tax, duty, levy or other imposition, contribution or charge payable to a government department and to assist investigations into alleged miscarriages of justice.'¹⁸ It seems then that overall, the Charter does seem to address public concerns of privacy and should not needlessly store data. The aforementioned provisions seem enough to cover the current criminal environment in Britain – in fact, it could possibly be argued that such provisions are necessary, given to the fact that the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) has stated that terrorism is the most immediate threat facing Britain owing due to the threat of hybrid warfare.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the bill is not free from further controversy. Regarding its link to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA), the bill states that, 'At present RIPA regulates how law enforcement, the security and intelligence agencies and other relevant public authorities obtain communications data from telecommunications operators [...] [it] was enacted in order to provide public authorities with a European Convention of Human Rights compliant framework for obtaining communications data.'²⁰ This passage is full of implications, especially given Prime Minister May's recent rumours of abandoning the aforementioned Convention as part of the country's Article 50 strategy to leave the European Union (EU).^{21, 22} It brings to possibility that RIPA might be repealed in order to accommodate the new legal composition of the United Kingdom as an entity separate from the rest of the EU. This is also in light of a recent EU high court ruling that rejected the bill under the reasoning that government retention of emails is illegal, once again signalling the possibility that Prime Minister May might seek for a push to reduce the reach of RIPA in order to further the bill or any other expansion of investigatory powers under a 'hard Brexit'.²³

One of the most pertinent comments, however, is made with regard to how the government perceives the necessity of such a bill in light of the current socioeconomic environment. For all the utilitarian and ethical arguments proposed in favour of and against the DCDB, the language regarding new technologies provides possible insight into the perception of digital communications held up by Parliament.

This commentary is interesting given the insight that disclosures have already allowed the public into the way that government agencies deal with internet privacy and security. Glenn Greenwald, writing in regards to documents provided by Edward Snowden stated that the, '[NSA] and [GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters)] have broadly compromised the guarantees that internet companies have given consumers to reassure them that their communications [...] would be indecipherable to criminals or governments.'²⁴ In such a reality, it is strange that a bill meant to expand current government investigatory capabilities – ones that have not been disclosed in full to the United Kingdom owing to state intervention – would make a specific note regarding publically available privacy solutions. If anything, it is for certain that the DCDB will over time drastically alter the national perception of privacy, emergent technologies, and the government's role in ensuring the safety of British citizens whilst maintaining civil liberties.

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Inadequacy in the Freedom of the British Press: A Comparison with Finland

ROSS GALE examines Finland's unequalled media freedom laws to expose the UK descent to inadequacy.

In 2016, The Press Freedom Index ranked Finland as the best country in the world for press freedom for the seventh year running.¹ Alongside it, with top scores for media independence and press pluralism, were the Netherlands and New Zealand.² The UK, however, remained distinctly absent from the top tier. In fact, the UK ranked only 38 out of the 180 countries assessed by Reporters Without Borders, continuing a clear decline from its healthier scores in the early 2000s.³ Given that the UK is a historic democracy with a rich media culture, its second-rate press independence necessitates an examination of why this deficiency exists, and what Finland does differently to achieve its exemplary standard.

Finland's press freedoms are recognised beyond their top position in The Press Freedom Index. In 2016, UNESCO selected Helsinki to host the 2016 World Press Freedom Day.⁴ Ilkka Nousianen, the chairperson of the Finnish Reporters Without Borders attributes Finland's recognition for press freedom to journalists' freedom from media owners and government interference, alongside effective laws and institutions that protect freedom of expression.⁵ This is manifest in the work of the independent self-regulator of the Finnish Media, the Council for Mass Media (CMM). With a membership pool that includes all the major media organisations, the CMM has a history of effectively internally regulating Finland's media and thus minimises the need for government interference and any restrictions that may follow.⁶ Freedom of expression is entrenched in Finnish law under Article Twelve of their constitution, but legislators have extended upon the basic constitutional right with further legislation.⁷ Section One of the 2003 Act on the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media aims to further protect the freedoms enshrined in the constitution,⁸ while the 1999 Act

on the Openness of Government Activities is the latest piece in a long history of transparent governance.⁹ Protecting the media's advantageous position is the 15,500 strong Finnish Journalist Union and a Finnish media consumer culture that works to their benefit.¹⁰ 93 percent of Finnish adults regularly read newspapers, making Finland the world's third ranked country for newspaper consumption, and highest ranked within the European Union.¹¹ This thriving demand encourages and maintains quality journalism. Ultimately, the Finnish media enjoys thorough legal protections, effective self-regulating institutions, and an opportune culture. It is thus of little surprise that it gives rise to an unrivalled environment for media independence. Nevertheless, despite being an idyllic journalistic paradise, Finland maintains strict defamation laws carrying custodial sentences, and just three companies have a monopoly on media ownership.¹² Yet these hurdles to press freedom seem to be easily overcome, allowing Finland to consistently maintain their global position.

Although the UK ranked 38th according to the 2016 Press Freedom Index, the country is far from the bottom of the table. However, their comparatively low ranking suggest that the UK media may not live up to the independence standards expected of a democratic country.¹³ Professor Andrea Czepek insists that this is important because in a democracy it is essential that the government is held accountable by the media.¹⁴ Like Finland, the UK has historically had a free press, manifest in statutory and common law protections for freedom of expression.¹⁵ This is perhaps most evident in Article 10 of the 1998 Human Rights Act, which grants a universal but qualified right to freedom of expression.¹⁶ However, Britain's history of free press is inherently linked with a catalogue of ineffective self-regulating organisations. Most recently the Leveson Inquiry, necessitated by a phone hacking scandal and evidence of widespread press misconduct, recommended serious reform to the UK press's self-regulating mechanisms. These proposals were incorporated into the 2013 Royal Charter in which a new Independent Recognition Panel was established on a statutory footing.¹⁷ This proved controversial as some argued that the government's dictation of processes within the media's self-regulating organisation compromised their independence.¹⁸ However, 'double lock' safeguards contained in the statute ensure the independence of the panel, and extinguish the chance of political interference.¹⁹ Thus the UK's press-regulator remains free from government obstruction like their Finnish regulatory counterparts.²⁰ However, despite the recent failings and controversy surrounding the UK press, self-regulation is not the main reason for the UK's poor ranking and marked inadequacy in comparison to Finland.

In 2015, a report on the ownership of the UK media revealed 71 percent of the national newspaper market to be dominated by only three companies, further warning that this lack of plurality results in the concentration of political power amongst wealthy organisations.²¹ Czepek warns that this can lead to distorted reporting that is biased in favour of organisational interests.²² However, Finland has found itself in a similar situation, as three companies have a media ownership monopoly. Yet, as a nation they can maintain a world-leading free press.²³ As both countries have a similar lack of diversity in media ownership,²⁴ the distinguishing weakness in the UK's press freedom must be elsewhere.

A greater reason for the decline and current inadequacy in media freedoms may be the 'draconian security legislation'²⁵ the UK has steadily implemented in response to new threats since the beginning of the century. The government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, David Anderson QC,²⁶ argued in his 2014 report that the very definition of terrorism under the Terrorism Act 2000 has unwarranted breadth,²⁷ and could foreseeably infringe on media freedoms.²⁸ He

stated that this was exacerbated by the Terrorism Act 2006 in which publications that are judged to encourage terrorism, widely defined in the earlier act, are criminalised.²⁹ Anderson warns that the implication of these acts bring, 'journalism and blogging in the ambit of terrorism.'³⁰ Under these laws political journalists who are deemed to have published something that may be dangerous to life, public health or public safety will face severe punishment.³¹ The illegality of such an article extends further, encompassing possession of such information.³² This places the entire population at risk of running afoul of these laws.³³ Journalist David Miranda's detention at Heathrow Airport in 2013 for carrying information obtained in the Edward Snowden leak is proof that the security services will treat journalists as terrorists, 'if they cross invisible lines.'³⁴ Legislators insist the restrictions on media freedoms enacted through the series of terrorism acts are necessary to protect the UK from the threat of terrorism.³⁵ A government press release shows that Finland has also taken steps to combat terrorism through laws bolstering the security services' investigatory and surveillance powers alongside information sharing with EU partners.³⁶ However, the Finnish media have not suffered a similar blow to their liberty.³⁷ This shows that the UK's attempts to protect itself have been uniquely damaging to its own press freedoms.³⁸ While both countries have legislated to defend against the same threat of terrorist attack,³⁹ Finland has not chosen to restrict its media to the extent the UK has through its terrorism legislation.⁴⁰ It seems that successive terrorism legislation has ushered in austere media restrictions that are responsible for the UK's retreating media liberty. This is backed by the UK's press freedom index score declining alongside the passing of such acts from the early 2000s.⁴¹

For the UK to match the standard of press freedom enjoyed in Finland, the successive terrorism acts passed since 2000 would have to be re-addressed to restore journalistic freedoms and clarify the circumstances under which the state can act against those that pose a threat to society. Comparatively, the Finnish media is not subject to similarly obtrusive restrictions imposed in response to the threat of terrorism. This is evident in their elevated level of press independence.⁴² Despite this, the UK is not dissimilar to Finland, with freedom of expression entrenched in constitutional law and a granted fundamental right.⁴³ Media in both countries are independently self-regulated and free from government interference.⁴⁴ However, this similar baseline is distorted by subvert restrictions placed on UK press through the country's terrorism acts.⁴⁵ Despite the evident consequences of the overreaching legislation, the government is not inclined towards reform. The passing of laws like the recent Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act 2016 is a clear indication of the government's policy trajectory and indifference to indirectly tightening press freedoms further.⁴⁶ Considering this political agenda, it is likely that the UK's future will see further decline in press freedom and a widening gulf between the British and Finnish media's respective ability to independently hold government to account.

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Donald Trump: Darling of the Russian Media

SHANE MCGLINCHEY discusses how Trump's portrayal in the Russian media reflects Russian foreign policy and the future of Russo-American relations.

The relationship between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump has provoked no small amount of controversy in recent months. Various commentators have described a kind of 'bromance' between the two 'strongman' leaders.^{1 2 3} Some American liberals have gone as far as accusing their president of treason,^{4 5} while a former deputy director of the CIA has called him, 'an unwitting agent of the Russian Federation.'⁶ What is really shocking about this relationship is how little we actually know about it; we can only speculate about the opinions the two men privately hold of each other. Yet the relationship is worth speculating about given that right now, the Russian and American presidents could hardly be more important in the world of foreign policy.

The strange Putin-Trump dynamic goes back many years. Trump expressed his personal admiration for Putin as far back as 2007 in an interview with Larry King,⁷ and his remarks about the Russian President have been consistently positive ever since. His ambivalence towards NATO, cynical realism and isolationist tendencies are all music to Putin's ears. This could all be posturing, but it may also be indicative of the potential for a much more conciliatory approach to US-Russia relations than has been the norm. Putin, meanwhile, has always been strictly neutral when discussing US presidential politics, and accordingly denied any direct support for Trump during the electoral months. He offered Trump a fair deal more praise than is customary for him,^{8 9 10} which is interesting, but does not tell us much about what the Kremlin really thinks of Trump. Putin is famously tight-lipped, diplomatic, and ever insistent on his willingness to play ball with, 'whomever the American people choose.'^{11 12 13}

There does exist, however, a more reliable marker of the Kremlin's opinion – its mass media.

Russian state and semi-state media occupy that curious space between press freedom and state control that is so typical of authoritarian regimes. Unlike more heavy-handed regimes, Russia's state media is not a direct party mouthpiece (for the most part) and is not openly censored by the regime.¹⁴ The illusion of legitimate opposition and press freedom is a core part of Putin's system of authoritarian politics, known as 'electoral authoritarianism.'¹⁵ As such, while not directly controlled, the mass media are limited to a particular Kremlin-approved spectrum of opinion. Media outlets that do not toe the line of acceptable opinion can expect to pay the price for it.¹⁶ The media tend to take a more or less identical line to the official one, and studying the media's attitudes towards Donald Trump can give us a good indication of the direction in which the Kremlin may be heading in relation to foreign policy.

There are a couple of key concepts to understand regarding the Kremlin's approach to foreign policy. The first is 'multi-polarity', the idea that the 21st century's world stage cannot and should not be dominated by a single superpower. Rather, local powers should assert their interests in their own respective spheres, cooperating with one another, but always respecting other powers' right to act as masters of their own spheres.¹⁷ Above all, the Kremlin cannot abide the thought of American interference in what it considers 'Russian' affairs. Russia's national memory cannot forget the 1990s, a period characterised by widespread poverty and unemployment at home, and helplessness and loss of

prestige abroad.¹⁸ Russia watched impotently as the West interfered in Yugoslavia, while struggling even to hold onto into its own territories of Chechnya and Dagestan.

The second is an ideological and pragmatic opposition to America's liberal status quo. This is rooted in the Kremlin's own self-interest and Putin's desire to hold onto power. The greatest threat ever faced by Putin's regime came from the Colour Revolutions, most notably the revolutions in Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005, as well as the more recent events of the Arab Spring.¹⁹ The Kremlin is extremely wary of such a phenomenon ever gaining traction in Russia and since 2011 has shown a marked sourness towards liberalism at home and abroad.^{20 21} In addition to being a matter of self-preservation, it is a foreign policy concern for the Kremlin. A wave of liberal revolutions in recent years has destabilised or toppled numerous authoritarian regimes, such as in Egypt, Libya, Ukraine and Georgia. Putin considered many of these regimes as allies on the international stage. Russia's ideal leader is that of the patriotic, yet pragmatic authoritarian, like the Gaddafis and al-Assads of the world.²² A US foreign policy based on spreading liberal norms runs directly contrary to this, and as a result it serves Russia to discredit American liberal democracy as an institution, and American liberalism as an ideology.^{23 24} Both are simply antithetical to the Kremlin's entire project at home and abroad. A nationalist, isolationist America like Trump seems to favour would neuter NATO and take the swing out of liberalism's bat. It is well-known that Russia has financed and supported populist groups in Europe for years,^{25 26} and its support for Trump is just part of the same ideological front. This front is based broadly on values of nationalism and anti-globalism and has been termed a 'Nationalist International'²⁷ or a 'Red-Brown International.'²⁸ Trump and his talk of 'America First' isolationism and non-interventionism fits right in.²⁹ It is easy to see then why news of Trump's election was greeted with such joy among the Russian political class. The State Duma famously applauded, while talk show pundits cracked smiles and predicted the death of American liberalism.³⁰

With all this in mind, the Russian media's depiction of Trump is rather illuminating. He was consistently described as pragmatic, honest and practical – a voice of reason in a political environment drowning in Russophobia.³¹ His conciliatory stance on Russia was offered as proof of his reasonable, honourable approach to politics. Much like in Western media, he was often covered in a humorous fashion, though without the biting criticism and mockery of Western counterparts.³² He was the, 'anti-system [...] protest candidate',³³ and a defender of the working man against the liberal 'establishment' (a word Russia has borrowed from English).³⁴ This establishment, it was contended, was eager to rig the vote against this outsider and stop the hardworking American people from having their say.³⁵ Vesti, one of the largest state networks, carried stories about the 'witch-hunt' against Trump among the establishment.³⁶ His victory would provide an opportunity for America to clean up its act, abandon Russophobia, and launch a new approach to foreign policy that involved treating Russia with respect. Popular television presenter Vladimir Solov'yov characterised Trump as an underdog against the establishment and called his victory a kind of, 'great counter-revolution,' against condescending liberal elites.³⁷ This prognosis was supported by Margarita Simonyan. Simonyan is the head of RT, formerly known as Russia Today, the Kremlin's flagship international media outlet. In the run-up to the US election, she ran a series of tweets forecasting the death of US democracy when Clinton won. When it became clear that Clinton was on track to lose, Simonyan's tone changed to one of triumphant glee.³⁸ Trump, she said, was part of a larger political movement of people taking back control from the autocratic establishment, naming Brexit and the election of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn as further examples of this phenomenon.³⁹

It is worth noting one of the underlying assumptions to this narrative: Russia is very much the victim in the current state of world politics. In Russia's eyes, the deterioration of relations with the EU and US is not in any way Russia's fault, and the onus is on the West, specifically Trump, to make overtures and 'fix' the situation.⁴⁰ If Trump and Putin fail to repair relations or establish any kind of political partnership, then we can be confident that the Russian media will place the blame squarely on Trump's shoulders. This was, in fact, precisely the series of events which unfolded during the first term of the Obama presidency following Obama's failed 'reset' with Russia.^{41 42 43} It is a way of insulating the Russian President domestically against failure abroad.

Just as telling as the depiction of Trump was the depiction of Hillary Clinton. It is fair to say, in fact, that the Kremlin was not so much in favour of Trump (they initially threw support behind the Green Party's Jill Stein) as it was opposed to Clinton. Clinton was everything the Kremlin does not want in the White House: a potentially aggressive neo-conservative with a normative, neo-liberal approach to international relations.⁴⁴ She took a firm stance on Iran and Syria, expressed full support for US allies abroad, and was particularly supportive of NATO.^{45 46 47} Unsurprisingly, Russian media were less than kind to her, describing her as dishonest, witch-like, and eager for conflict with Russia.^{48 49 50} Much attention was given to coverage of perceived scandals involving Clinton and her advisors, with some going as far as speculating that she was covertly orchestrating the assassination of her critics.^{51 52 53}

It is certainly interesting to see how the Kremlin relates to both Clinton and Trump, and it will be worthwhile studying the personal relationship between the Russian and American presidents. However, there is another, more important factor at work here: the propagation of the Kremlin's geopolitical interests. The Kremlin's baseline goal in their depiction of the election was not to support or demonise any particular candidate on the basis of a personal relationship, but rather to discredit the institution of American liberal democracy. For every broadcast, article, or opinion piece that showed Trump in a positive light or Clinton in a negative, there were two or three calling into question the fairness and legitimacy of the election itself.^{54 55 56 57} Would the winner be assassinated?⁵⁸ Would there be widespread voting fraud?⁵⁹ Were the results already fixed?⁶⁰ The Russian media might like Trump, but they are there to promote a geopolitical agenda, first and foremost.

By looking at the geopolitics of the situation, it is clear that this is not the start of some long, beautiful friendship between Trump and Putin. There exists great potential for increased collaboration between Russia and the US in areas such as arms control and security policy, but they still maintain a range of conflicting interests on the world stage and this will be no panacea. Russia's aim of multi-polarity is implicitly threatening to the US' military and political status. Any attempts on Russia's part to expand its influence in theatres such as the Caucasus or Middle East constitutes a direct challenge to the US and its allies, such as Georgia, Ukraine, and the Baltic states.

Even if the will to détente exists between the two, it is not quite clear precisely what concessions either man is capable of making beyond symbolic gestures and rhetoric. Lifting sanctions against Russia is the mostly commonly discussed measure, and would certainly endear the new American administration to the Kremlin.^{61 62 63} However, even this will be difficult to effect if President Trump finds opposition to the idea in Congress.

What happens next depends very much on what approach President Trump takes. There are a number of loud voices in his camp – notably James Mattis and Mike Pompeo, his picks to head the Pentagon and CIA, respectively – who maintain the GOP's long-standing tradition of hard-line opposition to the Kremlin.⁶⁴ If they manage to sway the President,

then Trump may ultimately fail to bring the rapprochement that Russia had hoped for. In this case, the Russian media have ensured that Putin is insulated from public opinion in Russia anyway. Alternatively, Trump may live up to certain expectations and pave the way for better Russo-American relations in the future, built on mutual realism and cooperation on areas of interest, most notably counter-terrorism. Such a move could undermine the EU's sanctions and stance on Russia, while potentially emboldening Putin's foreign policy. The coming weeks will be very revealing either way.

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News coverage of Latin America by UK and European media focuses almost exclusively on violence, corruption, and political problems. Sometimes, news of 'The Americas' is overshadowed by coverage of the United States and Canada. Sometimes recurring crises will get coverage, as was the case of the political crisis that in 2016 led to the impeachment of Brazil's Dilma Rousseff, and sometimes coverage will be sporadic or one-off, as with the Venezuelan social and economic crisis. These issues nonetheless receive international coverage whilst other important issues remain either unreported or underreported.

The editorial lines and personal opinions that reporters and producers are influenced by will naturally have affected media coverage of Latin America, and coverage of Fidel Castro's death provides a prime example. For the past 50 years, Fidel Castro caught the attention of worldwide news outlets that would mostly criticise or

praise his policies. During the Cold War this dichotomy of thought was more evident, but in more recent years the praise and criticism of Castro were not limited to one specific country. Diversity of thought has become more evident across the world, allowing different topics to get the media spotlight.

However, of the stories that were covered, many lacked sufficient scrutiny and analysis. Perhaps most notably, a lack of serious attention to political patterns in Latin America arguably prevented the rest of the world from foreseeing the symptoms that can facilitate the rise of populism. Although world media have analysed the 'decline' of the Pink Tide of left-wing populist governments in Latin America, the repercussions of the Pink Tide on the continent were portrayed as unique to the region. Had Europeans and North Americans focused on the similar growing inequalities and discontent within their own borders, they might have drawn links to the events taking place in Latin America and learned from the region's history. However, it seems that narrow perceptions will continue to allow history to repeat itself.

Profile: Has the 'Pink Tide' Spread Beyond Latin America?

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the 'pink tide' started in Latin America with the rise of leftist populists such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, closely followed by Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Evo Morales in Bolivia.¹ The international media coverage of this movement over the past decade has been, at most, limited to election time and to possible human rights violations.² A simple web search for the 'pink tide' or the countries related to it, in English, only shows articles related to these and other topics of interest to the West.³ In contrast, during the last year, media around the world has been reporting frenetically about the dangerous rise of 'populism' in Europe and the United States (US).⁴ After the election of Donald Trump as US president, and with the rise of support for populist movements in the upcoming elections in France and the Netherlands, institutions such as the World Economic Forum and Human Rights Watch have issued reports about a new populist threat to liberal democracy.⁵ Nevertheless, the media is late to the party. If they had paid more attention to the political developments in Latin America over the past decade, the rise of 'populism' could perhaps have been avoided.

The recent overuse and popularity of the word 'populism' in the media can sometimes obscure its actual meaning and blur the theory underlying it. According to the political theorist Mitchell Seligson, populism is founded on the belief that the 'peoples' will' is not reflected in the institutions of classical liberal democracy, such as legislatures and courts.⁶ He furthermore claims that these institutions are considered anachronistic and inefficient by the populist. Conventionally, populism is associated with charismatic, egocentric leaders who appeal to the mass of voters by promising to return power to those who are 'forgotten' and 'neglected' in the current state of affairs.⁷ This volatile strategy can take the form of a variety of ideologies, and as a result, it is possible to find populist leaders across the political spectrum, from the extreme left to the far-right; the Cuban leader Fidel Castro can serve as an example of the former, whilst the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán represents the latter.⁸ Characteristically, populism also establishes polarisation within the country; the populist will generally divide the population into two groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. Who these 'pure people' or 'corrupt elite'; are in practice can differ depending on local circumstances.⁹

Latin American populists have used distribution of wealth to divide nations into two: the wealthy elite, which rules with money, and the working class, which needs a voice.¹⁰ This is the case in Venezuela,

where President Chávez called the upper class, 'burguesia pro-yanqui,' (pro-yankee bourgeoisie) and the rest, 'el pueblo,' (the people).¹¹ On the other hand, and currently evident in the US and Europe, most far-right populists have created the division of 'us: the rightful citizens' versus 'immigrants: who are potentially dangerous and damaging to our society.' An example is Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, who wants to ban Islam and establish a no-entry policy for Muslim refugees.¹² After this differentiation has been made clear to the masses through propaganda and rallies, the populist leader will usually present him or herself as a delegate of the 'pure peoples' will' in order to overcome the existing system and to transform it in a democratic ideal.¹³ Examples of this method of expression becoming part of a leader's rhetoric during their rise to power can be seen in Chávez's speeches in Venezuela, as well as in Trump's rallies in the US. Both populist leaders based their agenda and platform on the idea of protecting the interests of the normal people, not the elites.¹⁴

As the above-mentioned leaders can be tied together by the described identifiers, we can perhaps find a general recipe for populism's appearance in the political landscape. According to the World Economic Forum, one of the triggers of populism is inequality, and both Europe and the US have a growing gap between social classes that is making social mobility more difficult.¹⁵ Latin America is one of the most unequal regions of the world, but now the US is not far behind.¹⁶ Using Gini coefficients, a standard metric that assesses countries' income inequalities on scale from zero (complete equality) to 100 (complete inequality), Latin American countries score on average around 50.¹⁷ Similarly, the US is around 45, and the coefficient score may continue to rise.¹⁸ This demonstrates that one of the key factors driving populism, namely inequality, is an issue in the US, showing that the US is not immune to the problems faced by other countries in the Americas.¹⁹ Also, the increase in economic and social difficulties for the population can also explain the willingness of Americans to take more extremist stands in politics, such as Trump's proposed wall on the US-Mexico border or his Muslim entry ban.²⁰ Finally, it is worthwhile to note that the possible cause of the rise of populism seems far more simple than its definition.

Even though the argument until now has centred on the common circumstances that can lead to populist movements, it should not be expected that all movements resemble each other. Populism is a personalised and tailored political strategy that depends on the leader.²¹ The 'pink tide' started with some charismatic leaders who campaigned to give back power to the voiceless of their countries. However, these leaders were not able to do so without changing existing constitutions, which according to them were protecting the interests of the

establishment's 'corrupt elite.'²² Therefore, most of the Latin American leaders were keen to reform and even create new constitutions, as well as develop new institutions which aim to aggregate more participation from the popular will.²³ This is the case of Ecuador, where Correa created a 'Truth Commission' in 2007, which enabled the population to check on past government abuses between 1984 and 2008. This commission listed 136 cases, but by 2015 only eight cases have been taken to court.²⁴ On the other hand, the characters in the European wave of populism, which includes most far-right European party leaders, are not fond of criticising underlying institutions.

This is the main difference between Latin American and Western populism: European populists portray themselves as supporters of the values and fundamental rights that their constitutions defend.²⁵ Nevertheless, these leaders claim that the establishment or ruling elite is not defending these rights, that their constitutional interpretations will give back the power to the 'pure people'.²⁶ An example of this is France, where Marine Le Pen has pushed for anti-refugee laws and anti-Muslim rhetoric, not on the stand of racism, but for the protection of the state secularism which is a core value of the French Constitution.²⁷ This difference among populist actions can be explained by the fact that in Europe and the US, institutions and courts are older and more established than in the comparatively new democracies that Latin American countries have. This reality has made it easier for left-wing populists in Latin America to erase and create a new framework in which they can centre power in their persona and weaken checks and balances for other state powers.²⁸

Despite the sharing of obvious common ground for both waves of populism, the media has not covered them in the same way, with the importance of 'pink tide' underestimated by international media, forgotten after the elections passed and only making an appearance in the news when the regimes started to violate human rights or mess up with international corporations, such as Venezuela and Ecuador's squabbles with oil companies.²⁹ The poor coverage of Latin American politics by the international media has proved detrimental to the political awareness of Americans and Europeans because it did not give them the necessary information to recognise populism. While past populism in Latin America was largely overlooked, the current populist trend has invaded all news portals and social media platforms. Every day there is a new video or a new report about how things are not going as expected and how important it is to keep the real facts in the media.³⁰ Nonetheless, Americans and Europeans could have potentially avoided this new political scenario if they had real information about the wave of populism in Latin America, and how to recognise it.³¹ Pinpointing the common characteristics of populist leaders or their similar political strategies would have been much easier, and it is not surprising that for Latin Americans Trump's speeches are so familiar.³² They have lived in this world for at least ten years, and, coincidentally, the 'pink tide' is currently waning the region.³³ Politicians around the world should look at this final stage of populism in Latin America to learn how to combat and avoid such a movement in their own countries. Latin America took a while to get there, but for the US and Europe, the populist tide is just starting.

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Life after Castro: The Changing Face of Media Perception

HANNAH STANLEY explores the global response to the death of Fidel Castro.

Fidel Castro has undeniably been one of the most divisive figures of the 20th century; his controversial policies following the Cuban revolution in 1959 have been a source of debate throughout the world since their implementation.¹ These policies resulted in the defamation of Castro, particularly in the United States media which described him as, 'reviled'² as a result of discord between his communist ideals and the threat such ideals imposed on capitalist America's sphere of influence. Such juxtaposed ideologies have arguably contributed to a collective perception of Castro's legacy amongst the US media and public, highlighting the intrinsic link and mutual dependence that public perception shares with the media.³ The death of Fidel Castro on 25 November caused a schism across the politically-polarised media spectrum. Media outlets such as Kremlin-funded Russia Today promulgated the notion that Castro's regime undoubtedly bettered the lot of his people,⁴ including selective quotes from his most notable supporters.⁵ In contrast, US-based platforms such as CNN focussed on more cynical coverage, giving accounts from American-Cubans who perceived his legacy negatively.⁶ Analysis of historical examples from prevalent media influences in China, Russia, and the US, most notably the Chinese Global Times and US-based New York Times, show how respective cultural perceptions has differed over time. However, the disparity between contemporary depictions of the Cuban leader within each of these nations shows that inevitably, even within an individual nation's media discourse, there will always be variations in perception.

It would be false to deny the prevalent preoccupation of the US with Fidel Castro. For over half a century he has dominated newspaper headlines, headed interviews with prominent journalists, and even ventured into the realms of fiction.⁷ Titles including, 'Bullet for Fidel,' and, 'Fidel Castro Assassinated,' have shown how,⁸ in the US media, Fidel Castro has been constructed as a classic villain. Key events involving the US and Cuba have laid the foundations for the demonisation of Castro, and can be directly transposed onto how the media in turn perceived his death. In the context of post-war relations, the US developed a desire to counteract the resurgence of the Soviet Union, which had gained a 'sphere of influence'. Cuba was a pivotal pawn in this power struggle due to its geographical location and the presence of US assets on the island nation.⁹ Consequently, the defeat of plutocratic Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista, amalgamated with the rapid socialist radicalisation of Cuba following Castro's succession in 1959, caused immense concern for the US.¹⁰

This historical context is important, because it was instrumental in changing the US' perception of Castro, and, by extension, in manipulating US media discourse. Negativity towards Castro first became apparent after US failure at the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961—a failed attempt to overthrow Castro's government. Headlines propagated by journalists from the The New York Times stated that Castro's dictatorship was so, 'entrenched,' that, 'there is no possibility,'¹¹ of usurping him, completely deflecting responsibility away from the US by antagonising Cuba and thus Castro. Similarly, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the newspaper asserted that Kennedy was, 'ready for action,'¹² and emphasised his proclamation that the actions of Cuba were a, 'clandestine, reckless and provocative threat to the world,' despite the President's knowledge, although secret at the time, of American missiles in Turkey.¹³ Such an

enshrined cynicism towards Cuban foreign policy can be traced in other forms of media. In Robert E. Quirk's biography of Castro, the North American historian conjures up a less than admirable impression of Castro, describing him as having a, 'mercurial temper'.¹⁴ Even today, US President Donald Trump's official statement seemed to perpetuate the traditional view of the US towards Castro, detailing, 'a brutal dictator who oppressed his people'.¹⁵ These examples parallel each other in their negative stances towards Castro, and thus are testament to the creation of a uniformed perception amongst the US media.

Such similar perceptions, seemingly purported across all platforms of media, may instil certitude in the American status quo. If no alternative perspective exists, it would be perfectly logical to assume that these portrayals are accurate; this is how Castro was. Yet, if one removes themselves from a purely Western paradigm and regards forms of Chinese media, for example, the picture is entirely different. A Chinese political drama, named 'Che Guevara' after the communist revolutionary, painted Castro as a revolutionary icon,¹⁶ whilst *The Global Times*, one of China's fastest growing newspapers, published a rhapsodic article titled 'Cuba hails Castro' in 2004.¹⁷ This discrepancy in perception can quite clearly be attributed to ideological differences between China and the US. As a communist state, China has a vested interest in enthusiastically enshrining Castro, a fellow proponent of this principle, to use as a provocative emblem against the West.¹⁸ Even with his death, the positive nature of the China-Cuban rapport permeated President Xi Jinping's response, when he stated that, 'the Chinese people have lost a close comrade'.¹⁹ This notion was also promulgated by Al-Jazeera, an Arab news network based in Qatar, and both approaches greatly contrasted with that of US-based CNN, which instead emphasised the, 'jubilation,' of those in Miami, quoting those who believe that they, 'are free at last'.²⁰ Such divergence in media reception and editorial lines, however, does highlight how a culture's perception dramatically alters the outlook of their media.

Another angle to consider is the Russian media's portrayal of Castro. For instance, *Russia Today's* analysis reports selective, though overwhelmingly positive, observations of his legacy, and the devastating impact of his death from his most vehement supporters. It included those such as the president of the National European Communitarian party and a Bolshevik party in Belgium, whose admission was that Castro's demise characterised the death of, 'an era of anti-imperialist struggle',²¹ and that he, 'should be a symbol for future socialist movements'.²² This view, adversarial to that of the US, is also prevalent in *Russia Today's* coverage of historical US-Cuba relations. In a historical retelling of the Cuban Missile Crisis, it starkly contrasted a *New York Times* article that depicted the heroism of Kennedy's policy towards Cuba.²³ *Russia Today* instead used visceral language to describe the precedent the Missile Crisis instilled in the US psyche, arguing it is one that, 'has attempted to undermine, terrorise and starve the Cuban revolution ever since'.²⁴

Of course, there are inevitable deviations within cultural media perception that should be acknowledged. For instance, there is a divide of great magnitude between the way Cubans themselves viewed Castro. The government-run website 'Cubadebate' published a plethora of photos on Twitter upon his death, using hashtags including, #forevercomandante,²⁵ accentuating the mass mourning of the population. Yet, an article from Cuban-born author Carlos Alberto Montaner in *Foreign Policy* titled 'Cubans are Poor and Enslaved' instead concentrates on the brutality of his regime,²⁶ detailing 5,700 executions and 1,200 extrajudicial murders which took place during Castro's rule.²⁷ This is further fortified by and op-ed in *The New York Times* which covers the extracts of letters from former Cuban political prisoner Huber Matos,²⁸ signalling the likely intention on the part of the paper to emphasise the most extreme aspects of Castro's time in power.

Despite what can often seem like overwhelmingly negative coverage, there are also Americans who perceive Castro in a more positive light than expected. In *The New York Times* in 2005, Nicolas Kristof asserted that, 'If the US had an infant mortality rate as good as Cuba's, it would save an additional 2,212 lives a year',²⁹ subverting the pessimistic critique pertinent to the US view of Castro by instead suggesting that aspects of his legacy were indeed successful. One instance that epitomises the disparity in perspectives within the same historical context is that of *The Times'* documentation of 1976. US journalist James Reston embellished the potential threat of the consequences of Cuban involvement in Africa through his confrontational stance, saying that, 'the USA will not accept further Cuban intervention abroad'.³⁰ In stark contrast, within the pages of the same newspaper, Wicker used Cuba to further his own critique of US foreign policy concerning Rhodesia, reprimanding Kissinger for rendering Cuban intervention more likely through doing nothing to support the white minority government at the time, although Wicker avoids attacking Castro in his article.³¹ These instances surely fortify the notion that what is assumed to be a commonly shared perception of Castro is in reality more diverse.

These variations in US media perception are mirrored within the Russian cultural framework. Russian blogger Anton Nosik usurps the Russian media's tendency to favour Castro vis-à-vis the US by asserting that Castro was a, 'cynical politician,' who, 'capitalised on the confrontation between superpowers during the Cold War'.³² Conversely, an article in *The Moscow Times* elevated the leader to legendary status through reminiscing about the, 'hopes,' his legacy instilled in the Russian people.³³ In subverting the status quo in their country by the juxtaposition between a less traditional and more conventional view of Castro, *The Moscow Times* and Nosik prove that a pluralism in perception can be found in any nation's media coverage. Regarding the US, although the proclamations of President Trump – as referenced earlier – could be testament to the prevailing impact of a deeply instilled cultural perspective, the dichotomy between his and President Obama's more reconciliatory tone instead reinforces its diversity.³⁴

The life and legacy of Fidel Castro will in no doubt be centred around controversy for years to come. The global response to his death, contrasted against historical examples of his time in authority, have shown that deviations in cultural perception exist regardless of the context in which they were founded. Despite a propensity for US media platforms to perceive Castro in a similar vein, variations in the manner in which he was viewed are inherent to media portrayals.

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The Middle East is often portrayed in the media as a region dominated between by tribal and sectarian rivalry, yet this obfuscates the complex dynamics under which these countries operate. The two most powerful revolutions in modern history took place in the Middle East. The Iranian revolution of the late 1970s is often depicted as an effort by radical clerics seeking to overthrow a repressive monarchical regime, but such an approach neglects how groups from all across the political spectrum worked together to bring about political reform.

Yet 40 years later, the Arab Spring heralded the promise for not only a political revolution but a revolution in how information is disseminated by the media.

and has thus provided the broader public with more nuanced accounts of such revolutions. In Syria, average people have sought to share how they perceive the conflict which dominates their daily lives through social media and smartphone recordings. Yet, as Elizabeth Dietz discusses in her profile article, while this media content is provided by locals, it is still distributed through mostly Western media, and thus remains characterized by a Western perspective.

Moreover, most media coverage surrounding the Middle East focuses on the proliferation of terrorism, and headlines have recently been particularly dominated by ISIS given their brutality and destruction of Arab history and culture. Victoria Hendricks discusses the implications of this phenomenon in her article, analysing how the Islamic State's war on culture has been used as an effective propaganda tool.

Profile: If a Tree Falls in the Woods

Communication is an act of power.¹ It does not matter what you have accomplished if no one knows. The Romans recognised this: parading, 'captured cultural objects before Roman citizens to assert conquest.'² Non-state actors have also recognised the importance of communication, from the Ismaili – or 'Assassin Sect of Shia Islam' – of the Middle Ages to modern terrorists.³ Modern mass media has not created terrorism, but has enabled it.⁴ In the tradition of the Roman victory parades, modern YouTube videos created by the Islamic State, portraying cultural destruction are not documentary evidence,⁵ but acts of power and control. This paper will explore the shifting use of technology by non-state actors, particularly ISIS, and focus on the portrayal of cultural destruction in the Middle East, exploring its framing and perception as a strategic goal.

Terrorism is a term arguably first coined in the French Revolution, during a period of state sanctioned violence later called 'the Terror.'⁶ It has become an increasing phenomenon of the twentieth century characterised by violent acts to further a defined aim by creating a state of suffering, '[extending] beyond the [intended] audience.'⁷ Therefore, 'by its very nature [terrorism] is a psychological weapon which depends upon communicating a threat.'⁸ For its historical roots terrorism has evolved, along with the technology it uses. Twenty-first century terrorism has been characterised as a 'new wave': they have a less hierarchic structure and an increasingly multidimensional focus – from territory to influence.⁹

Though the Assassin Sect of the Middle Ages used the power of gossip in the markets,¹⁰ modern terrorist groups have realised and taken advantage of the capabilities of mass media.¹¹ Al-Qaeda was arguably one of the first to take advantage of these new technologies, to coordinate its members globally, arrange funding, recruit and spread their message through television and the internet.¹² Though at one time terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda needed to send press releases to media outlets prior to events,¹³ the advent of social media networking has allowed instant, 'direct, intermediary free communication with their potential public.'¹⁴ The Islamic State has fully embraced this move to social networking, producing high quality videos through sophisticated production companies using cutting edge techniques.¹⁵ This elaborate, professional use of social media has been compared to, 'modern cross-media marketing or political [public relations] campaigns.'¹⁶ Yet these videos not only communicate their violent events to the globe, but also martyr biographies, and the welfare services they provide to their 'citizens.'¹⁷ ISIS has evolved both their tactics and politics to gain the largest global impact and influence: intrinsically tying their innovative social media strategy with their terrorism strategy.¹⁸

Whereas 'old wave' terrorists used media to document their acts, but downplay violence to garner popular support, 'new wave' terrorists have mixed social media with the traditional military tactics of shock and awe – highlighting and exaggerating their acts of violence.¹⁹ As terrorist groups,

such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), are producing, editing and disseminating their own media it cannot be assumed that this content is documentary.²⁰ That is not its purpose. Rather these social media products are intended to, '[exaggerate] perceptions of power... [provide a sense of] invisibility and highlight the impotence of its opponents,' and create a business model to support their aims.²¹

Yet communications strategy and theatre are strikingly similar.²² As with theatre ISIS is concerned with the size of their audience and the impact of their performance. The US State Department and the Brookings Institute have characterised in separate studies the large impact ISIS has had on social media in Syria, making the Syrian War, 'the most socially mediated conflict in history.'²³ These factors have provided ISIS with a global audience.²⁴ In order to orchestrate the impact of their communications to attain their intended means, 'terrorists pay attention to script preparation, cast selection, sets, props, role playing, one minute-by-minute stage management.'²⁵ It is clear through their actions that terrorists tailor their actions to satisfy media criteria for newsworthiness, allowing media access and adhering to their timelines and deadlines.²⁶ For all the theatrics it must be remembered that terrorism is at its root a form of psychological warfare with a tactical aim.²⁷

Many scholars have discussed the general aims and goals of ISIS in their communication plan. I will highlight their four key goals and three district levels of audience prior to an analysis of cultural destruction through these lenses. Wilkinson states that ISIS's four key aims are, 'to convey the propaganda of [their deeds] and create fear amongst their target groups, to mobilise wider support for their cause [...], to frustrate and disrupt the response of the government and security forces [...], [and] to mobilise, incite, and boost their constituency of actual and potential supporters.'²⁸ ISIS exercises these goals at local, regional, and global levels, targeting each differently to gain the greatest impact.²⁹ It is through this multilevel and multifaceted lens that all of ISIS publications must be considered.

With the dawn of new wave terrorism in 2001 also came the resurgence of iconoclasm, first with the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Afghan Taliban, and later, though more memorably for the Western world, the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York by Al-Qaeda.³⁰ This illustrated a change that had begun since the Second World War: the act of, 'plunder [shifting] from an act following military victory, to an integral aspect of tactical planning for conquest.'³¹ Since summer 2014 ISIS has embraced this strategy,³² allegedly attacking or destroying the, 'Mosul Museum, the archeological sites of Nineveh, Nimrud [...] [Hatra, Palmyra] and possibly Ashur.'³³ These attacks of cultural heritage sites do not only result in their destruction, but also their looting and sale on the illicit market, though this will not be the focus of this paper.³⁴ This destruction has been described as second only to World War Two in large scale destruction in the modern era.³⁵ And this is not just wanton destruction, but a tool. ISIS recognises its utility in the increasing media concentration on cultural destruction.³⁶ ISIS has,

'carefully disseminated videos and imagery,' detailing their destruction of ancient sites and artifacts.³⁷ ISIS, as an organisation, has discovered that it is of no consequence whether the destruction is real or illusion – as long as it is perceived as a real threat – as in the case of the archeological site of Nineveh.³⁸ In this case they are able to, 'test the impact of potential acts, and respond according to this impact.'³⁹

This cultural destruction though is not a phenomenon of new wave terrorism, or from modern warfare tactics, such as World War Two. As an ISIS representative explained in a propaganda video to justify their actions: 'When Abraham went to Mecca he destroyed idols.'⁴⁰ Cultural destruction has been used as a weapon of psychological warfare from time immemorial. ISIS has co-opted this form of warfare, and adapted it using new technology to gain a wider breath and scope of victims;⁴¹ notably through their 'Promotion of Virtue and Destruction of Vice' video released in 2015 portraying the destruction of objects from the Mosul Museum.⁴² What is distinct about the destruction practices of ISIS is that in their religious zeal they are destroying objects, 'so old that [ISIS] followers [have] probably never heard of them,'⁴³ these items are, 'no longer worshipped by anyone,'⁴⁴ yet are destroyed for propaganda. Prominent Yale scholar Eckart Frahm stated in an interview that though ISIS has destroyed the most spectacular sites already, continued destruction seems, 'quite likely,' even if it will be, 'less useful for ISIS's ongoing propaganda offensive.'⁴⁵

Though ISIS is ostensibly continuing a tradition of iconoclasm,⁴⁶ congruent with their religious ideals,⁴⁷ I would argue this destruction is more closely linked with their military strategy; the idea that this is taking place to destroy, 'forbidden form[s] of idolatry,' is too simplistic.⁴⁸ Harmansah criticises academics, journalists and the public alike for, 'taking the videos [of ISIS's cultural destruction] as pure documentary evidence,' as it is staged and shaped, for a much larger purpose.⁴⁹ Videos of cultural destruction differentiate themselves from videos of other forms of violence in that they are more consumable by a larger audience, they are less gruesome and more 'riveting.'⁵⁰ These factors lead to more sharing, greater viewership and allow for a larger target audience, 'to allure their sympathisers and patrons, recruit future fanatics, humiliate local communities while annihilating their sense of heritage, and offend the humanitarian West,' with a single video.⁵¹ I would challenge Nemeth who stated that the, 'psychological effects of destruction represent only an immediate tactical value,'⁵² as this section will explore the tactical value is large reaching and long lasting. One of the factors from which communities derive their identity and sense of belonging is through a shared history,⁵³ they see the future through the lens of the past.⁵⁴ Likewise cultural objects can also represent a political leader or group, formulating a national identity in a community.⁵⁵ As such if you figuratively destroy that history or political affiliation through the destruction of cultural objects you are destroying a community's identity – which is exactly ISIS's intent. Once a people's identity is destroyed, once they are subjugated, it is less complicated to, in the words of UNESCO chief Irina Bokova, 'enslave them,' and make them take on a new identity and cultural beliefs.⁵⁶ Cultural destruction has been used historically in order to, 'subjugate local populations,'⁵⁷ but the same tactic is being used to manipulate and persuade audiences as well.⁵⁸ This manipulation, though it can be targeted to local populations, has recently been used to target the West as well, through showing the impotency of organisations like UNESCO to protect cultural heritage, and shaking Western identity who see, 'the ancient civilisation of Mesopotamia as the root of its own culture.'⁵⁹ This widespread unease caused by the violent destruction of objects and identities can in turn, 'compromise the stability of a [...] political system,' and contribute to further volatility.⁶⁰ Yet these harms are only realised if their intended audience takes notice.

As previously mentioned the use of cultural destruction as a tool of propaganda by ISIS is distinct from its use of media to portray killings

and other forms of violence⁶¹ both in the reasons it is created and how it is consumed.⁶² It must never be forgotten that these videos are a carefully constructed strategy, a form of theatre,⁶³ and as such the distinction between reality and perception is irrelevant.⁶⁴

Smith, et al., continue this argument in that much of this destruction, if it has occurred, has been solely for the, 'purpose of producing the video.'⁶⁵ An additional feature of this publicity that should not be forgotten is that the media attention itself can create an, 'aura of legitimisation.'⁶⁶

ISIS is not leaving its exploits to be conveyed through word of mouth. They are allocating valuable assets to the creation and dissemination of modern communication methods. They have adapted and embraced modern technology and social networking to reach a global audience.⁶⁷ They are visible, they are shaping the view of their organisation, and throughout 2014 and 2015, were largely achieving their goals. Though their military tactics and appeal has been attributed to this success, I believe their communication strategy and policy of cultural destruction should not be underestimated in achieving their tactical goals: gaining power, creating a society, and gathering supporters world-wide.

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Revisiting Sontag: Citizen Journalism in Syria

ELISABETH DIETZ uses Susan Sontag's analysis of war journalism to explore the rise of citizen journalism in Syria.

The Syrian Civil War may well be the most heavily documented conflict ever.¹ From its early protests up until the fully-fledged civil war we observe today, images and stories from the streets have been continuously broadcast to a global news audience. Due to severe restrictions put on foreign journalists in the country, most of this information flow originates from local journalists and, notably, from the work of 'citizen journalists'; ordinary citizens that photograph, film, record and report what is happening on the ground. Indeed, continuing the trend from the Arab Spring, we have in the mediation of the Syrian conflict seen an unprecedented rise of so-called 'user-generated content' – iPhone videos of bombings and Facebook updates about evacuations only being two such examples. Citizen journalism is born out of the desire to disseminate information about the realities of conflict, often with a political aim. Those who engage in it risk imprisonment, torture or even death. Yet beyond these objectives of documentation – can citizen journalism pose a radical alternative to the dominance of the traditional media, challenging the Western gaze on the conflict and opening a possibility for connection between global news audiences and citizens in Syria?

Anglophone mainstream media can easily be critiqued for its tendency to depict non-Western conflicts as caused by, 'primordial irrationality and tribalism,'² and in the case of Syria the media reality is further complicated by the United States and Russia supporting opposing factions. Influential American writer and political activist Susan Sontag went beyond critiques of media bias and tendencies of orientalism when she questioned whether war photography itself actually has the capacity to generate meaningful political action amongst news audiences, or whether it is doomed to cause apathy.³ In her book 'On Photography' Sontag argues that 'concerned' photography has done at least as much to deaden conscience as to arouse it.⁴ Furthermore, Sontag upheld that while photos might give us

an illusion of understanding, this way of looking at conflict actually only promotes, 'an acquisitive relation to the world that nourishes aesthetic awareness and promotes emotional detachment.'⁵ Indeed, the problem here is one of detachment and distance. The gap between the lives of those suffering and the lives of those looking at photos of suffering is one too large to be bridged by war photography, and such images thus only serve to desensitise and transfix – they provoke emotional outbursts rather than genuine solidarity. To Sontag the solution laid not in abandoning war photography and closing our eyes - but in contextualising images with background information, and critically examining the way we look at the suffering of others as removed from our own lives.⁶

Yet what would Sontag say about the flow of images emerging from the conflict in Syria today? The case for desensitisation is in the case of Syria often made with reference to the abundance in the media of graphic imagery depicting all kinds of atrocities - the video of rebel commander Abu Sakkar eating the heart of an alleged government soldier being one particularly graphic example.⁷ However, an important difference between citizen journalism and the traditional photojournalism, which Sontag was critiquing is that the 'reporting' in the former is done by locals. The photographers and writers are here intimately familiar with the context, and through their reporting they assert the voice and agency of Syrian citizens in the mediation of what is happening to their country. It is this, 'situated, embodied and political,' nature of citizen journalism that allows it to move towards a, 'sense of achievable cosmopolitanism.'⁸ Even more it can be argued that the citizen journalist provides the most effective account of conflict and may, 'put us in the communicative domain of his realities, touch us at the affective level, and invite a moral response from us.'⁹ It is through accessing citizen journalism we are best put in the position to act upon the moral and political imperative of media consumption Sontag spoke of – moving from passive spectators to members of collectives of solidarity. This account of cosmopolitan journalism resembles the alternative photography envisioned by John Berger, where the photographer is not so much a reporter to the rest of the world as a witness for those involved in the events. To him, graphic photos should not be taken to, 'please generals, to boost the morale of a civilian public, to glorify heroic soldiers or to shock the world press,'¹⁰ but be directly addressed to those who are suffering what the photos depict.¹¹ It can be argued that it is through this recalibration of mediation that citizen journalists offer global news audiences an opportunity to transcend traditional barriers of separation and distance. Zaina Erhaim, citizen journalist trainer and co-establisher of the LCC network of Syrian reporters, called the work being done on the Women's Blog on the Damascus Bureau website, 'the Syrian history through women's eyes,'¹² – and it is perhaps access to the writing of contemporary history that may allow us to connect with the experiences of Syrian citizens.

Then again, though citizen journalists might be disrupting traditional media coverage of conflict by making it more unfiltered, has the global media sphere really become more democratic? The voice of the Syrian citizen, reporter and witness, commonly all in one, can increasingly exist parallel to the traditional media outlets due to the rise of social media, yet the way to reach large audiences still goes through being incorporated into mainstream media. As Swedish academic Jesper Stromback points out, there is a theoretical possibility of reaching wider audiences through the internet, 'but in the absence of coverage in the traditional news media, this possibility is seldom realised.'¹³ It is precisely in the interaction with mainstream media that some of the limitations to citizen journalism are most frequently pointed out – the difficulty of independent verification of material, questions about authenticity, and the alleged political agenda of citizen journalists and activists. Material from citizen journalists is commonly published with a disclaimer informing that the content cannot be independently verified, and publications are wary of losing

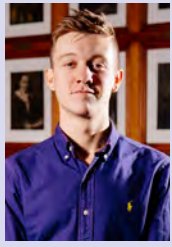
their credibility by disseminating politically motivated content.¹⁴ Indeed, many Syrian citizen journalists are political activists, and there have been cases of fabrication - such as a video of Homs with a fabricated smoking backdrop created by Omar Telawi in 2012. He himself made no excuses for his actions, calling on the urgency for the world to take notice,¹⁵ and as Ayman Mhanna, former director of the press freedom group Samir Kassir Foundation, put it; 'Activists feel there is nothing wrong with mislabelling a video, because they feel that exaggeration is nothing compared to the bloodiness of the regime, they say it gets them an attention that they desperately need.'¹⁶ However, though such individual instances might occur, other citizen journalist groups like the Local Coordination Committee of Syria (LCC) value their verification processes highly.¹⁷ Furthermore, the supposed neutrality of mainstream journalism should be questioned as well as the fairness of coining the illusionary objectivity of the Western press against the desperateness of activists seeking international attention to a crisis.

Nevertheless, although we might argue that it is precisely subjectivity that gives citizen journalism its strength, it is also this dimension that makes the traditional media wary of overly close association – particularly in Syria's polarised media reality where, 'videos have driven the conflict even as they document its horrors.'¹⁸ In the Syrian Civil War the mediation of the war has thus become part of the very conflict, consequently also affecting how the Western press gathers material. It is clear that the assertion that citizen journalists may provide the most accurate testaments has not considered the political motives that direct the generation of citizen journalism coming from Syria. In an article examining the relationship between professional and citizen journalists in the Syrian conflict, Madeline Storck argues: 'In the context of a civil war in which actors compete to control the media narrative, [user generated content] must be treated as situated within the information war.'¹⁹

Consequently, the widespread use of Western NGOs like Avaaz²⁰ as fact-checkers in the Western media is hardly surprising. These precautions effectively serve as methods of gatekeeping; citizen journalists may see their material incorporated into mainstream media, yet only if they can meet the premises dictated by Western media.

In a strange turn of events, the abundance of citizen-generated information flowing from Syria has in fact reinforced the authority of the mainstream media. Mainstream media retains its role in providing context and filtering to an audience overwhelmed by a conflict many still understand little of, and by the constant stream of graphic material coming out of it. Syrian citizens may well be providing content to the news, but the role of narrating and commenting to international audiences is in the mainstream media largely still in the hands of Western journalists. Thus, the cosmopolitan potential in citizen journalism is lost in a brutal media war in which mainstream media in the West is unwilling to let go of the power of narration, and an uninformed audience is unlikely to protest. It is still 'Western media' that is, translating the complexities of the war to the public – and not Syrian citizens. In other words, we are probably best served by not dismissing Sontag's critiques of war journalism just yet.

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The fallout from last November's shock victory for the Trump campaign has left American media institutions reeling and looking for answers. How could they have got it so wrong? And how did they lose the trust of a significant portion of the American public? The new administration is unlikely to offer any respite; only a few weeks into office, it appears to be waging an unprecedented war on the press and has shown an alarming disregard for the core tenet of journalism in the United States: holding government to account and acting as the fourth estate. Trust in mainstream media is at a record low, and new technological developments appear to be causing more problems than they solve – with the proliferation of fake news and social media 'echo chambers' sowing partisanship and

separating Americans into entirely different spheres of information. As the United States enters an uncertain new political chapter, media framing and perception is sure to be both fascinating and troubling for observers.

In terms of perception, no region of the United States has drawn more attention recently than the 'Rust Belt' states, which, to the surprise of virtually every pollster, swept Trump into the White House. Ima Bishop examines why these reliably blue states turned their backs on the Democratic nominee, and why a populist economic message espoused by an outsider proved to be a winning formula. On the national scale, Kareen Movsesyan delves into the modern phenomenon of mainstream media distrust, and assesses its causes and consequences on both ends of the political spectrum. And for this region's 'Not in the News' article, Alexis Nicole Gaviola gives a spotlight to the Asian-American voter, often overlooked but increasingly politically active.

Profile: The Asian-American Voter

In recent years, campaign strategies have sought to gain votes by specifically pandering to various ethnic and racial groups. The 2016 election displayed specific attempts to appeal to Hispanic and Black voters. From media coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement to images of Latinos for Trump at rallies, Americans recognised the growing impact of minority groups on the political climate. In 2012, they represented 27.1 percent of the total electorate.¹ While having these voices heard is vital for the democracy of a nation as diverse as the United States to function, other groups were left largely unheard.

Asian-Americans represent the fastest growing minority voting group in the United States.² They represent huge numbers in the populations of several States such as California, New York, and Hawaii.³ Although typically conservative, Asian-Americans increasingly leaning towards left-wing politics. Karthick Ramakrishnan, professor at University of California-Riverside and founder of the AAPI Data—a research group focused on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders—states that one-third of Asian-American voters are undecided, and that overall they represent 12 percent of the electorate.⁴ In fact, Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles has found that in several of California's districts, Asian-Americans made up the winning margin.⁵ It is clear how powerful this demographic can be in swinging votes in several major states. Still, very few in politics actually pay attention to Asian-American communities. Demographically, they represent the commonly targeted voter groups. They are often considered well educated and economically successful, yet statistics show that only around half of the total eligible Asian-American voters actually vote; even fewer run for political office.⁶ Asian-Americans represent a political anomaly, explaining why the issues they face are usually ignored by candidates and politicians. After all, why would they invest their time and energy into understanding and appealing to Asian-Americans when they would gain so little in return? Asian Americans issues are often misunderstood due to the effects of the label 'model minority'.⁷ In the face of conflict, they are expected to remain subservient and quiet, as racial stereotypes portray them to be.⁸ Asian-Americans represent a diverse group of people, some of whom face issues that mirror those typically associated with Black and Latino Americans. For example, Vietnamese Americans are more likely to live in low-income neighbourhoods and experience higher rates of high school dropouts.⁹ Korean Americans are largely left uninsured.¹⁰ Filipino Americans will often know someone who immigrated illegally.¹¹ Despite all of this, Asians are largely absent from the frontline of political debate.

Studies suggest that the reasoning behind this stems from the lack of acknowledgement Asian-Americans themselves often have

in regards to the issues most affecting their communities. Asian-American culture is often blamed as facilitating a mentality of struggle as part of the 'American dream'.¹² At the same time, a significant lack of resources prevents Asian-Americans from being educated on these issues in the first place.¹³ For example, providing Spanish speakers at government agencies, charities, and educational community centres fosters communication with a wide set of people. Spanish newspapers and news channels are easily found throughout the country, especially in regions large Latino communities.¹⁴ As a result, they gain a better understanding of these issues and are able to speak out. However, providing such resources for Asian-Americans would be expensive and difficult. With such a diverse array of people who speak various languages, such as Mandarin, Hindi, Tagalog, Thai; how can you communicate with them all? Unifying Asian-Americans is far more challenging than for other minorities in the United States.

The media has, at times, given a degree of attention to the Asian-American voter. In her commentary on the 2008 Democratic presidential primary election, Nancy Wang Yuen, assistant professor at Biola University, discusses the effect that media reporting has had on Asian-American voters.¹⁵ In both the 2008 and 2016 Democratic primaries, Asian-Americans favoured Hillary Clinton. Media outlets portrayed their support as attributable to her personal characteristics, the economic success of her husband's presidency, and her policies during her time as Secretary of State.¹⁶ This contrasts with the way media outlets portrayed a lack of support for Barack Obama; Asian-Americans were labelled as 'outright racists'.¹⁷ The media pitted people of colour against one another, inferring that the primary reason Asian-Americans did not support Barack Obama was because of the colour of his skin and because of tensions with the Black community.¹⁸ Yuen refers to a quote from Fay Wattleton from CNN to represent this: 'I think there are tensions between African Americans and Asians around affirmative action issues at the higher education levels [...] And I think we can't ignore those. Now, whether they show up in the electorate and how deep those divides are, but the tensions do exist.'¹⁹ Yuen then goes on to state, 'This description exemplifies how the media frames people of colour: the dominant pattern is to search for racial reasons to gauge support, or lack of support, for a candidate of colour. In this case, the media cites racial tensions between Asian-Americans and African-Americans surrounding affirmative action as a potential reason for Asian-American non-support of an African-American candidate, even though, historically, whites are the major racial group rallying against affirmative action [sic].'²⁰ While the relationship between the two racial groups has been portrayed negatively, the media fails to highlight just how integral their relationship was in the past and, in some Asian American communities, how connected they remain to be. For example,

after being inspired by Malcolm X, Japanese-American Yuri Kochiyama went on to become one of the era's most prominent civil rights activists, fostering collective solidarity between Black and Asian communities.²¹ Surely, this played a role in Asian-Americans' political involvement. Why even make a political stance when you will just be misunderstood and labelled negatively? For some Asians, especially ones seeking to assimilate with American society, perhaps voting is seen more of a risk than a right.

This 2016 election presented new opportunities and challenges. For the first time in history, four women of Asian descent have been elected to the Senate.²² Manhattan's Chinatown is finally being represented by a woman of Asian descent in the New York state Assembly.²³ For some victorious candidates in the many campaigns of 2016, such as Phillip Chen, a Taiwanese representative in the California state Assembly, Asian-American votes largely contributed to his campaign's success.²⁴ After all, to many Asian-Americans, representation matters. What is fascinating is how Asian-Americans were able to combine their efforts to create a political stance. For example, 'Chinese Americans for Trump', a group that paid for several billboards and aerial banners supporting the candidate in more than twelve states and 32 cities,²⁵ were able to rally support through social media. Members resorted to posting on Chinese-language forums and messaging services such as WeChat to promote Trump's candidacy.²⁶ In a study conducted at the University of Texas-Austin, Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Nakwon Jung, and Sebastián Valenzuela found that social media networks had a significant impact on political participation.²⁷ With its popularity amongst Asian-Americans,²⁸ surely the use of social media as a platform for political ideas and campaign marketing has made an impact. For several candidates, it definitely made a positive one.

With the impact that Asian-American voters can have on elections, political media coverage can no longer afford to ignore their voices. Like others, they face real issues that have been central to the political agenda in 2016, particularly education, financial security and immigration.²⁹ It is time that politicians address these issues in the faces of all the people that they affect, not just a select group. At the same time, cultural barriers must be removed. If the government and organisations can invest in resources that enable them to communicate with Hispanic voters, they must do the same for Asian American voters. After all, if no one bothers to reach out to them, how can they make their voices heard? The media, one of the most powerful platforms for politics, has largely overlooked the Asian-American voter. However, what is inspiring is that Asian-Americans themselves have sought to change this collectively. Through social media platforms, they have successfully rallied for support of candidates and spread awareness of issues. They have been able to communicate with one another using various languages and connect with one another. But in order to make an even bigger impact, they cannot and should not have to depend on themselves alone. Asian-American voices must be louder and more frequently heard in Washington in the near future.

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Framing the US Election: Shaping Perceptions in the Rust Belt

IMA BISHOP examines the key factors that created support for Donald Trump in the Rust Belt states.

America's Rust Belt spans Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Indiana and Illinois: the USA's old industrial heartland. Today, it is an area that employs mainly blue-collar workers, and suffers increasing unemployment and inequality due to economic troubles and industrial decline.¹ The Rust Belt has been hit hard by brain drain as young people have left rural counties for cities and states that offer better employment opportunities in white-collar professions.² Lower middle class Americans, like many of those living in rural and less urban areas of the Rust Belt, lack economic power and have keenly felt the impact of economic downturn.³ With his promise to 'Make America Great Again', the white working class population in the Rust Belt's 'Red Counties' were an ideal target audience for Donald Trump's presidential campaign.⁴

Traditionally, the Rust Belt is not a Republican heartland. Many of the Rust Belt states typically constitute the Democratic Party's 'Blue Wall' across the north of the country,⁵ and many of the towns that elected Trump in 2016 also voted for Barack Obama in both 2008 and 2012.⁶ Perhaps key to understanding this drastic swing in support is voter demographics. Going into the 2016 election, political analysts were aware of the white working class demographic living in the Red Counties but did not expect this group to mobilise at the polls. Instead, they predicted that the same coalition of voters that had previously supported Obama would turn out for Hillary Clinton.⁷ In reality, the 2016 presidential election saw the Rust Belt's typically disengaged sector of society turn out in high numbers to vote for Trump, giving him a majority in all the Rust Belt states, with the exception of Illinois.⁸

The failure of these states to swing blue, as they have at recent presidential elections, occurred for several reasons. The Democrats did not put substantial campaign resources into Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio until very late in the campaign,⁹ reflecting research that suggests (other than during the Obama campaigns) the Democrats do not put many resources into appealing to poor voters.¹⁰ In contrast, the Trump campaign aggressively targeted the region, having identified a voter demographic that was receptive to his messages of US decline and the restoration of greatness. Additionally, the coalition of voters who turned out for Obama in 2008 and 2012 did not turn out for Hillary Clinton, suggesting that her message and vision was not as compelling as that of Obama's. Intrinsicly linked to these factors is the idea of issue-framing, which seems to have been essential in mobilising Rust Belt voters in favour of Trump. Framing an issue paints it in a certain light, highlighting some features, facts and angles as the most important considerations of the issue. Ultimately, it shapes the lens through which the public views an issue.¹¹ Framing is widely used by the media but is equally applicable to political campaigning and the manipulation of voters' perception of candidates.

Framing must be combined with frequent audience exposure for people to become familiar with a policy stance and adopt it as their own opinion. However, the strength of a frame controls the extent that it can sway public opinion. People are unlikely to accept a weak argument that comes across as loud propaganda. Frequent exposure will not compensate for a weak frame, especially in a competitive political environment when alternative media outlets might present a different and more convincing frame. Indeed, weak framing can actually drive

those with strong political opinions in the opposite direction than intended.¹² Of course, it could be argued that Trump's campaign was little more than loud propaganda. Yet, it is important to remember that campaign and media messages are received in echo chambers. Voters are unlikely to engage with media and messages that do not align with their interests and tend to reject communications that do not match their existing knowledge, experiences, and opinions.¹³

Trump framed America's problems through the lens of economic downturn, immigration surges, and patriotic decline. His campaign promised to remedy these ills and restore America to its, 'former glory'.¹⁴ This resonated with those who had felt first-hand the impact of unemployment, industrial decline, and wage inequality, such as voters in the Rust Belt. 'Make America Great Again' was a particularly potent message for these voters. It acknowledged and shared their belief that America, and life, was not as good as it once was, and suggested that the current establishment had made little effort to improve this. It evoked connotations and nostalgia for a time gone by that offered those living in rural areas and industrial towns of the Rust Belt stable jobs, economic prosperity and security.¹⁵ As one example among millions, Shannon Goodwin from Wisconsin voted for Trump because he was, 'a big poster child for change'.¹⁶ The Trump campaign put a lot of energy into these states, appealing to their industrial history and values while providing scapegoats for their current problems: the American establishment and self-interested politicians, immigration, globalisation, and jobs moving out of the US.¹⁷ Trump's promise to renegotiate NAFTA resonated with voters as many in the Rust Belt viewed this as the origin of their problems.¹⁸ The framing of Trump's message and his liberal use of scapegoating riled voters, reflecting strong evidence that anger is key in driving voters to the polls.¹⁹ Indeed, emotion seemed to be a powerful factor in mobilising Trump's supporters. Regardless, of whether or not these scapegoats are justified or whether or not Trump is able to follow through on his promises to combat them, he framed the situation in an emotive manner for Rust Belt voters and portrayed himself as the person to resolve their concerns.

The Trump campaign picked up on the fact that economic framing has a history of success in the Rust Belt, as demonstrated by the 2008 and 2012 Obama campaigns.²⁰ Obama's 'Hope' campaign in 2008 promised a departure from decline and inequality, and the prospect of better socioeconomic conditions. In 2012, the Democrat-leaning media framed Mitt Romney as a big businessman who did not represent Middle Americans.²¹ However, these voters' ideas of change did not necessarily equate to progress, something Obama may have promised but Trump certainly did not with his endorsement of a return to America's past. It seems that Trump supporters in the Rust Belt were primarily concerned about America's social and economic trajectory,²² and resented the Obama administration and the Democratic Party for failing to make a significant difference in the standards or their day-to-day lives. These sentiments are summed up by one Trump voter who stated that Trump will help, 'hard-working blue collar workers looking for family-sustaining jobs'.²³ He further asserted, 'We didn't leave the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party left us'.²⁴

Message framing becomes especially important when Trump's campaign slogans are compared to Clinton's. While 'Make America Great Again' resonated with people's everyday problems, 'I'm With Her' carried a much stronger candidate-centred message. It did not reach out to voters or present a clear vision of the America that Clinton wanted to create. Trump's message may have been based more on what he stood against rather than what he stood for, but it was nonetheless a clear stance, something that the Clinton campaign did not hone in on.²⁵ 'Stronger Together' equally did not ring true for many Rust Belt voters who felt that the Obama administration and Democrats as a whole had

not delivered on the promise of change. It seemed as though Clinton would only bring another string of unfulfilled hopes.²⁶ 'Stronger Together' was also best framed in reaction to Trump's divisiveness and hostility to many sectors of the American population. However, rather than combatting this, it drew attention to Trump and through this particular framing re-emphasised fragmented society and its scapegoats rather than encouraging citizens to draw together.²⁷ Voters were aware of antipathies and disparities within American society but this did not automatically translate into a desire to overcome them, an urge the Clinton campaign relied upon.

This was a particularly problematic sentiment when coupled with Trump's insistence that the current political system had let the American people down. Hillary Clinton was every part the establishment candidate as Secretary of State and a former First Lady. This image contributed to her scandals appearing more shocking to some voters and framed her as an embodiment of the corruption and failures Trump's campaign attributed to the existing US political system. In contrast, the perception of Trump himself as an anti-establishment candidate helped his popularity amongst Rust Belt voters. He was not a typical Republican, meaning that many people who had previously voted Democrat could overcome their traditionally polarised views and justify voting for Trump.²⁸ During the election campaign, Trump cultivated a virtual cult of personality, which was key in winning votes when he was objectively less qualified than his opponent.²⁹ Harsh and unfounded criticisms of the US government and politicians, and the state of the country, were twisted and framed as well-founded anti-establishment critiques.

The Trump and Clinton campaigns were both plagued by scandal. However, in contrast to Clinton the prominence of scandal surrounding Trump did not damage his image, even in the Rust Belt states that form the Democratic Party's 'Blue Wall'. In 2010, Chong and Druckman carried out a study on the importance of media messages in a competitive context. This study questioned the extent to which people prioritised issues according to the significance different media outlets placed on them. The study revealed that competing messages received at the same time cancelled each other out and respondents fell back on their pre-existing knowledge and opinions to judge issues.³⁰ In the case of the 2016 presidential campaign, the fact that Trump came hand-in-hand with scandal did not damage voters' perception of him. His damaged appearance was balanced out by the onslaught of scandal that followed Hillary Clinton and her campaign. The fact that he was an anti-establishment candidate with a maverick personality helped normalise his transgressions,³¹ whereas Clinton's high flying political status did not afford her the same luxury.

Framing messages and personalities appears to have been crucial in swinging the Rust Belt states from blue to red in the 2016 presidential election. The Trump campaign's economic framing, anti-establishment rhetoric, and berating of the opposition mobilised disillusioned voters on a wave of nostalgia for times gone by, in conjunction with right-wing populism. As Richard Longworth argues, economic downturn and social tensions arising from an era of globalisation plays straight into the hands of rhetoricians such as those behind Trump's campaign.³² Playing on the fears of those who believe they are victims of the system, and attributing blame to, 'distant and mysterious forces,' is key to mobilising a following without tangible or legitimate proof to justify support.³³ It is highly unlikely that Trump will be able to return the white working class population of the Rust Belt's Red Counties to their industrial heyday, but utilising strong issue framing and constructing a campaign around abstract problems, grand promises, and fear-mongering was enough to secure a victory in these regions. The Rust Belt's idiosyncrasy regarding flexible party preferences sets it apart from reliably red or blue regions in the rest of the United States. While the region turned red in the 2016

presidential election, this is not a sure indicator that it will remain so in the future. Indeed, it is almost certain that the outcome of the 2020 presidential election will be decided in this changeable region yet again.

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Evaluating Media Distrust: The Partisan Divide

KAREEN MOVSESYAN examines the causes of the collapse in trust of mainstream American media, and its effect on the recent presidential election.

For most observers of the recent United States election, the previous year was a contentious time filled with partisanship and misinformation. While fake news spread like wildfire, a populist uprising accompanied a weakening of trust between the press and American public.¹ At first glance, it may seem appealing to place the bulk of responsibility on Donald Trump's supporters, many of whom were eager to express their dissatisfaction towards the political establishment. But this ire towards the establishment was shared by the left as well, especially among progressives and supporters of Bernie Sanders. With the case of rising media distrust, this was a bipartisan phenomenon. This article seeks to highlight the similarities and differences in media distrust between conservatives and liberals throughout the 2016 election.

To preface, it is important to note that growing institutional distrust has been an ongoing trend for decades. According to recent Gallup polls, Americans' trust of the press in 1997 represented only 53 percent of respondents.² By 2013, negative impressions of the media continued to promulgate, decreasing support to less than 44 percent of survey takers. Today, this value sits well below 32 percent.³ Across party dimensions, a similar pattern is observed, with Democrats, Independents, and Republicans all expressing increasing distrust of the press.⁴ Presently, 51 percent of Democrats indicate their support for the media, in contrast to only 30 percent of Independents and 14 percent of Republicans. When analysed along age demographics, this pattern repeats itself. Compared to individuals who are 50 years or older, 18-49 year-olds have consistently reported greater distrust by a margin of five to ten points since 2012.⁵

It is thus apparent that Republicans harbour the most distrust of the press, especially among middle-aged Republicans.⁶ Interestingly, the overall picture becomes more complex along ideological dimensions. According to a February 2016 Pew Research Survey, three-fourths of Americans believe that news organisations keep politicians in line.⁷ But when comparing media distrust between conservative Republicans, moderate liberal Republicans, moderate conservative Democrats and liberal Democrats, the results show that moderate conservative Democrats expressed the greatest degree of trust, at around 57 percent of respondents.⁸ By contrast, liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans both representing the ideological extremes, reporting greater dissatisfaction than their more moderate counterparts by margins as high as 20 percent.⁹

In spite of these ideological differences, however, there does seem to be some consistency in American's beliefs. Take a recent joint Suffolk University-USA Today poll which found that nearly 76 percent surveyed believed the media wanted to see Clinton elected.¹⁰ Other

surveys corroborate this sentiment, including a poll conducted by the reputable Media Research Center (MRC), which found similar results for 78 percent of voters.¹¹ What is especially peculiar about this poll is that 97 percent of voters also reported that the media had no effect on their eventual vote.

This leaves a puzzling conclusion. On the one hand, most Americans acknowledge the effectiveness of the media's watchdog role, but at the same time, most people disparage its biased nature, indicating their distrust. If Trump's victory was propelled by a dissatisfaction of the press, then the media did in fact influence voters' decisions, contrary to the self-reporting of these studies. It is therefore imperative to address the roots of media distrust in general before delving into the intricacies of the liberal-conservative divide. As of now, there are perhaps six central hypotheses regarding rising media distrust among the American public.

Polarising Nature of Elections — A common, if not obvious, theme of every election since 2000, was the heavily partisan nature of reporting. As *The Atlantic's* Derek Thompson cogently summarises, 'Perhaps the hyper-politicisation of elections, which cleaves the electorate and entrenches two opposing viewpoints on a single national story, erodes public faith that 'the media' can be fair to both camps.'¹² As evidenced by Republicans' overwhelming reliance on Fox News compared to the Democrats' more diverse list of information sources, there is little overlap in the kind of information ideological counterparts receive.¹³ More worryingly, the conservative-liberal divides between media organisations themselves only serve to splinter audiences and accentuate the entrenchment that Thompson speaks of. Another, more confounding, finding pertains to the findings of Andrew Daniller, Laura Silver, and Devra Coren Moehler's 2013 article on media effects.¹⁴ In their investigation of 39 partisan news and entertainment programs and their effects on voter expectations, they found that, 'those with unmet [political] expectations experienced a decrease in trust in the media following [...] [an] election.'¹⁵ Essentially, electoral coverage exaggerates, or at least routinely covers, the grandiose promises of presidential candidates, almost all of whom disappoint their supporters. While the effect of this phenomenon is unclear for the 2016 election, it would be reasonable to suggest that it played a major role in setting the field for populism to bloom before the primaries.

Echo Chambers — Arguably the most widely spoken topic immediately following Trump's victory refers to the homogenisation of media consumption by like-minded consumers and its elevation of group think. The introduction of the internet has allowed for countless information forums to develop, allowing consumers to select the news that best conform to their own beliefs. This has led to a natural process of political polarisation through self-selection. In fact, while conservatives are more likely to have close friends who share their political views, liberals are more likely to drop a friend because of politics.¹⁶ In the realm of social media, there is a striking similarity in this regard, wherein conservatives' social media friends are also more likely to share their political opinions, while liberals are more prone to block others who share dissenting viewpoints.¹⁷ On Facebook, trending and news feed algorithms exacerbate divisions by tailoring a user's content to match their own tastes and politics,¹⁸ while studies of Twitter follower clusters show the existence of liberal-conservatives bubbles: rarely do people of opposing side interact with one other.¹⁹ Of course, Twitter accounts for only 18 percent of internet users and 14 percent of the American adult population, so these are not conclusive findings.²⁰ Moreover, when analysed along age, the reliance on social media for political information is true primarily for people under the age of 30. Most Americans, by contrast, continue to rely on television for information.²¹ Still, as social media usage will continue to expand, echo chambers are certain to become increasingly problematic in the future.²²

Journalistic composition and tendencies — A difficult point to evaluate empirically, authors like The Washington Examiner's Timothy P. Carney have made the case that media bias comes from the affiliations of journalists themselves. In an article in The New York Times, he specifically discussed the coastal and Democratic propensities of journalists, as well as the unprecedented 'revolving door' of journalists entering into government, as 30 journalists did during the Obama administration.²³ Thus, the greater the disparity between the numbers of liberal and conservative journalists, the more prominent the media bias will be towards the greater side.

Media sensationalism — Sensationalism refers to the increasing reliance on partisanship and 'gotcha' journalism as the economic model for the industry. Unlike the early to mid-20th century, where less competition and political polarisation allowed for a more investigative, impartial press, today's press operates under different economic incentives.²⁴ For example, in the realm of online news, instead of emphasising the quality of an article's content, click-baiting has become the mainstay of many journalistic platforms.^{25, 26} These are often emotionally-charged tactics, especially when employed on political topics, and are quick to generate controversy, even provoking moral outrage, not the empathy and depth required to maintain some semblance of impartiality.²⁷ This tendency has even elicited the reaction of the colloquially-titled 'blogosphere', where ranks of liberal and conservative bloggers vent and delegitimise the 'mainstream media'.²⁸

Modernity itself — Another difficult argument to prove in isolation is that exigent circumstances — such as the 'uber democratisation' of American institutions,²⁹ or the loss of oversight in certain sectors of public life (such as the military, press and big business) —³⁰ led to a sweeping distrust of institutions in general. According to an older UN report, this phenomenon has been common to every advanced industrial democracy since the 1960s.³¹ In the United States, general institutional distrust has become commonplace: 'Fewer than half of Americans now say they trust the church, the medical system, the presidency, the Supreme Court, public schools, banks, organised labor, the criminal justice system, big business, and Congress [sic].'³²

Accusations of left-leaning or pro-Clinton bias — Lastly, there is a manifest belief that the media had largely pursued a pro-Clinton agenda during the 2016 election. The previously cited Suffolk University-USA Today poll shows that over 76 percent of survey takers agree with this assessment.³³ Indeed, even a joint MRC-YouGov Poll, conducted between 9 and 10 November, found that Americans believed the media was supporting Clinton (59 percent) versus Trump (21 percent).³⁴ Even 32 percent of Clinton voters believed the media was pro-Clinton. The accuracy of this claim is difficult to verify. On the one hand, newspapers have a propensity for reporting negatively on Trump,³⁵ but that can also be attributed to Trump's controversial history, comments, and personality, not to mention his own antagonisation of the press during the early primaries.³⁶ It is also true that in a list of newspaper endorsements in November, only one of the top 50 publications publicly endorsed Trump, perhaps suggesting some kind of media vendetta against the candidate.³⁷ Or maybe this is just emblematic of the media's overarching opposition against the GOP itself.³⁸ Unfortunately, it is difficult to prove either of these points definitively. Yet for most Americans this should not matter. In their minds, the bias is abundantly clear.

For some Trump voters, the press was not some impartial, objective arbiter of the truth. In their minds, the press had a leftist agenda, one that unabashedly supported Hillary Clinton to the tee. Moreover, as billionaire tech investor Peter Thiel puts it, '[the] media [has] always tak[en] Trump literally. It never t[ook] him seriously.'³⁹ Rather than treating their candidate fairly, the media often lambasted against the presumed ineptness of Trump voters.⁴⁰ This is an important point, since

people are less likely to listen to an argument when they are offended, according to a 2013 study by the University of Wisconsin.⁴¹ Other explanations on this topic include the role of the conservative media in engendering a natural distrust of mainstream publications,⁴² as well as the controversial and often debated topic of whether conservatives are more susceptible to fake news and conspiracies.⁴³

At the other end of the political spectrum, there are a surprising number of similarities between Sanders and Trump supporters. Both consist largely of low-income white, anti-establishment Americans whose main concerns are economic.⁴⁴ Like Trump supporters, many progressives despise what they see as a biased 'mainstream media' — one that presumably defended Clinton despite allegations of preferentialism by the Democratic National Committee following the release of hacked e-mails by WikiLeaks.⁴⁵ According to a Harvard Spring 2016 IOP Youth Poll, 8 percent more Sanders supporters expressed absolutely no faith in the media than compared to Clinton supporters. With Trump supporters, this difference between Clinton voters was an incredible 21 percent.⁴⁶ The chief reasons for distrust among Sanders supporters come largely from the claim that the media's coverage of Sanders's campaign was unfair.⁴⁷ Specifically, until his Michigan primary victory, Sanders was often ignored by the press and they were accused of treating him more as an obstacle than a legitimate candidate.

In sum, it is clear that Republicans and Trump supporters overwhelmingly distrust the press — more so than liberals and Sanders supporters. Among the six noted causes of media distrust, it is difficult to pin this observation on any single hypothesis. What is clear, however, is that large swaths of the public were dissatisfied with establishment politics and the media's perceived insistence on maintaining the status quo. For proponents of a free and legitimate press, this should serve as a warning, one that demands reforms to mend these wounds, lest political polarisation continue to sweep the United States.

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Industrialised communication has become a reality for nations and citizens ever since the dawn of the telegraph. The culture of media, who says what, where, about whom, how, and why are as much a global fabric of society as they are fickle markets in of themselves. The Trump administration is struggling to fight for approval in the wake of its own anti-establishment dialectic, British Prime Minister Theresa May wrestles with

projecting an image of strength and skulduggery onto the rest of the world, and words like 'post-truth' and 'alternative facts' have become common parlance. Not confined to just the Anglo-sphere, perception has become a key dynamic everywhere: Rojava is progressively becoming an embedded

reality in the Middle East and a tide of fundamentalist traditionalism is spreading like wildfire in Malaysia. Adam Curtis' words are more pertinent than ever in this conflict of transmissions: 'We live with a constant vaudeville of contradictory stories'.

In this issue, Maria Gharesifard discusses how the perception of environmentalism worldwide is shaped in part by the image nations project onto the world stage, and how they seek to use the idea to their ends. Additionally, Sofiane Aklouf discusses fact-checking culture and its pragmatics in modern journalism, finally and Júlio César Crêlier Othon assesses the health of modern media, and questions if there was ever some golden standard in publication that has since been thrown out.

Profile: How China, Russia and America Project Environmentalism Worldwide

The media has always played an influential part in the fight against climate change. Research conducted on media framings in Norway, China, and Ghana demonstrates that, 'mass media, rather than education or experience, is the main source for people's understanding of the science of global warming and other scientific issues which the public do not confront directly in their everyday lives.'¹ The media plays a crucial role in translating the threat of climate change to the public, and largely shapes perceptions.² In the United States, powerful owners, families, friends, and advertisers influence the media.³ Furthermore, corporations such as ExxonMobil and Shell have a vested interest in shaping public perception and have used their financial power to do so.⁴ In Russia, this role is largely taken on by the state.⁵

It is critical to examine Russia, China and the USA due to their international position in terms of environmentalism and the influence of mass media. They are three of the most powerful countries in the world, and are also the top three carbon emission contributors.⁶ China's emissions as of 2015 constituted 25 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. The US came second at over 14 percent.⁷ As the two largest emitters, 'China and the United States are the two countries that are most important to worldwide efforts to slow climate change.'⁸ These countries have taken different approaches to climate change over time. Most recently, the Paris agreement of 2015 was hailed as historic due to the participation of China, Russia, and the United States.⁹ Previous attempts at global efforts against climate change have not always gone as well. For example, the US did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol in 1997.¹⁰ As a result, the media presence of these nations provides us with radically different understandings of environmentalism.

From 1998 to 2006, only 24 stories were identified as covering the issue of China and global warming in Chinese media. By contrast, 29 stories were reported by Chinese media in 2007, primarily an attempt by the Communist Party of China to be seen to respond to the global discourse regarding China's CO2 emissions.¹¹ Chinese media firmly advocated the government's stance in arguing that developed countries should take more responsibility for global greenhouse gas emissions and economic development should be prioritised in developing countries.¹² China's rhetoric is that it is quite simple to point the finger at developing countries, but global cooperation is key to combatting climate change.

China is considered to be 'developing', and does not have to set targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction.¹³ Depending on the origins of media, their portrayal of China differs. Australia and American media

consider China a threat to climate change.¹⁴ The national news agency Xinhua, points out that developed nations contributed to 95 percent of carbon dioxide emissions from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution until 1955. Therefore, developed countries are, 'inescapably liable,' and should take responsibility for the damage caused.¹⁵ Nonetheless, China has taken steps to combat climate change, perhaps because it has experienced droughts as well as floods in the past few years. Water shortage is a real possibility due to glacial melting at the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers.¹⁶ China is half the size of Russia but is host to ten times the amount of people.¹⁷ The difference in policies is reflected in the perception of the people as well. An Ipsos Mori poll revealed that the Chinese population views climate change as a more imminent threat as 91 percent believe that, 'we are headed for environmental disaster unless we change our habits quickly.'¹⁸ By contrast, just 57 percent of Americans agreed.¹⁹

For Russia, a falter in climate change efforts is profitable. Petroleum makes up around 63 percent of Russian exports.²⁰ In the past decade, oil and gas has amounted to half its revenue.²¹ The energy sector is very closely linked to the state, as it controls 30 percent of oil production and owns 51 percent of shares in Gazprom, Russia's largest gas company.²² While climate change is a real threat to Russia, it is not as confronted by the issue as other nations, such as China, are. Russia has not suffered as many natural disasters as a result of climate change in comparison to the latter's various droughts and floods. The representation of climate change in Russian media further downplays the issue.

Russia's former stance on climate change presented it as, 'an invention of the West to try to bring Russia to its knees.'²³ Russian newspapers usually follow the, 'state's official policies on climate change,' and the state supports the interests of large industries.²⁴ The Russian public had the lowest concern about global warming, other than Ukraine, in the summer of 2015.²⁵ This is believed to be due to climate change barely being addressed in state news outlets. The country's response to climate change and extreme weather events is muted and this results in general apathy, which emphasises the role of the media. The lack of public discourse on climate change allows for the government to be lax in its policies.

However, at the Paris agreement Putin said Russia was, 'taking the lead,' in the fight against climate change, signalling a stark change in rhetoric and policy.²⁶ He noted that Russia had reduced its levels of emissions since the Kyoto Protocol and even vowed to cut emissions further. A possible trigger for this was a 2010 heat wave, making it difficult for the government and the media to deny the obvious link to climate change. The natural disaster resulted in fires, killing people as well as destroying vegetation and homes.²⁷ Russia has also suffered from relative economic weakness due to the decline in, 'oil, gas, and other commodity prices since 2014.'²⁸ In addition, it faced sanctions from the US and the EU following the annexation of Crimea.²⁹ Russia's image has

been tarnished by these various events and therefore it is in their interest to promote an alternative lens through which to perceive the nation.

The US similarly approved the Paris Agreement in 2015 through President Obama, but the new Trump administration could change that. The new heads of President Trump's transition teams for the National Aeronautics Space Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of the Interior and the Department of Energy, are all sceptical of humanity's role in climate change.³⁰ So while Russia and China have changed their policies in order to take climate change more seriously, the US might not follow suit. This is a point of interest as the US has more home grown; environmentalism compared to China and Russia.³¹

There is a future for jobs in the renewable energy sector in the US. However, this does not align with the interests of major corporations and the new administration. The Keystone XL pipeline is an example of a project that will escalate carbon emissions.³² The tar extraction is a threat to native lands and contains several harmful chemicals.³³ The justification is that the project will create jobs through 'indirect job creation'. Furthermore, Trump has promised to revive the coal industry despite falling demand and a global surplus of coal.³⁴ By contrast, employment in solar energy has increased, while it has decreased in the oil and gas sector in the past few years.³⁵ There is a dissonance between what is projected through the media and the reality of the American job market with regards to the feasibility of environmentalism.

Ultimately, climate change impacts every person on earth, but those who are best equipped to make a difference are the states that have the actual means to do so. The Paris Agreement, 'stresses the importance of all countries contributing' in order to reduce emissions. There is a sense of urgency with climate change. It is imperative, as shown by data, that states demonstrate flexibility and efficient responsiveness to environmental threats.³⁶ Developed states, especially those who emit the most greenhouse gases, have a responsibility to the rest of the world. Trump's denial of climate change, and the support from media outlets such as Fox News, is dangerous.³⁷ China has said that Trump will be, 'defying the wishes of the entire planet,' if he backs out of the Paris agreement. The Kyoto Protocol treaty had already failed under President Bush.³⁸ Due to the divergence of policies between these three states and the example they project onto the rest of the world, the future is uncertain.

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The Boy Who Cried 'Wolf': Fact-Checking and Empirical Dynamics in Modern Journalism

SOFIANE AKLOUF explores the new culture of 'post-truth' and fact-checking in contemporary media politics.

In November 2016, Oxford Dictionaries chose its word for the year: 'post-truth'.¹ This adjective is defined as, 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.'² The conflicting information regarding Brexit allowed this word to be at the heart of the news in the United Kingdom. In the last weeks of the campaign, the Leave camp promised that the £350 million a week slogan sum could be redirected from the EU to the NHS,³ but the day after the vote, Nigel Farage recognised that it would be impossible.⁴ Likewise, in retrospect, Donald Trump's campaign promises, such as financing the wall along the US-Mexico border using Mexican funds, were quickly altered to refer to remissions taxes instead.⁵ The 2,000 percent increase in the use of the word in 2016 compared to the year 2015 shows the willingness of some to question the credibility of mainstream journalists.⁶ It is strange to use a term that supposes the end of 'truth', as if society had been one day virtuous and objective; that the press and media have shifted so much that it has now become commonplace to deconstruct it in order to befit the current state of political affairs. To return facts to the forefront, journalists try to combat false political statements, through resources like fact-checking to denounce the rumours circulating on the social networks.

Part of the problem is affiliation. A majority of large media outlets such as MSNBC and Fox News frequently operate under their specific party line, with Democrats and Republicans influencing each respectively: this already creates issues in terms of pure journalistic practice. The repercussions of the Pizzagate controversy shows how an environment of enmity and an expectation of misinformation can lead to extreme outcomes, such as when a pizzeria was burned down by Edgar Maddison Welch in Washington on 4 December 2016, after he alleged it to have been part of the conspiracy.⁷ The controversy was sparked by a tweet, disclosing the alleged information but without any supporting evidence to otherwise justify it.⁸ The lack of fine details in the story and clearly poor judgement shows how easily information can overrule critical function. Now, rather than neatly cutting out inconvenient facts or distorting context, this style of 'fake news' consists of inventing information ex nihilo. The challenge for journalists and responsible citizens is to be able to sort out unverified, invented information and vetted and credible information in the midst of such a quagmire.

However, the share of individuals using social networks as sources of information increases. A Pew Center poll in 2014 estimated that 30 percent of Americans use Facebook as a source of information.⁹ However, the engineers who manage the algorithms behind the social media platform are not journalists - they do not check the information disseminated, says Emily Bell, director of the Tow Center.¹⁰ Each decision on model algorithms changes how news is created and shared. In this context, the democratic accountability of newspapers is totally removed, allowing the spread of lies through general opinion, which can be misled. Thus, a user of Facebook who reads conspiracy theories will be offered articles of the same type, and shut himself up in a truncated vision of reality, without even being aware of it.

One can even wonder about a potential manipulation of these

algorithms since those who control them have immense power: Zeynep Tufekci, an associate researcher at the Center for Technological Policy Studies in Princeton, finds it amazing that information posted instantaneously on networks, such as those regarding the Ferguson riots, were only visible the day after their publication on Facebook and Twitter: 'No Ferguson on Facebook last night. I scrolled [...] this morning, though, my Facebook feed is also very heavily dominated by discussion of Ferguson. Many of those posts seem to have been written last night, but I didn't see them then.'¹¹ This raises the question of the neutrality and scope of these algorithms.

Faced with such a situation, the press tries to counter-attack. Thus, the majority of the major newspapers assert that they now have their journalists consult or work with fact-checkers, whose mission is only to verify the data, statements and information of politicians or articles circulating on the Internet.¹² The French newspaper *Le Monde* hosted a blog named 'Les decodeurs' dedicated to fact-checking, but quickly, the feature became too essential to be applied in as limited a manner as proposed and the verification request too important to be just a page on a newspaper. Since 2014, 'Les decodeurs' has become a full-fledged brand with a strong presence on social networks.¹³ In the 1990s, fact-checking mainly concerned political declarations, partly in thanks to institutions like The Annenberg Political Fact Check, launched within the University of Pennsylvania,¹⁴ but this task was seen as a part of journalistic duty. The first fact-checking website appeared in 2003 in the United States and was named 'politics.org'.¹⁵ Since the dawn of post-truth, journalists check articles written by other media when they suspect them of spreading false information.¹⁶ Citizens themselves can do this if they check the coherence of the statements of politicians by comparing their past positioning to their current stances. Twitter is a space that allows this. While statements in 140 characters do not allow the expression of a nuanced opinion, it can be used as a fact-checking mechanism. Through Twitter everyday users can challenge false or inconsistent statements made by politicians or journalists. However, each tweet leaves the writer vulnerable to attacks if their remarks are entertained purely for shock value of if the writer is perceived to be biased or a hypocrite.

It is the investigative work of journalists that allows the revelation of financial and political scandals. The International Consortium for Investigative Journalism, an organisation that brings together editors from around the world, leaked more than 11.5 million documents, which helped embolden the role of journalists to court investigators.¹⁷ These 'Panama Papers' had an international impact: Xi Jinping had ordered all the articles that reprinted the published information to be forbidden by law,¹⁸ and the Spanish Minister of Industry Jose Manuel Soria had to resign following his implication in the papers of his name in the case.¹⁹ In France, the sheer volume of requests to crack down on tax exemption became so overwhelming that the Ministry of Finance had to hire new staff just to process the suits.²⁰ It may be considered that these types of revelations to the general public contribute to the improvement of democracy. This is a new step in the work of the journalist: knowing how to analyse data will soon be more important than knowing how to report facts. The internet enables citizens to learn everything for themselves, entailing a need for institutions to go further not just to describe what is happening, but to analyse information to put it in context. Editorial teams are now so large that any given newspaper must add credibility and accountability to any and all information that they are responsible for. The duties of the journalist are now shifting perhaps to a different interpretation; that of not only serving as an arbiter of information, but also as a lens through which to observe events.

However, this vision of the new journalist should be nuanced. In fact, this renewal is accompanied by very virulent criticism of this profession,

accused of not being objective. Indeed, according to a poll in 2015, only 25 percent of Britons trust journalists.²¹ If this criticism is unfounded, then it bears to mind how Brexit and Trump came to be when major outlets said otherwise. The day before the election, the Huffington Post gave Hillary Clinton a 98 percent chance to win.²² The American campaign was a confrontation by the people, with a show based on personalities and political scandals - not a confrontation of programs. The surprise provoked by each new decree signed by Trump punctuates this: such proposals were unknown for many voters.

Fact-checking might be the panacea however. Facts are binary: either false or true, but that is often not the case due to the limitation of data extraction - such a demand undermines the pragmatism and efficiency of journalism when it focuses on them being authorities instead of people responsible for establishing all possible outcomes and facilitating holistic perspectives. Secondly, any analysis of a given fact, removed from its context, loses meaning. It does put forward an interesting question of whether or not political discourse should be beholden more to minutia rather than to an overall, case-by-case analysis if the approach of fact-checking is taken to its logical extreme. Even if the approaches are reconciled, a more fact-driven perspective would deprive the public of useful political insight that can sometimes only be granted through debate or by political insight alone. One of the issues with a fact-dependent approach is that ultimately, the media is meant to present information, and not rely simply on pumping out raw data. This is the case of Politifact, a site of public utility that has deviated in fact-checking everything and anything.²³ But it is simpler to verify facts than to entertain arguments through mutual discourse in order to evaluate the best political ideas and initiatives at hand. There is no absolute truth and selection of facts as verified by trusted sources is a process decided already by editorial choices.²⁴ A fact-checking pedagogy to explain their choices is necessary; it is also a need for transparency for the sake of credibility. The number of sites proposing to check statements is too many and leads to a quick and simple verification war, which is not healthy for journalism. These sites are addressed to the same public who is rather cultivated and politicised, so the demand for fact-checking is likely to reach its event horizon very soon.

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