

THE EMERGING OF GLOBAL JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Freedom of information is one of the fundamental human rights, the right of every citizen to express his or her opinion through the written and the spoken word. It is clear today that the technology of communication has revolutionized the spread of information, making it instantaneous and allowing it to reach an ever-widening public. Thus a new power is born, the power of global journalism and social media.

What is the nature of this new power? How does it fit into the basic structures and processes of democracy? Should we not recognize the new power as an integral part of our democratic institution? Thus public opinion could more effectively help to shape government and corporate sector policies.

Global journalism and a vibrant, free, and independent media play an indispensable role in the healthy functioning of democracy and are a staple of any open society. We rely on the curiosity and skepticism of global journalism to uncover the truth, underwrite the public trust, and hold all accountable. Global journalism becomes an extension of real world communication strategies by allowing enhanced transparency and accountability between stakeholders.

This paper seeks to describe the role of global journalism and social media in applying both good political and corporate governance practices as well as identify some problems arising due to global journalism.

As societies, we draw our strength from confronting the truth of our own imperfections—and this is the potential benefit when we rely on global journalism to hold us to the highest standards, even when, or especially when, we fall short. There is no freedom without freedom of expression, and global journalism and social media should strive for the highest ideals of journalism: to denounce all forms of injustice.

KEYWORDS: Global Journalism, Social Media and Governance

INTRODUCTION

The Emerging of Global Journalism and Social Media

The vital role of global journalism, the fourth estate, is fast changing as a result of technological advances that have brought about easier and faster access to all kinds of communication and information. Global journalism as well as social media provide a constant stream of information to the public, which has brought many government, nongovernment, and corporate entities to greater accountability, transparency, and probity.

With the advent of global journalism and social media, there have been unthinkable changes in our lives. For instance, privacy and confidentiality are more difficult to maintain; it's difficult to operate in secrecy or count on privacy. Global journalism and social media also allow people to more easily share different facets of their life in the global public spheres. Technology enjoyed by journalists is providing access to information by the public—for example, access to

boardrooms that were supposed to be inaccessible to everyone except top management. In many instances, expectations of confidentiality are no more. “Information that once had been safely proprietary now escapes the confines of a corporation and gains viral public exposure. Corporate missteps that once had been easily and quietly managed can get magnified into crisis,” note Santiago Chaher and David Spellman (2012).

When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the world for the first time witnessed live coverage of the death of a head of state. The execution of President Saddam Hussein was captured by smartphone and was made public, and the mob killing Colonel Muhammad Gaddafi in the streets of Tripoli went viral. I believe these and similar events have brought to stunning clarity the instantaneous and global nature of modern information.

The power of the new public global journalism and social media helped spark the first “Arab spring” uprising in Tunisia, and other forms of global public journalism helped sustain popular dissent in other parts of the Middle East and North Africa. Social media communication has demonstrated a new capacity to upend political agendas globally.

But they are not just effective in influencing political change. “Widespread use of social media has equal potential to transform corporate agendas. Tools used at Tahirr Square are also available in the capital market for use by directors as much as by disgruntled employees, by customers both satisfied and aggrieved, by competitors, and by shareowners both retail and institutional in confrontation with the board“ (Chaher and Spellman, 2012).

New technological advances have resulted in a radical transformation in both the political and professional spheres. With the recent advances made in communication methods, it is becoming possible to imagine a whole nation being called upon to discuss its affairs day after day in the media marketplace in the manner of a global village in classical times. In both realms, decision making and policy will be influenced more by public opinion, in a style similar to direct democracy; such a transformation can broaden and enrich democracy and expands corporate accountability.

GLOBAL JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN DEMOCRACIES

The media have come to play an increasingly influential role both in the lives of the citizens of our democracies and in those of their leaders. For centuries, thought has been mirrored in the written word: newspapers, pamphlets, and the like. For the last 40 years or so, the transmission first of all of sound, and then of images, has spurred the conversion to a continually flowing and immediately accessible worldwide information network. The proliferation of such forceful new forms of communication has brought into being a new form of power: the power of social media.

While it has numerous benefits, social media power threatens a variety of confidential relationships, whether that of doctor-patient, attorney-client, priest-penitent or husband-wife. The social media demand for access to the news in the name of freedom of the press also threatens family privacy, relationship privacy, national security, and a wide range of confidential boardroom decisions.

What exactly is the nature of this power? What is its place within the functioning of a democracy? On what is its legitimacy based? Has it now become a fully fledged power in itself, whose de facto existence should be recognized as such before the law? Does it constitute a fourth power?

Democracy is characterized by the existence of legal rights among the citizens of a sovereign state. The people are the sole source of political power. They exercise that power either directly or through representatives, but the principle of legitimacy is always bound up with the will of the people. Where does the media, a de facto power that was initially

national but has now become global, fit into this conception of democratic legitimacy? Where does it stand with regard to corporate governance? This paper will try to address some ways that global journalism and social media can influence corporate governance.

THE Rise of Global Media

And yet social media are neither a power nor a counterpower, but a reality in the same way as economics is neither a power nor a counterpower, but reality itself. Only a few reckless followers of Marxism speak of ultimate economic power. Fernand Braudel reminded us that economics was society, that one was part and parcel of the other and that they were indivisible. The same goes for social media and society: they are indivisible. Civilian society is steeped in the media just as it is in economics. We could even apply Braudel's method to social media and identify three distinct layers of the media reality, just as there are three layers of the economic reality. At the very bottom is the micro societal layer, consisting of oral information; in the middle is local and national information; and above that is "global media," in the same way as there is world economics. These three layers are also inseparable from society.

Global media today is demolishing barriers of time, space, and national borders. It is a fluid and instantaneous realm resembling the great financial market: news now circulates as freely as dollars. Here, we are plunged in social media, just as we are plunged in economics. However, governments and corporate bodies are just as helpless when confronted by social media as they are in the face of the world's economic realities. They can neither control, channel, nor subjugate information any more than they can protect themselves from major economic upheavals. They have been able to establish a balance of power with the media only on a national basis, just as they have been able to master economic movements only within a country in protectionist times.

Today world media and world economics bear witness to the withering away of nation-states. It is the instantaneous nature of information that is helping to create the media world as we know it today: global press agencies—with the use of satellites, international television transmission, or whatever the hardware—is creating this new reality. Social media's leading players have, in a sense, even more power than the actors in international economics. The latter, in fact, have less negotiating to do and less to expect from governments or corporate bodies.

Thus, the three-layer media reality is no more regulated from outside than is the economy. Conventional balances of power come into play at the first level. At the second—national—level, regulation is by the state in less democratic countries, and through the rule of law in the most democratic systems. But what about the third level—that of global social media?

No state or jurisdictional regulatory authority exists in this area any more than there is a world central bank capable of controlling major economic movements. On the other hand, countervailing the absence of regulatory checks and balances is everybody's insistence on the media's professionalism and code of ethics. But what is the cult of professional ethics, if not a return to individual morality as the sole counterweight to phenomena that are hard to come to grips with, control, or master? Nevertheless, there is no answer to global media other than global media itself, just as there is no answer to world economics other than world economics itself. What does this mean? It means the system can find its equilibrium only in open operation—that is, with a large number of actors, a large number of trends, and a large number of

instruments. It is a return to the good old theory of market forces.

Self-regulation of world media presupposes that the law of survival of the fittest does not operate too ruthlessly among the social media and that they do not become too tightly organized into monopolies or oligopolies. Time will tell if this holds true.

Though uncontrolled, global media have a center just as world economics has a center. That center is manifestly the United States of America; the United States dominate the global media far more than the United States economy dominates the world economy. This stems from the fact that they have had a head start in development, their home market is expansive, and they have a technical edge.

Corporate power can pose as great a threat to democracy and freedom of communication as governmental power: corporate communication markets can and do restrict freedom and equality of communication by generating barriers to entry, monopolies, and restrictions in choice and by shifting the prevailing definition of communication from that of a publicly useful and publicly meaningful good to that of commercial speech and the consumption of privately appropriable commodities (Fiss, 1990; Keane, 1991).

GLOBAL JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The new global journalism, when it performs well, includes all those forms of journalism that recognize that the borders between domestic and foreign are negotiable and subject to continual osmosis. Global journalism is more or less aware of its dependence upon global dynamics and thus sees itself as contributing positively to citizens' understanding of the push-pull processes of global interdependence, conflict, and compromise that stretch from local milieus to the four corners of the earth and back again.

Similarly, social media sites are places where power struggles are visibly waged and witnessed by means other than violence and war: they are the narrated, imagined, nonviolent spaces within global civil society in which millions of people at various points on the earth witness the powers of governmental and nongovernmental organizations being publicly named, monitored, praised, challenged, and condemned by journalists, in defiance of the old tyrannies of time and space and publicly unaccountable power. Global journalism consequently heightens the sense that the socioeconomic and political legal institutions of our world are unfinished, permanently threatened projects. They shake up its dogmas and inject it with energy. They enable citizens of the world to shrug off their insularity, to see that talk of global civil society is not simply Western-turned-capitalist ideology—and they even enable us to appreciate that the task of painting a much clearer picture of the contours and dynamics of global civil society, a picture that is absent from most of the current literature on globalization, is today an urgent ethical imperative.

The contemporary growth of global journalism certainly points to the need to bring greater democracy to the global order. However, the vast numbers of nongovernmental organizations know little or nothing about democratic procedures and behaviors. The world is structured also by a conglomeration of governmental structures—a "cosmocracy" comprising bodies like the European Union, the United Nations, the World Bank—that defies the textbook of traditional political science and political theory (Keane, 1991). Global publics have important implications for democratic theory and practice. By throwing light on power exercised by moonlight, or in the dark of night, global publics and global journalism that supports them stretch citizens' horizon of responsibility for what goes on in the world (Edwards and Gaventa, 2001, pp. 6–7). They help keep alive words like freedom and justice by publishing the manipulations, skullduggery, and brutality

in other countries. “Global publics, of the kind that in recent years have monitored the fate of Aung San Suu Kyi and Yasser Arafat [as well as Nelson Mandela and George W. Bush], muck with the messy business of exclusion, racketeering, ostentation, cruelty, and war. They chart cases of intrigue and double-crossing. They help audiences to spot the various figures of top-down power on the world scene: slick and suave managers and professionals who are well-practiced at the art of deceiving others through images; kingfishers who first dazzle others and then stumble when more is required of them; fools who prey on their citizens’ fears; quislings who willingly change sides under pressure; thugs who love violence; and vulgar rulers, with their taste for usurping crowns and assembling and flattering crowds or beating and compelling them into submission” (Keane, 2003a, pp. 172–73).

Global journalists can also “probe the powers of key organizations of global civil society itself. While the multiple voices of this society function as vital checks and balances in the overall process of globalization, very few of the social organizations from which these voices emanate are democratic Publicity can serve as a reminder to the world that these organizations often violate the principle of public accountability. Reminders are served to those who read, listen, and watch that its empty spaces have been filled by powerful but publicly unaccountable organizations or by profit-seeking corporate bodies that permanently aggravate global civil society by causing environmental damage, or swallowing up others by producing just for profit rather than for sustainable social use. Global publics [backed by global journalism] can help to expose malfeasance, such as accounting and stock market frauds of the kind in the United States during 2002 that rocked the industrial conglomerate Tyco International, the energy trader Enron, the cable company Adelphia, and the telecommunication giant WorldCom. Global journalism can likewise help question some of the more dubious practices of some nonprofit INGOs”—for instance, their lingering colonialist habit of behaving like missionaries, “their bureaucratic inflexibility and context-blindness, their spreading attachment to market values or to clichés of project-speak, or their mistaken belief in the supply-side, trickle-down model of social development” (Keane, 2003a, p. 173).

“Because of their propensity to monitor the exercise of power from a variety of sites within and outside civil society, global journalism—when it functions well—puts matters like representation, accountability, and legitimacy on the political agenda. Who benefits and who loses from global civil society? Who currently speaks for whom in the multiple and overlapping power structures of global civil society? Whose voices are heard, or half-heard, and whose interests and concerns are ignominiously shoved aside? How could there be greater equality among the voices that emerge from the nooks and crannies of this society? And through which institutional procedures could these voices be represented?” (Keane, 2003a p. 174). With these questions, global journalism can help fight against entities who seek to monopolize power at the local and global levels. Moreover, it can expose corrupt or risky dealings and name them as such, as well as catching decision makers and forcing their hands and then requiring them to rethink or reverse their decisions. And in uneven contests between decision makers and decision takers—corruption scandals within the International Olympic Committee or European Union controversies about United States foreign policy are good examples—global journalism and its publics can help to prevent the powerful from “owning” power privately. At its best, global journalism and its publics imply greater parity (Keane, 2003b).

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, “Firms that embrace Web 2.0 (social technologies) and social media are more likely to be market leaders, have their market share increase, and use management practices that lead to higher

margins” (2012). What is the relationship between business and social media and the consequences at their peril? We have, for an example, the experience of the Argentine Football Association (AFA). Football (in some places, called soccer) is the most popular sport in Argentina, and its millions of fans want to know everything related to it. So, when the AFA board met in July 2011 to discuss a possible new organization for the national tournament, the public immediately became interested.

Before social media came about, the AFA would have kept its deliberations confidential until it was ready to publicize the details of the new setup on its own terms. The new format would have nearly doubled the size of the top league by adding 18 more teams, in turn increasing revenue by \$320 million in television broadcasting rights for the AFA, paid by the Argentinean government (which holds the TV rights).

With social media, it is harder for organizations to control information, and after the AFA meeting, a board director tweeted about the changes, even though there had been no decision yet made. His one tweet caused a serious reaction from football fans, including those opposed to the new tournament, which jeopardized the project.

“So much social media attention had been drawn to this issue that an AFA spokesman was forced to declare that the national Argentine government was not involved in the process of creating the new tournament—that it was only an idea. Unfortunately for the AFA, it relied solely on television as its communication pipeline, while the social media channel continued to lead the issue in a downward spiral, generating a live protest involving 500 people in front of AFA headquarters. By the end of the week, the AFA announced its ‘indefinite’ postponement of the new tournament project and Julio Grondana’s decision not to run for reelection as chairman” (Deloitte, 2011).

This experience shows very well how misunderstanding and underestimating social media can affect businesses. “The AFA experience underscores why directors and managers must understand social media technologies, the ethos of social media users, the dynamics of how “conversations” occur and people ‘engage’ with one another, and the tools used to monitor and analyze social media activities. Paul Cantor (2012), chairman of the ING Direct Risk and Investment Committee, advises, ‘Board oversight of social networking requires more than an understanding of the underlying of the sociology and the implication of the phenomenon’” (Chaher and Spellman, 2012). This example is only one of many that aptly illustrates the power of social media to effect far-reaching change.

CONCLUSIONS

What is called democracy is rarely pure or authentic. Whether in the kitchen or in staff meetings, or in the boardroom or on the battlefield, it always seems to be in short supply. We are always chasing it around corners, through halls of mirrors, across uncharted landscapes and oceans, up into blue skies. And while improvements *are* made, perfectibility and disappointment and failure are inscribed within the very idea of democracy; the role of global journalism theory in such circumstances is to remind us of the practical requirements of the ideal at a global level.

As has been noted, “The struggle against blind arrogance and stupidity caused by power may not be ultimately winnable, yet it is among the struggles that we human beings abandon at our own peril. Democracy is a powerful remedy for hubris. It champions not the rule of the people—that definition of democracy belongs in more ways than one to the age of kings—but the rule that no single body should rule. It refuses to accept that decision makers can draw their legitimacy from gods and goddesses, or tradition, or habit, or wealth. Democracy is a way of life and a way of governing in which power is publicly accountable, in which the use of violence and sitting on thrones and making decisions behind the backs

of others—and the intrigues and ambitions that usually accompany arbitrary rule—are deeply problematic.

“The history of democracy is replete with a weird and wonderful cast of figures who believed in democracy because they saw that it could humble blind arrogance” and was not merely a marketable commodity. “They refused the temptations of aggrandizement and did not much like big clichés and smelly little orthodoxies. They trusted in simple decency. They did not believe that unequal society was inevitable. They believe in the power of the powerless. That is why, in these testing times, their democratic spirit, helped along by global journalism, badly deserves to be nurtured—not only within but also beyond the borders of territorial states” (Keane, 2004, b p. 45).

Though we do not know yet the future role of global journalism and social media in helping to shape public opinion and change corporate and government policy, we can assume that its influence will only grow over time. Though there will be challenges posed by this growth and undoubtedly some negative consequences and repercussions, for the most part, the increased impact of global journalism and social media should be a benefit, helping to promote democracy worldwide as well as a freer, more independent, and more effective media. It is hoped that global journalists and social media outlets will work tirelessly and relentlessly toward this ideal.

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