



# **Communication in Post- and Neo-Authoritarian Societies Working Group**

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# **The communicative sphere of Bolsonarismo in Brazil: a country-wide qualitative study**

## **Authors**

Prof. Joao Feres Junior - State University of Rio de Janeiro

## **Abstract**

Elected in late 2018, Jair Bolsonaro has not faced an easy time as the head of Brazil's federal government. His administration has not been able to avert the economic crisis the country is facing, unemployment is very high, the dollar exchange rate soared to levels unseen before, the GDP is shrinking, and inflation is on the rise. In the realm of politics, Bolsonaro has not fared well either. Rather than focused on a common agenda, the governmental coalition in Congress is made of a plethora of small parties, much focused on obtaining pork barrel at each negotiation. The Senate has blocked several of his policy initiatives. To make things worse, Bolsonaro has been in constant conflict with the Supreme Court, which has not only blocked some of his policies but also is currently prosecuting him and several of his close allies in a number of criminal cases. Finally, his management of the Federal Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been catastrophic and includes campaigning against vaccines, supporting the adoption of an ineffective and harmful "treatment cocktail", and mocking the disease, the sick and even the deceased. Nonetheless, despite his overall poor performance in office, Bolsonaro has managed to keep the approval rate of his government around 30%. How can this be possible? Based on a country-wide qualitative study which I led comprised of 24 focus groups conducted in 6 major state capitals, I argue that Bolsonaro and his political group have managed to fracture the oligopoly on political communication held until recently by Brazil's mainstream media companies, creating their own communicative sphere. I intend to show that social media has a role in the communicative strategy of Bolsonarism, but some outlets of mainstream media are also important in reaching target publics. The paper also delves into the testimonies of Bolsonaro's followers to discuss the spread of misinformation and narratives that give credence to Bolsonaro and to his political agenda.

## **Submission ID**

264

# **Institutional-based, Characteristic-based, Process-based, or Authoritarian-personality-based Media Trust? A Comparative Study of Traditional Media Credibility in China and the U.S.**

## **Authors**

Mr. Xiancheng Jiang - Renmin University of China

## **Abstract**

Since the rise of social media, the credibility of traditional media has become the focus of academic and social attention. Previous studies have suggested that media trust may have three generation paths: characteristic-based trust, process-based trust, and institutional-based trust. Characteristic-based trust refers to individuals' trust in media that share the position of the group (community, party, etc.) to which they belong. Process-based trust refers to audiences' trust reinforced by repeated exposure to a certain type of media. Institutional-based trust refers to the trust audiences have in media due to their trust in the social institutional environment in which the media are embedded.

However, there is little literature to validate the applicability of these three paths to traditional media credibility in different countries in the new media era. In addition, although previous studies tend to emphasize the important role of psychological factors in media trust, they rarely include psychological factors in empirical analysis models. To remedy the shortcomings of previous studies, this paper conducts a comparative study for people in China and the United States, with 1254 samples from the United States and 4155 samples from China collected through online platforms.

The researchers found that these three paths are applicable in both countries. However, there are also distinct differences between the two countries: the most influential path for generating trust in traditional media in China is institution-based trust, while the other two paths are less influential; all three paths have a certain degree of influence on the generation of trust in traditional media in the United States, with some differences among media with different partisan positions. This study also found that authoritarian personality is a common psychological cause of media trust in both countries, i.e., the stronger the authoritarian personality of an individual is, the more likely he or she is to trust traditional media. This may indicate that media trust has a universal psychological basis.

This paper illustrates inter-country and inter-media differences in media trust. The most important finding of this study is that the dominant source of trust in Chinese traditional mainstream media is political trust rather than media use or political stance. On the one hand, this result is different from the "media use equals media trust" view in existing studies, and demonstrates the misalignment between media use and media trust in the new media

environment. On the other hand, this study provides strong evidence that political trust is the most direct and central influence rather than a mediating factor in the generation of media trust in China.

The differences in the current state of media trust and its generation mechanisms largely reflect the different political and social environments in China and the United States. In recent years, media trust in the United States has shown a clear trend of polarization. The popularity of social media and politicians' attacks on opposing partisan media have further intensified the public's selective information exposure and partisan media trust, further exacerbating the division and political polarization of American society. In contrast, the Chinese public's trust in traditional media continues to grow, and the high credibility of traditional media is conducive to the cohesion of social consensus, the leading role of mainstream media in public opinion, and the further strengthening of the people's unity toward mainstream social values.

In a word, this paper compares the commonalities and differences of media trust generation mechanisms in China and the United States through an empirical approach, which is enlightening for understanding the current situation of media credibility in China and promoting the development of traditional media. In the follow-up study, the relationship between the three paths of media trust generation and psychological causes should be enhanced, and the applicability of this theoretical model to more countries and for more media types outside of China and the United States should be analyzed to help us better understand how media trust is generated and how it can be sustained in the social media era.

## **Submission ID**

295

# **The Marxism Ideological Analysis of China's Media Dual-Track System: Socialism Endogenous Legitimacy From a Planned Economy to a Market State**

## **Authors**

Mr. Qing Xiao - Communication University of China

Mr. Rongyi Chen - Communication University of China

Mr. Jiyi Yang - Xiangtan University

## **Abstract**

With the reform and opening up, the Chinese media system turned into the dual-track system, which means Chinese media are entrepreneurially managed based on the state-owned system. As Liangrong Li (1993, 2003) said, the Chinese media has the dual attributes of superstructure and information industry. On the one hand, the media needs to play the role of the Party's mouthpiece (*Hou She*), and on the other hand, the media has the nature of an information industry as the enterprise. This study aims to analyze the legitimacy of national system transformation from the Marxist ideological analysis perspective, specifically, the theoretical process that the dual-track media system received the license of the socialist party system, which in turn gave legitimacy to the transformed national system.

In this study, the dual-track system should not be understood in a superficial way as a contradiction between the capitalist market system and the socialist identity, but rather as a return to the grand understanding pointed out by Mao (1937): it is indeed governed and limited by the fundamental contradiction between modern state apparatus as superstructure and civil society as an economic base.

Since the 1980s, the Communist Party of China considered the directive media system no longer applicable and gave the mass media a very high degree of operational autonomy (Huang, 2003). The media became more independent to adapt to the market and also required to propagate the Chinese authority ideology. With the policy of "the primary stage of socialism," the Communist Party of China proposed that the media should be "people-oriented," and "the mouthpiece of the people" while no longer frequently mentions that "the media is a tool of class struggle" (Xu & Sun, 2018) .

In conclusion, the Party's ideological advancement is the key to the media's move toward a dual-track system. Only when the Party achieves this ideological replacement at the national level can the media simultaneously have the contradictory attributes of party mouthpiece and information industry. This ideological adaptation is not only to adapt to the need for reform, but also bring about the reform. Through this adaptation, the Party has achieved its subjectivation by adjusting the media's self-perception.

In commenting on other Marxists' misguided focus on turning points in Marxist history, Zizek (2007) argues that even if others were to be relentlessly critical of Marxism's past, they must first acknowledge that 'this is Marxism's own past.' Similarly, it should not be simply understood that the media dual-track system as an intrusion of market economy or neoliberalism into contemporary China, but need to carefully examine how this dual-track system is transformed by the Party's self.

As China transitioned from planned institutional socialism to an ostensibly free market, the transformation of the media reflected a proactive transformation of Chinese socialism and ideological self-adaptation. This guarantees the dominance of information in China after the restructuring of the relationship between the modern state apparatus (superstructure) and civil society (economic base). Likewise, this guarantee further ensures the fundamental legitimacy of the dual-track media system in contemporary China.

## **Submission ID**

516

# **Strengthening Authoritarianism in the Age of Pandemics: On the Shutdown of Oppositional Media in Ukraine**

## **Authors**

Prof. Olga Baysha - National Research University 'Higher School of Economics'

## **Abstract**

It is well known that the accusation of terrorism has been often used to quash political dissent and suppress freedom of expression. Framing ethno-political groups striving for independence as “terrorist others” justifies non-democratic methods of government targeting a nation’s own citizens. This paper traces how the discourse of counterterrorism may be structured with respect to oppositional media, which come to be articulated as “terrorists’ accomplices.” It discusses the case of the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. On February 2, 2020, he signed off the sanctions of the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) against two parliamentary deputies from the Opposition Platform “For Life” (OPZZh)—the main political rival of Zelensky’s own party. As a result of these sanctions, three television channels controlled by the opposition—*NewsOne*, *112 Ukraine*, and *ZIK*—were shut down.

The sanctions against the oppositionists were imposed under the premise of investigating their alleged involvement in “financing terrorism”— i.e., having economic relations with Donbas and Luhansk People Republics (DNR and LNR), separatist quasi-states, which announced their independence from Ukraine in 2014. As this paper argues, Zelensky’s decision to sanction—in violation of Ukrainian laws—oppositional politicians and shut down oppositional news channels was driven by the desire of the Ukrainian president to silence oppositional voices amid his popularity in nosedive—a result of Zelensky’s neoliberal initiatives, especially his land reform, which had been opposed by up to 72% of Ukrainians. The

new land law was adopted during an extraordinary parliamentary meeting, convened as an exception to a coronavirus lockdown while Ukrainians could not protest.

Analysis presented in this paper is based on (1) Zelensky's address to the nation on the closure of the oppositional channels that was posted on the presidential *YouTube* channel and (2) primetime (from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.) talk shows of two oppositional channels, *NewsOne* and *112 Ukraine*, devoted to the land reform, which were broadcast between September 2, 2019 (the day Zelensky instructed the government to work out the land reform), and March 31, 2020 (the adoption of the new land code). Within this time period, the talk shows were monitored daily. Overall, 96 television programs on the land reform were analyzed.

For the purposes of this analysis, I employed a discourse-analytical method informed by the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) and Nico Carpentier's model of Discursive-Material Knot (2017).

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## Submission ID

630

# China's media regulation evolution in the era of digital platform

## Authors

Mr. Tao Zhang - Tampere University

## Abstract

As the dominant technology platform giants in China, such as Tencent and Alibaba, have invested in news media entities or built in-house news teams, this study is aimed to examine China's media regulation change including the latest policy to ban the investment from technology platform companies and understand the rationale behind the change.

By analyzing major media regulations from the central government of China during the past ten years with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research explores how the central government has been adjusting its media-control policies to adapt and respond to technology platform companies stepping into an area that used to be tightly controlled. The research provides a comprehensive review of the changes of the Chinese government's media regulation policies over time as resourceful technological companies have been playing a larger role in the news media. This serves as the basis to understand how the central government is evaluating the changing dynamics and regulating media through an established but also evolving legal and political system to support the legitimacy of the government while ensuring control over mass media.

On the basis of this comprehensive policy review, the research follows the categorization defined by Siochrú, Girard & Mahan (2002) to examine the rationale behind policy changes from two distinct perspectives: 1) regulating the media as a sector of the economy, or industry regulation, 2) regulating to sustain and strengthen the social, cultural and political role of media and communication. Differentiating regulation for industry management from regulation for social and political concerns, the research will develop a framework to understand the dynamics of the social, political and economic drivers that lead to the policy change and provide the foundation for further research on the relationship between the impact from technology platforms and policy reaction. In addition, as technology companies are expanding their presence in countries with tight media control, it is critical to understand the policy change and rationale in China for further comparative studies in other countries.

## **Submission ID**

741

## **How Chinese Cities Reflect Their Deliberative Democracy by Visualizing A Communicative City: A Computer-assisted Visual Analysis on City Promotional Film**

### **Authors**

Prof. Chengzhang Zhu - 1.The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University 2、 Center for Intelligent Media and Communication Research, The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University

Ms. Zimeng Yang - The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University ;  
Center for Intelligent Media & Communication Research, The College of Literature and  
Journalism, Central South University

Mr. Yifeng Chen - The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University &  
Center for Intelligent Media & Communication Research, The College of Literature and  
Journalism, Central South University

Mr. Xin Jin - Center for Intelligent Media and Communication Research, College of Litera-  
ture and Journalism, Central South University

Dr. Jie Feng - 1.The College of Literature and Journalism, Central South University 2、  
Center for Intelligent Media and Communication Research, The College of Literature and  
Journalism, Central South University

## **Abstract**

City promotion is a key theme of urban governance (Wu, 2000), with the target to stimulate tourism, attract investments and impress inhabitants (Wong & Liu, 2017), which involves different stakeholders (Ma et al., 2020).

In the context of China, city promotional films are usually produced by municipal govern-  
ments or party committees. Such government-oriented city promotional films have aroused  
many controversies.

Some argued that city promotion has fallen to be a “trendy action” to fulfill the bureaucratic  
instructions (Jeffres & Lin, 2006). But others regard it as a communicative action with di-  
verse cultures and practices embedded (Wu, 2000), based on different interests of stake-  
holders rather than only the government. Therefore, the demonstration strategy in city pro-  
motional films can well reflect the understanding of deliberative democracy.

This research used the method of computer-assisted visual analysis to figure out the actu-  
ality of deliberative democracy in Chinese cities and whether the geographic factor plays  
an important role.

To measure the deliberative democracy, we used a representative concept, “communica-  
tive city”, whose core is the same as that of democracy. Both are related to civic involve-  
ment (Jefferes, 2010) and are trying to reach a public agreement. The agreement emerges  
out of difference rather than above it (Bridge, G.,2005). In other words, a communicative  
city where different stakeholders exchange and communicate ideas can be seen as a new  
form of deliberative democracy.

For this study, a communicative city can be observed by three dimensions (Zhong, 2018):  
the spatial space which refers to physical features including buildings and scenery, the im-  
agery space which refers to cultural symbols, and the practice space which refers to

activities and close-ups of citizens. A communicative city should involve all three dimensions and especially emphasize the practice space where citizens are visible. This corresponds to the demand for democracy in involving different interests and respecting citizens' status.

Thus, we propose RQ1: what is the actuality of Chinese city promotional films when conveying a communicative and democratic city?

In general, the geographic position plays an important role in city branding choices in China (Qihui Yang 2017). Thus, we propose RQ2: Does the geographic factor influence the demonstration of a communicative and democratic city?

We selected 12 out of 70 large and medium-sized cities in China, which include 4 eastern, central, and western cities respectively. We use Python to exploit OpenCV for cutting frames, getting 89,872 images. After automatic deletion of similar images using RGB histogram, we use Baidu AI image recognition platform to label objects. Natural scenery ( eg: seacoasts), historic buildings (eg:temples), and modern buildings (eg: skyscrapers) are classified into the spatial space. Historical (eg:bronzes), business (eg: hotels), technology (eg: robots), art (eg: sculptures), daily life(eg:furniture), entertainment (eg:bars), public facility (eg:subway stations) symbols are classified into the imagery space. Activities ( eg: camping) and close-ups (eg: smiling) are classified into practice space. Two coders finished the classification, with reliability over 0.88 in Kappa tests.

The demonstration of a specific dimension was measured by its proportion in length. Results show that the 12 Chinese cities emphasize more on the imagery space( 49.56%) while the practice space is a less concerned part, with an average proportion of 10.96%. All 12 cities allocate some length to 12 dimensions, trying to display a communicative city with diverse aspects involved.

Geographic factor greatly influences the demonstration of the practice space ( $F=4.750$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and citizens' activities ( $F=4.535$ ,  $p<.05$ ) in ANOVA. In Post Hoc Tests, western cities in China are less concerned about practice space than eastern cities ( $M_{western}=.06, M_{eastern}=.15, M.D = -.09$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and emphasized citizens' activities less than both eastern ( $M_{western}=.03, M_{eastern}=.07, M.D = -.04$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and central cities ( $M_{western}=.03, M_{central}=.07, M.D = -.04$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating a less progressive understanding of a communicative city and deliberative democracy where citizens' status should be respected and reflected. The demonstration of citizens' practices helps to introduce a thick regional identity (Terlouw, 2009), which increases inhabitants' belonging and visibility related to deliberative democracy.

In conclusion, Chinese cities are trying to display a communicative and democratic city by demonstrating diverse dimensions. The imagery space is the most emphasized part as diverse symbols can well reflect the creations of citizens. The geographic factor influences

the demonstration of the practice space. In the context of China, the factor functions owing to its close relation with the development stage, which influences visions and goals embedded in city promotion greatly (de Jong et al., 2018). This research finds that the difference especially appears in the aspect of citizens' practices.

## **Submission ID**

1224

# **The multi-discourse fight of COVID-19 vaccine in the world of digital platforms: rethinking popularity of anti-intellectualism**

## **Authors**

Mr. Gopolang Ditlhokwa - Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

Prof. Li Jidong - Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

Mr. Nadeera Sri Ekanayake - Institute of Communication Studies, Communication University of China

## **Abstract**

As communication technology continues to enhance global governance and augment the ease of content delivery to the public by both the state and non-state actors, the academic inquiry in communication studies is better placed to rationalize the adoption of digital platforms as channels of communication by examining the messages, their intentions, and impact to the global public. By applying the Kent and Taylor (1998) dialogic communication framework to assess the message effects, awareness purpose, and engagement of mediated communication strategies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century organization-to-public discourses for sustainability, this paper, recognizing health as a social sustainability necessity, will explore how government institutions used digital platforms to spark discussions and enhance knowledge, and share scientific information about development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines by drawing samples from official Twitter and WeChat accounts in five different countries that were frontrunners in the vaccine manufacturing, being China, United States, Germany, India, and United Kingdom between 2020 and 2021. Previous researchers have made meaningful contributions to this area by aligning the usage of digital platforms to the provisions of the agenda 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of promoting sustainability for a better future. According to scholars such as (Yu et al., 2018),

Hancu-Budui et al. (2020), Ruggeri & Samoggia, (2018), and Osborne et al. (2015), most institutions have adopted the use of social media to promote their services, and to some extent, attempting to shape public opinion especially in the areas of food security and health. Instead of focusing on how these institutions promote their services on social media, the current study will focus on how the messages were received and how they helped end-users understand scientific information during the pandemic. This study, therefore, hypothesizes that most institutions use digital platforms to advance political interests and divisions during global crises, while they do not focus more on how they can ignite dialogue on how science and technology benefit the public, and how the public understands and interpret these messages. It is through this study, that the researchers propose to employ a thematic analysis using sentiment scores on the collected texts from messages shared on these platforms. This study is timely and relevant to the current global pandemic and it will contribute to knowledge by informing future research about the confluence of digital platforms with science, technology, sustainability, and the public service and the rationale behind building anti-intellectual discourses towards scientific knowledge and evidence about the pandemic. Moreover, the findings of this study will help encourage best practices in communicating messages about science, technology, sustainability, and public service on digital platforms during the time of crisis management, to ensure that the messages' contexts are well understood and interpreted. The main goal of this study is to answer the following question: How was the content and delivery of messages for science, technology, sustainability, and public service on Twitter achieved during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Keywords:** anti-intellectualism; COVID-19; dialogic communication

## **Submission ID**

1293

## **Political Trust in China under the Pandemic: Study on the Blogs of CCTV News**

### **Authors**

Ms. Xingman Wu - School of Journalism and Communication, Wuhan University

Dr. Hao Cao - School of Journalism and Communication, Wuhan University

## Abstract

Covid-19 has been considered as a crisis at multiple planes. In particular, the initial poor handling of the pandemic led to public outcries to governments across the globe and to international agencies. The idea that public health events have impacts on people's political trust has been explored in different countries, events, and different levels of political institutions. However, in these studies, the effects are not in the same direction. Commonly, countries that are not considered liberal democracies would have consistently higher political trust compared with other countries, especially in East Asia (Park, 2016). Some scholars believe that the highest political trust in authoritarian governments may be caused by methodology fallacies, inequivalent meaning, and loyalty feeling (Meer, T. W. G. van der., 2017; Shi, 2014; Welzel & Dalton, 2015). Hence, finding a valid approach to evaluate the political trust of one authoritarian regime is a valuable topic. Then, we naturally raised two research questions:

RQ1: How did the political trust in China change during the Covid-19?

RQ2: If it increased/decreased, then what did people specifically trust/distrust in?

Considering the Chinese official media's special role as the "government mouthpiece", we decided to equal official media's communication effect as the political trust in China. This research took the "CCTV News" Weibo account as the research object. A total of 6,466 blogs posted by "CCTV News" from 01/01/2020 to 04/30/2020 were crawled, and three blogs were randomly selected from each day's blogs (set to not repeatedly select) to form a total of 363 samples of blogs for content analysis. Then, 60 comments of each sample blog were crawled. Finally, the 363 blogs and 14,631 comments were used as samples to analyze the communication effect.

Content analysis and discourse analysis were employed to answer the questions: categories of data analysis are "report subject, information source, report framework, the identity of main characters, and report mood" (Valkenburg PM, 1999). The reliability is good (Kappa: 0.88-1); Communication effect was calculated in the principle of: if the user's comment reflected recognition, and was consistent with the meaning of the blog, the communication effect was considered good, then it was denoted as 1; If the user's comment showed doubts over the information, policies, and institutions, denoted as -1; if the user's comment was not related to the blog, or it was difficult to understand its meaning, it was marked as 0. Then, the average value in each stage was regarded as the stage's communication effect.

Research finds that the media coverage can be divided into five stages: benchmark stage (1.1-1.21), outbreak period (1.22-1.28), persistent period (1.29-2.18), mitigation period (2.19-4.8), and recovery period (4.9-4.30). The political trust declined during the first three periods, and people's distrust showed a chronological chain of "authenticity, competence,

and interest relationships.” However, the political trust of the recovery period was significantly higher than that of the first three periods, and the recovery period’s was also higher than the benchmark stage’s, which partly indicated that political trust in China increased under the Covid-19.

This paper indirectly calculates the level of political trust by estimating the users’ comment attitude, making it possible to quantify their attitude and reflect political trust in China with less bias.

## **Submission ID**

1327

# **Self-Media: Concept, features, milieu, selected cases: WeChat and Telegram**

## **Authors**

Prof. Svetlana Pasti - Tampere University

Mr. Xiao Xiao Yang - Fudan University

Mr. Xi Zhu - Renmin University of China

## **Abstract**

The term ‘self-media’ is well known in China and almost unknown outside of it. With the arrival of the supper app WeChat in 2011, China has experienced burgeoning self-media, which have become extremely lucrative services in the field of information, education, leisure, and entertainment. Self-media creates new jobs in the creative professions market, including journalism and high technology.

The paper recounts the origins of the concept of *self-media* as proposed by Chinese researchers and distinguishes the term from the Western concept of *WeMedia*. Next, we identify the differences between self-media (on the one hand,) and traditional/online media (on the other). Then we analyze selected cases of self-media in terms of their history, founders, business models, audience, and role in society. Finally, we discuss the political and cultural factors affecting the milieu of self-media, their specifics, and development opportunities in China and Russia.

The fieldwork was conducted in 2018-2019 in Shanghai and St Petersburg with the support of the School of Journalism of Fudan University and St. Petersburg University.

Research data consists of in-depth interviews with journalists-entrepreneurs and secondary literature.

The main findings are summarized for a discussion. 'Self-media'(自媒体) *zì méitǐ* a Chinese term coined in the process of domesticating the Western term *WeMedia* and addressing a shift from civic engagement to mass creativity and entrepreneurship, cultivated through new technology and aimed at commerce as a dominant. According to the shared opinions of respondents in both countries, the future lies with these media, which are not just media, but a blend of technology and social media. Their main differences from mainstream media are as follows: strong personality, clear market positioning, proactivity of interaction with subscribers, individual or small team, low cost, and risk. However, despite their common features, self-media in China and Russia are utterly different in terms of evolution and development paths.

The Chinese case demonstrates the cooperation of government, business, and society. *WeChat*, created by *Tencent*, operates under government control with a transparent system for regulating and stimulating the self-media business. The Russian case demonstrates an unresolved conflict. *Telegram*, as a place for free communication was created in 2011 by the Durov brothers, who had previously created the most popular social network *Vkontakte*. It was ironic that *Telegram* was banned in Russia, but government officials, including *Roskomnadzor* (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media), continued to open their information channels there. Side by side, political and commercial journalism, on-site news and fake news, government propaganda and criticism of the opposition compete for influence over the reader. These channels are of two types: authored and anonymous; the channel sponsors are unknown, likewise authors' funding. Summing up our observations, we conclude that China and Russia represent different worlds: Order (China) and Chaos (Russia), and this metaphor seems relevant to reflect on our findings.

## **Submission ID**

1389

# **Anatomy of Online Activism in Hybrid Regime: Lessons from Bangladesh**

## **Authors**

Mr. Shudipta Sharma - Bowling Green State University

## **Abstract**

This paper aims to explore the status of online activism in Bangladesh, where freedom of expression is reportedly being restricted. It also tries to contribute to the growing knowledge on the impact of new communication technologies on the rise of surveillance society and authoritarianism. In this era of Internet, online activism has been playing important roles in successful social movements across the world. However, the increasing polarization and its disruptive effects on democracy and freedom of expression have been limiting the prospects of online activism. Bangladesh, which has experienced fifteen years of military rule over its fifty-year-old history, is not different. Bertelsmann Stiftung in a report classified Bangladesh as an autocracy because it “no longer meets minimum standards for democracy,” such as fair elections. Scholars also categorize the regime of the country as a hybrid. Moreover, Bangladesh has been experiencing a rapid rise of Islamic extremism in recent times, with the murders of several writers, bloggers, online activists, publishers, and foreigners. Such incidents and the government’s failure to bring the murderers to justice led to a growing fear among the online activists that they no longer feel safe to exercise the rights of expression. A group of Islamic extremists also often declares progressive online activists as atheists and calls upon people to kill them as a holy duty. In response, the government has enacted several laws and strengthened its online monitoring, which are reportedly hampering the good practices of online activism. It is also said that in the name of controlling extremism, the government has been trying to establish a surveillance society so that they can easily oppress dissenting voices. In this context, it is important to know the present status of online activism in Bangladesh. To help provide some insights into the dynamics of online activism, this study addresses following empirical questions: Who are the online activists in Bangladesh? Why do they engage themselves in this voluntary activism? What kind of challenges they are facing currently? How do they respond to those challenges? To answer these questions this study applies a qualitative approach. As research methodology grounded theory is selected to conduct this study. For data collection, semi-structured in-depth interviews of 20 online activists have been conducted. Activists were selected through snowball sampling method. The study finds that by using the social media platforms, especially Facebook, urban educated youths engage themselves in online activism to serve society. Several factors including the absence of functioning democracy contributed to the affected the freedom of expression in the country. It is found that in response to the incidents of murders, legal, physical, and psychological harassment, the online activists either went for self-censorship or abstained from writing on ‘sensitive’ issues. The study also finds that the technological and statutory steps and comments by the government exacerbated the situation and contributed to the rise of surveillance society and authoritarianism.

## **Submission ID**

1526

# **“I am as soft as wool”: A discursive analysis of Emmerson Mnangagwa’s ‘new dispensation’ in Zimbabwe’s post-Mugabe era**

## **Authors**

Mr. Noah Kupeta - University of KwaZulu-Natal

## **Abstract**

Emmerson Mnangagwa’s ascendancy to power in November 2017 was viewed from within and beyond Zimbabwe as the country’s opportunity to correct leadership deficiency brought about by Robert Mugabe. His leadership was meant to bring harmony, peace and collective shared national socio-economic political development in Zimbabwe. Under Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe experienced a long period of despotic rule characterised by vengeance, violence, chicanery, and arrests against his opponents. This present study argues that Emmerson Mnangagwa’s attempts to rebrand himself and the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) ruling party is marred with controversy. Extracted from my current qualitative Ph.D. research questioning change and continuity, the place and discourse of colonial memory in Zimbabwe’s post-Mugabe Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) politics, this study is an analysis of Emmerson Mnangagwa’s selected responses to criticism during the 2018 post presidential election violence mainly against the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC A). Data in this study is collected from purposively selected articles from *The Herald* – a state-owned daily newspaper and *NewsDay*- a daily private-owned newspaper. The intention is to explore, via qualitative content analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), if these responses reveal Emmerson Mnangagwa to be a reformist (compared with Robert Mugabe) or they are two same sides of the same coin. The study deploys political branding as the principal theory (Smith 2009) in order to explore Emmerson Mnangagwa’s rule in Zimbabwean normative political culture. The theory is significant to unpack post Mugabe era in a Zimbabwean context so as to determine if there is any change and or continuity to talk about under Emmerson Mnangagwa’s administration or he remains entangled in the past. Zimbabwe has suffered isolation from the international community as a result of complex factors such as disputed elections, the controversial land reform in 2000, politics of violence and impunity. This study’s unique aspect is that it centres on the political communication of the post Mugabe era and how it is possibly influencing on -going conversations about transformations that are taking place in the nature of ‘texts’ to understand presidential discourse (Coe 2011). More so, the study also contribute to ongoing debates about the need to come with up with multitheoretical approaches that are non-western in order to explore African political communication practices grounded in decolonial lenses.

## **Submission ID**

1917

# **Divergence in Background Expectancies: Battle between Media and Courts in High Profile Legal Trials in China**

## **Authors**

Ms. Chun Yang - Department of Media and Communication, City University of Hong Kong

Dr. Fen Lin - Department of Media and Communication, City University of Hong Kong

## **Abstract**

Excessive media coverage of judicial trials is often a battlefield where notions of justice are in co-existence and constant competition. With a social constructionist perspective, this study examined high profile legal trials as the trial-based media events, in which the perceived justice is collectively constructed by the media and the courts. This article especially focuses on why and how the Chinese media tended to challenge court judgments when legal trials in which the socially disadvantaged people commit crimes become media events. To address this question, I analyze the discourse in news reports, court documents and statements, and interviews on legal reporters regarding the case of Xia Junfeng in 2013 among other similar cases. The disagreement between the media and the courts is elaborated in the three stages of social construction process, namely the externalization, objectivation and internalization. It is common to see in such cases the socially disadvantaged people committed the crime because of existing social grievances, which awakened the media's advocate role and stirred up the sympathy of netizens. In the stage of externalization, the social media played a key role in putting the initially unknown case on the public agenda, increasing the publicity and effectively setting subsequent media frames. The grassroots identity motivated netizens' participation and laid the populist style for the news reporting. News reports tended to adopt a human-interest frame and further mobilized the emotion of sympathy. Other news reports employed institutional discourse and uncovered the broad social issues and structural problems under individual cases. The media drew on non-legal discourses, put emphasis on the issues other than legality, and expected the court decisions to respond to the social justice and common sense. However, in the objectivation stage, media opposition encountered the hardline courts who stuck to the law and justified their judgments with legal standards. The media and the courts could not convince each other due to a lack of shared background expectancies.

The political force thus intervened to maintain judicial authority for the courts with both the coercive and soft means. On the one hand, the opposing media faced direct censorship, while the party organs began to celebrate the credibility and transparency of the courts. On the other hand, a process of civilization online specifically attacked emotional mobilization and undermined the legitimacy of the sympathy. In the internalization stage, the advocate role of some journalists reinforced their position of the weak in reporting. They valued speaking for the powerless and achieving macro social justice more than professional journalistic norms, which reflected certain features of populism. Another group of reporters adopted thematic framing and made constructive suggestions for practical motives, aiming to both avoid political risks and fulfill their social responsibilities.

## **Submission ID**

1958

# **Desire and authenticity in North Korea: Case study of child YouTuber Sujin**

## **Authors**

Dr. Soomin Seo - Temple University

Ms. Ye Ju Ki - Temple University

## **Abstract**

This study shows how North Korea has appropriated its anti-Western Juche ideology of self-reliance to promote tourism and consumerism on the global Web. It analyzes 16 social media clips featuring Sujin, a child music prodigy of an elite Pyongyang family. Sujin debuted in 2020 as part of North Korea's efforts to promote itself on YouTube and other social media platforms. The clips are targeted primarily at the English and Chinese-speaking audience, as the general public in North Korea does not have access to YouTube. Preliminary analysis of the objects and places featuring Sujin highlights North Korea's affinity for capitalistic affluence, with Western brands like Apple and Nike in prominent display. Scenes like the unwrapping of new gifts are similar to images in popular child YouTube channels. We also find typical YouTube visual strategies such as panoramic videos of high-rise towers and riverfront, which depart significantly from previous propaganda videos made by North Korea. In terms of technology, Sujin's clips use high-end professional

equipment such as full-frame DSLR cameras and drones, indicating strong support from the North Korean regime in terms of resources. At times, however, the clips use amateur equipment such as handheld action cameras, resulting in unsteady images making the clips look less staged and more 'authentic.' Mundane scenes of everyday life and baby pictures of Sujin are other devices to add authenticity to the videos. Her status as a child serves a dual purpose: in addition to humanizing the North Korean regime, it also inoculates her from potential criticism, findings consistent with previous research on the role of children in global media content (Moeller, 2002). Taken together, the videos indicate North Korea's grasp of YouTube as a platform where attention, softness, and distinction are awarded (Suh & Jun, 2021). The clips also reveal the regime's different and often conflicting desires: to become more affluent, promote the Juche ideology of self-reliance, and make more friends in the global arena at the same time. Findings can help explain the ideological shifts taking place in contemporary North Korea.

## **Submission ID**

2358

## **An empirical study on how COVID-19 signify a paradigm shift in Communication and Culture in India**

### **Authors**

Mrs. Moumita De Das - Adamas University

### **Abstract**

Communication and culture are entwined as a yarn. Communication encourages and disseminates the behavioural outline of a society for social amalgamation. It moulds the cultural know-how for millions of people. The media are closely related to culture. It is through the media that creative people vent out their artistic advocacies. The media have the latent talent to make acquainted people with the finest of human ingenuity and culture. Yet this bonding of culture and communication can be battered by commercial enterprises to underpin hegemonic values and precedence. Over the next decade, Communication will radically transform and determine how we converse with others. This global pandemic of COVID-19 has taken a huge leap in this process and added a paradigm shift from the traditional mode of communication. We have been forced to embrace digital modes of communication for our everyday survival likewise through online advertisements, social media, online financial transactions, augmented reality and video conferencing etc. The author of

this paper will conduct a brief online survey on the changing pattern of communication regarding varied mass media platforms across different age groups. It will also analyse how the varied groups embraced the new changes and also share their concern about the challenges of varying communication modes. How these alterations effect our Mass Culture in this era of neo-globalisation? why? and how? Whether in the decades to come it may throw us amid the task of either digital amalgamation or digital divide.

Keywords: COVID-19, Neo-globalisation, Communication, Culture, Mass Culture, Society, Internet, Digital

## **Submission ID**

2363

# **Debating ‘Visual’ Arab Spring and ‘Sensible’ New Media in the Arab World**

## **Authors**

Mr. Abdul Fahad - University of Malaya

Mr. Tarun Joshi - Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University

Dr. Saad Ahmad - Jawaharlal Nehru University

## **Abstract**

For academicians and experts, the major outline of the phenomenon of Arab Spring, a *phenomenon looking for democratization; a meta-theme of Arab struggle*, simultaneously opened the gate for many other disciplines to engage with it. Though, disciplines like Area studies on the intellectual understanding of Arab studies were much flavored with civilizational trends in the discourse of imagining the ‘right and wrong’ and spaces of power interaction. It also tried to re-imagine ideological trends that dominated the sense of presenting, representing, and projecting emotions. Considering the whole trajectory of Arab Spring, this reading finds visual effects of Arab Spring as a rational phenomenon primarily shaped by the instrumentality of new media. It influenced desires, mentalities, and shaped the new Arab public sphere as well. Though this act has another shift seated in the Orientalist narrative of essentialism. This review paper also aims to study the impact of visibility as a phenomenon as a circular effect. But the prime intention here is more to trace meanings of Arab Spring which is recently being considered as more about the dominance of authoritarians confronting the *sense* of freedom, the emergence of neoliberal capitalism, the crisis

in national political economies, jobs, and *feel* of individual existence in everyday life of the Arab World. In this regard, we can think of *experiencing* Arab Spring by its spectacles through a widespread visibility of the events that launch subjectivities; shape the local narrativity of the event and engage the quotidian nomenclature of the struggle benefitting from new media.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Visuality, Democratization, Authoritarians, Freedom

## **Submission ID**

2365

## **Searching for “foreign agents”. The impact of labeling media as such on Russian media landscape**

### **Authors**

Dr. Daria Dergacheva - ZeMKI, Centre for Media, Communication & Information Research, University of Bremen

### **Abstract**

Since the beginning of 2020, the Russian federal law (No 327-FZ) on media as foreign agents has been used in connection to media outlets. At least one Russian-registered large media organization, TV Dozhd, has been put on the list (as well as many others, smaller ones, which have both foreign and Russian registration, such as MBKH Media, radio Svoboda, Meduza etc) (Tass: 2021). In addition, adaptation of the law on news aggregators (Russian federal law (No 208-FZ) is holding news aggregators liable for spreading fake news. As Wijermars (2021) highlights, the law “has created a mechanism of indirect media control enabling the Russian state to influence online news dissemination through existing media regulation structures” since it has effectively obliged local news aggregators to algorithmically choose only registered media.

This research suggests that the biggest search engine in Russia, Yandex, algorithm avoids using TV Dozhd news (and other outlets considered ‘foreign agents’) as main news stories of the news aggregator page and favors state-aligned media. Traditionally, Yandex News aggregator traffic has been important for Russian media outlets traffic numbers, sometimes even more so than social media. The research also investigates if the citation of several media considered ‘foreign agents’ has dropped in ‘traditional’ media and social media in Russia since the law enforcement in 2020 – 2021.

Research design:

For the dataset construction, this research is using the archived pages of Web Back Machine, a not-for-profit Internet archive organization which stores historical web pages and has been storing Yandex aggregator news pages since 2008. (Arora et al: 2015). Research methodology includes both digital methods as well as qualitative interviews with journalists from traditional media on reasons to avoid citation. To add to the archive data the official sources of Medialogia media analysis service (Medialogia: 2019, 2020, 2021) are analysed on citation of the media considered 'foreign agents' before and after the active enforcement of the law is contrasted.

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2390

## **Ethics in Political Communication on Social Media: A Study of the Indian General Elections of 2019**

**Authors**

Ms. Sukriti Bhukkal - Panjab University, Chandigarh

**Abstract**

Social media has made Indian politics inclusive by allowing citizens, who were traditionally excluded from politics due to factors such as geography and demography, to become participants in the political process. It has also provided for an array of viewpoints and public engagement on an unprecedented scale. However, with the intervention of the digital media in political communication, new lows in public discourse, the pervasiveness of fake news and misinformation, and a routine flouting of ethical norms have also been

witnessed. The proposed paper shall focus on ethics in political communication, which has always been a complex issue and is further complicated by the rise of digital technologies that are weakening traditional ethical constraints among all political actors—politicians, journalists and the mass media, and audiences. It shall highlight the rise of fissiparous and polarising content in the General Elections(Lok Sabha) of India held in the year 2019. The paper shall utilise the data collected from social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook while applying the methodology of ‘content analysis’ to discuss how the ‘new media’ has enabled a style of populist politics that is combative and personal, allowing hate speech and extreme speech to thrive in online spaces. Moreover, the paper shall also discuss the response of the related stakeholders both governmental and non - governmental vis a vis the maintenance of ethical code of conduct within the realm of communicating the message during political events such as the elections which hold the utmost importance in the democratic setup of India.

## **Submission ID**

2399

## **Critical and investigative journalism in risk contexts. Knowledge-representation methodological approach for the comparative study of the independent press in Cuba and Mexico.**

### **Authors**

Dr. Dasniel Olivera Pérez - Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

Dr. José Refugio Arellano Sánchez - Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

### **Abstract**

Violence against journalists in risk contexts, insecure democracies, authoritarian and 'post-authoritarian countries is an international emerging and relevant studies field (Brambila & Hughes, 2019, Hughes, Mellado, et al., 2017; Márquez- Ramírez, 2012). In this direction, the growing empirical evidence demonstrates that direct and indirect violence hamper professional journalistic practice and limit press freedom and the right to information (Brambila & Hughes, 2019).

A comprehensive understanding of the multiple sources of threats to journalism's exercise should consider its interactions with political, economic, cultural, and technological systems. It also must understand the many non-institutional, extralegal and even absolute forms of reproduction, transformation and subversion of power (Chakravartty and Roy, 2013). But it should also be extended beyond the reflective models and include "generative models" of the media as active molders of political power (Chakravartty and Roy, 2013: 365).

Mexico and Cuba are countries with structures, political stories and different media systems, but both constitute contexts of risk for independent journalism. What factors intervene when some outlets choose to continue making critical and investigative journalism in these contexts is what this project attempts to explain using the comparative methods and the representation of knowledge.

In Mexico, some of the factors that explain this phenomenon are the configuration of an ambiguous press model, clientelism - including connections between political elites and organized crime - and a passive journalistic culture (Márquez-Ramírez, 2015). In Cuba, the instrumental relationship and subordination of the media to the Party-State have been pointed out, the lack of guarantees for the exercise of political plurality, and the inflection that has the US political conflict. Against Cuba in journalistic culture (Olivera, 2019). This paper discusses the hypotheses, derivative of the bibliographic and theoretical review, the methodological strategy, and the preliminary results.

In general, among the main structural, organizational and individual factors that prop up these journalistic practices are the context of ICT development and the possibility of building audience communities, the networks of professional, political and economic collaboration and support, and the defense of the shared professional ideals about journalism.

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