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Participant organization: National Media Commission, Ghana

**Meeting w/ National Media Commission – 9 APR**

* Mismatch between offensive content online & deliberative actions against it
* I have been arguing this in ISU – still maintaining the position that democracy around the world suffers when US suffers
* In the run-up to democratizing in Ghana, there was no private media – only publicly funded media. (One Prof said that a week’s collection of the daily newspapers looked more like an album for President and wife than news)
* Created NMC as independent agency under constitution to
  1. support independence of the media
  2. settle complaints by & against the media
  3. Register newspapers
  4. Appoint boards of publicly funded media
  5. Protect the publicly funded media from politics
* 18 members on board representing different stakeholders
* Chief executive manages institution
* Two key sources of mis/disinfo – internal political actors running acvitities against eachother
* Starting in 2016 - Cambridge Analytica did some work here – in Ghana & Kenya and have seen more & more problems since then. They didn’t understand foreign information influence.
* After Sahel coups - saw lots of content supporting coup leaders & presents them as liberators and presents US and France as imperialists and Russia as supporter of liberators.
* So effective because platforms – Ghana institutions, writers, lawyers platforms & then one of very senior leaders in Ghana – money, local bonds – VP of Unilever, Int’l & West Africa, President of MTN. Almost on daily basis have to explain to them what content they are getting is false.
* The materials are so powerful – it affects people at all levels of society & education
* Making democracy look dysfunctional & authoritarianism look better – issue a lot of young people clamoring for authoritarianism
* New leader of Burkina Faso celebrated more than any other leader at Summit in Accra (inauguration of President Mahama)
* Russia & China – China also pushing
* China is being clever at it – very effective. Even more pernicious – China owns all of the comms & Chinese getting in mainstream media. Sponsoring journalists, content – carrying a lot of journalists into China to learn propaganda
  + Direct threat to Ghana Democracy & media
* Not much on government side to counter – not worried about internal
* From NMC – they recognize threat more but limited on what they can say publicly about foreign actors
* Policy Commission has fully developed – don’t have a full position
* Civil society groups have done some really useful work
* in last elections were able
  + MFWA, Dubawa, & Ghana Check
  + Hoping will keep that coalition and how far they will go
* NMC – developed an app for tracking media disinfo – in Ghana can download on phone
  + Best suited govt institutions to address this. Rest of government more concerned about elections – not what other parties are doing
* Waiting to swear in the new members of the board and one of the biggest issues to address (mis/disinfo)

1. Build consensus on the nature of the threat

* What partners can do
  + Build internal capacity to understand and devise solution – need collaboration w/institutions - And need more $$ – no quick outside funding (for NMC) but could take it. Have worked w/ US Embassy & EU.
* Definitely work to be done
* Security/ Military side – security establishment seems a bit closed up. Don’t share analysis or info – only come to them (NMC) when they (military) has a problem
* So Ghanaian Military – communications seen in very instrumental terms.
  + Want journalists to cover. Person that leads their comms was very low but now a Brigadier General.
* New Minister of Defense & Minister Comm
  + /access to info – not good on military side. Military and Security build on fear – rank and file still operates like previous times. Dealing with internal culture that is slow to change.
* New Minister of Defense – extremely open-minded & Chief of Defense Staff (also) – but don’t know how far they will be able to go w/these issues.
* They are looking to do work w/Def (NMC is)
* Chief of Defense Staff had been interested in putting together a training program – train officers how to talk to journalists
* NMC & Defense Sector – joint journalist training
* Other thing we had planned – Defense Advisory – (plan) guide for media to help them understand what is going on with military & how to communicate
* Worried about what the safeguards are when China controls their entire comm system
  + But now that it is clear it is becoming leader of the world – worried US democracy has collapsed