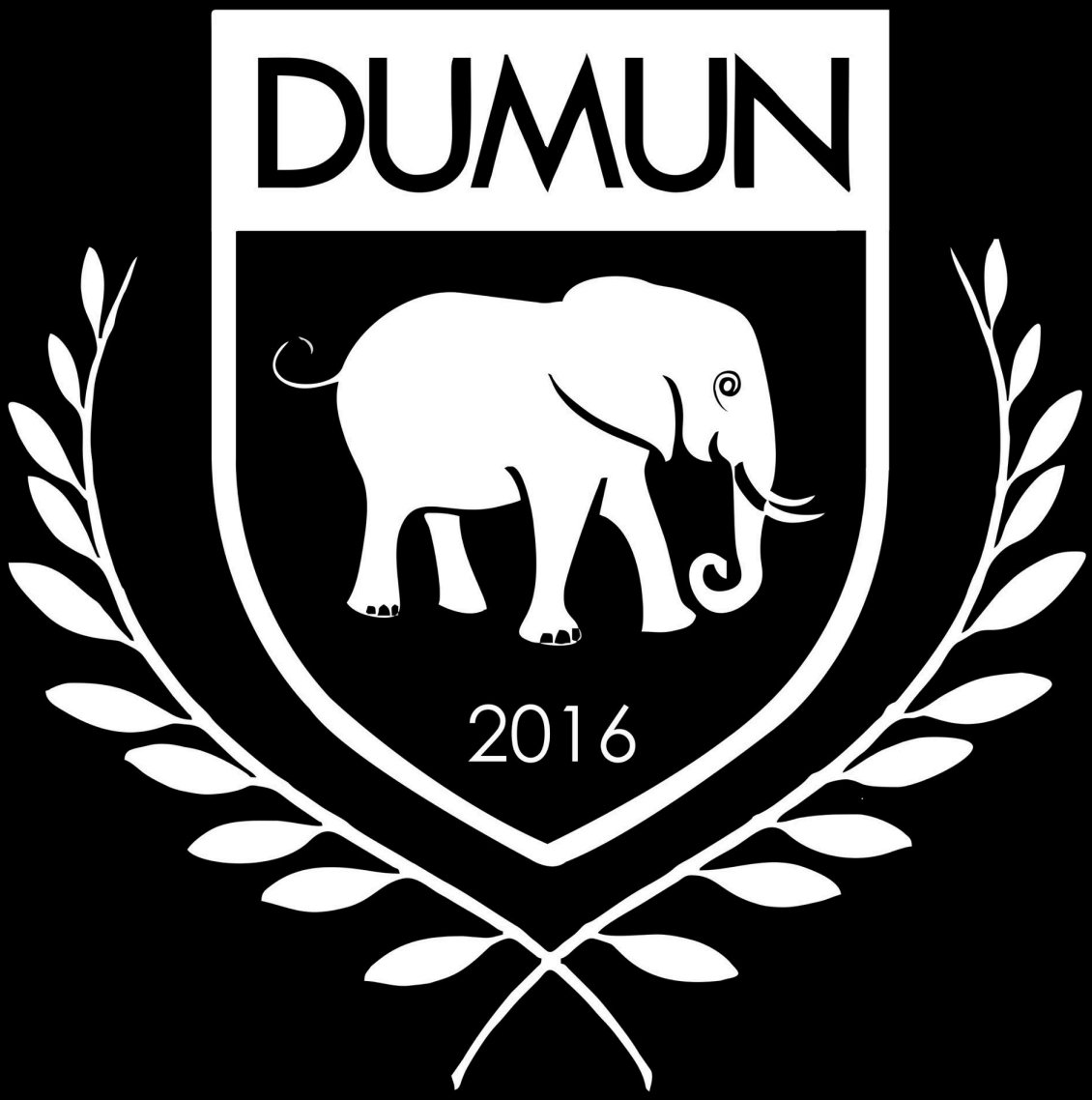

Delhi University Model United Nations Conference

7-9 APRIL 2016

Inter-Parliamentary Union

AGENDA GUIDE

1. INTRODUCTION

The entire concept of using media to engage citizens in the democratic processes is a concept of participatory democracy. While it is argued that democracy in itself implies that 'people' are the power and hence all democracies involve the public opinion, participatory democracy advocates a more involved form of citizen participation and political representation than that of the traditional representative democracy.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has identified citizen participation in democracy a valuable element in decision making and that it has positive effects on the quality of democracy. Democratic innovations can be of various types of which some include deliberative forums, surveys, referendums and participatory policymaking.

Social Media Guidelines for Parliaments, 2013:

"One lesson that parliaments have learnt from their efforts to engage citizens if the following: you cannot wait for the people to come to parliament, you need to go to where the people are."

- Anders B. Johnson (Secretary General, IPU)

The media has always played a role in the sustenance of the type of government being operated by a nation, which is why it is referred to as the 'fourth estate of the realm'. It does not merely act as a voice of the citizens but also ensures a platform whereby the government and the governed interact, and facilitates democratic exchanges. With the advent of social media, amongst other media sources, the interaction between the source of governance and those being governed is a lot more direct and faster as opposed to interaction through other mediums. This originates from the fact that the mass

media has combined both human and non-human elements to increase and smoothen the flow of information and ideas.

There can be no sustainable democratic governance if there is no platform where a degree of interactivity and dialogue on issues and policies takes place between the governing body and citizens being governed, and it is the media that brings these activities to the forefront, which is why it is called the watchdog of both, the government and society. This facilitation of exchange between the two entities of governance and society, if even single sided, is often done in the name and under the pretext of Freedom of Speech and rarely under the notion of participative democracy. This is why social media, specifically, can provide new ways to communicate and engage with the public for parliamentarians, and reach out to policy makers and stimulate political action for society.

The public's relationship with their parliaments has changed. Where traditionally, the parliament's work may have been reported by the conventional media commentary, today parliamentarians themselves have begun interacting through social media networks from the chamber and committee rooms as events unfold. The public has access to multiple political views and perspectives and can directly contribute by communicating with members in real time. This use of media in general and specifically social media has increased society's expectation of immediate communication, and this in turn extends the role of parliaments to provide information and access to parliamentary workings in a more effective manner.

To ensure that media can be used to harness and direct this tide of information and active participation by the public to enhance the democratic process and ensure parliamentary engagement is another form of the IPU's objective of participatory democracy. The World e-Parliament Conference, 2012 held in Rome, Italy also established the need to further the extent and use of parliamentary action by way of media and internet platforms.

2. ASPECTS FOR CONSIDERATION

2.1 Investigative Reporting or Advocacy

Investigative reporting, which in some cases has led to the ouster of presidents and the fall of corrupt governments, has made the media an effective and credible watchdog and boosted its credibility among the public. Investigative reporting has also helped accustom officials to an inquisitive press and helped build a culture of openness and disclosure that has made democratically elected governments more accountable.

Perhaps the most instructive case is that of Latin America, where it is widely acknowledged that sustained investigative reporting on corruption, drug-trafficking, human rights violations and other forms of wrongdoing has helped build a culture of accountability in government and strengthened the fledgling democracies of the continent. There, media exposure, particularly of corruption in high places, has helped bring down governments. A variety of Presidential regimes changing hands has come against the backdrop of the investigative reporting carried out by local media on the incumbent government's complicity in corrupt deals. Such reporting has made the press a credible — and prestigious — institution in the region's new democracies. [1]

In Southeast Asia's new democracies, sustained reporting on malfeasance in public life has resulted in the ouster of corrupt officials and raised public awareness on the need for reform. In the Philippines, investigative reporting provided evidence that led to impeachment charges being filed against President Joseph Estrada in 2000 and fueled public outrage against his excesses. Estrada was ousted from office in a popular uprising on the streets of Manila in January 2001. In Thailand, investigative reports unearthed evidence of the shadowy business dealings of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. In Indonesia, the press has uncovered wrongdoing that led to the filing of

charges against formidable, high-ranking officials, including the powerful speaker of Parliament, Akbar Tanjung, in 2001.

Perhaps the clearest impact of investigative journalism can be ascertained by the belief that by constantly seeking critical information, by compelling governments and the private sector to release documents and by subjecting officials and other powerful individuals to rigorous questioning, investigative journalism expands the boundaries of what is possible to print or air. At the same time, it accustoms the government and its officials to an atmosphere of awareness and political inquiry. [2]

On the other side, media advocacy refers to the strategic use of news-making through TV, radio and newspapers to promote public debate, and generate community support for changes in community norms and policies. In any democracy, members of the general public are the ultimate decision-makers and opinion leaders. Said norms and practices, along with beliefs and overall community attitudes are shaped by the dialogues that take place within families and the social networks, based off the impetus the media provides by coverage of and focus upon the challenges the country may be facing. The news media, as a primary source of information, play a very powerful role in shaping the public dialogues that eventually form community rules and standards.

Late American political commentator Walter Lippmann once famously said — *"The press is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision"*. Media advocacy tries to work through the news to put the spotlight on selected issues of national social, cultural or political concern, focus the light on policy-oriented solutions, and hold the light in place over time. This three step process: setting the agenda, framing or shaping the issue, and advancing a specific solution or policy, is the core of media advocacy. [3]

Setting the agenda — This is important for two reasons. First, the media tell people what to think about — the more coverage a topic receives on the news, the more likely it is to be a concern of the

general public. Second, media are a vehicle for getting the attention of specific decision-makers and opinion leaders, such as politicians, government regulators, community leaders, and corporate executives.

Shaping the debate — The policy being advanced must be clear. Messages about the policy should be consistently presented and should indicate who has the power to enact it. The media openly asking questions about what the problem is, why it continues to occur, and what the potential solutions to it could be are how discourse is made to progress in the public eye. The debate is always shaped in the context of a broader solution or policy-goal.

Advancing the policy — Once policy has been successfully approved or progress towards its enactment or passage has begun, the larger challenge is its sustainability as a public provision or long-term concern. By continuing to (i) create news about the policy or phenomenon in question, (ii) reporting on crucial contemporary developments as they occur, and (iii) continuing to target community opinion leaders and using their voice to present an influential presence in support of the advocacy campaigns, the media can advance the long-term modeling or development of policies it advocates for the adoption of.

2.2 Judicial Activism

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy. The rule of law may be further institutionalized by support for an independent media that keeps a check on the judiciary, reports on the courts, and promotes a legally enabling environment suitable for press freedom. Often the coverage in the press can be said to reflect the views of the audience it caters to. [4]

The responsibility of the press to conform to the highest standards, especially when reporting information that is sourced tenuously at best, such as leaks from government dealings and case files,

is coming under increased scrutiny due to the kind of position they hold in democracies around the world. On one hand, families and friends of persons convicted of crimes have successfully used the power of the media to reopen cases over the years, yet on the other, media adventurism in reporting of ongoing cases with verdicts still in the balance has been noted to tilt towards notions of premature, pre-emptive guilt apportioning, leading to the persecution bias more commonly known as 'trial(s) by media'.

A trial by press, electronic media or public agitation is the very antithesis of rule of law, and can often lead to miscarriage of justice. A judicial bench has to guard itself against such pressure and be guided strictly by rule of law, particularly so in delicate cases that have the tendency to evoke vituperative public sentiment and backlash. A free press is the *sine qua non* of a democratic society and is a bulwark of freedom of speech & expression, and freedom of information; but a question worth asking for the committee is, how far is it appropriate to influence the general public's mind and opinion towards a particular conclusion when trials are still in limbo, and further yet, beyond which point can such influence be said to have become manipulation?

In many countries, in order to establish a culture of accountability in reportage, an independent autonomous public institution like a Media Council is either a constitutional need or voluntarily set-up. In some, it is established by the various constituents of the media as a voluntary organization, while in others, it is constituted by the legislature under a statute. These bodies whether voluntary or statutory, evolve a code of conduct or of ethics for the media with regard to honesty and fairness; duty to seek the views of the subject of any critical reportage in advance of publication; duty to correct factual errors; duty to provide an opportunity to reply to critical opinions as well as to the critical factual reportage; appearance as well as to the critical factual reportage; appearance as well as reality of objectivity; duty to distinguish between facts and opinions; duty not to prejudice the guilt

of an accused and to publish the dismissal of charges against or acquittal of anyone about whom the paper previously had reported that charges have been filed or that a trial had commenced.

In short, there is a growing need for the media's role in terms of keeping the society informed about happenings which have a direct / indirect impact on it yet stopping short of drawing definitive conclusions. In a democratic society, the media ought to be an accessory to achieving justice, not one to defeat it. [5]

2.3 State Censorship

State censorship would as suggested eponymously refers to the suppression of speech, public communication or other information which may be considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive, politically incorrect or inconvenient as determined by a state government. [6]

The rationale for censorship is different based on the sort of information or content being censored, and may be briefly collapsed as follows:

Political censorship — which occurs when governments withhold information from their citizens. This is often done to exert control over the populace and prevent free expression that might foment rebellion.

Moral censorship — the removal of materials that are obscene or otherwise considered morally questionable. Pornography, for example, is often censored under this rationale, especially child pornography, which is illegal and censored in most jurisdictions in the world.

Religious censorship — the means by which any material considered objectionable by a certain religion is removed. This often involves content being deemed blasphemous or damaging to the

characteristic of the religion in question being curtained. Alternatively, one religion may also shun the works of another when they believe the content is not appropriate for their religion. [7]

The concern of censorship is further exacerbated when a government attempts to conceal, fake, distort, or falsify information that its citizens receive by suppressing or crowding out political news that the public might receive through news outlets. In the absence of neutral and objective information, people will be unable to dissent with the government or political party in charge. The term also extends to the systematic suppression of views that are contrary to those of the government in power. The government often possesses the power of the army and the secret police, to enforce the compliance of journalists with the will of the authorities to spread the story that the ruling authorities want people to believe. At times this involves bribery, defamation, imprisonment, and even assassination. [8]

Governments are known to keep tight reins on both traditional and new media to avoid potential subversion of authority. Known tactics to this effect often entail strict media controls using monitoring systems and firewalls, shuttering publications or websites, and jailing dissident journalists, bloggers, and activists. Battles like that of search engine giant Google's with the Chinese government over Internet censorship, and the Norwegian Nobel Committee's awarding of the 2010 Peace Prize to jailed Chinese activist Liu Xiaobo, have also increased international attention to censorship issues. [9]

Even in countries that offer constitutional guarantees to afford their citizens freedom of speech and press, the opacity of various media regulations allows authorities to crack down on news stories by claiming that they expose state secrets and endanger the nation. Often, the definition of state secrets in said countries remains vague, facilitating censorship of any information that authorities deem harmful to their political or economic interests. Often, countries require foreign correspondents to

obtain permission before reporting in their country and use this as an administrative roadblock to prevent journalists from reporting on potentially sensitive topics like corruption and protests on the days/eves of national dissidence events of historical significance.

Certain websites that the government deems potentially dangerous — like Wikileaks — are blocked during periods of controversy. Specific material considered a threat to political stability is also banned, including controversial photos and search terms. Governments are at times known to be particularly keen on blocking reports of issues that could incite social unrest, like official corruption and ethnic strife. The websites of news services are sometimes blacked out after they run controversial reports on top-ranking government officials. Restrictions are also placed on micro-blogging services. Censors are at times also swift to block any mentions of illegal or degrading government activity and practice in certain parts of the nation, such as the Syrian Electronic Army, when the Syrian government rolled tanks and artillery into Damascus and Dara'a to diffuse protests.

2.4 Internet & Democracy

The Internet and democracy have a fundamental and irrevocable relationship in terms of the mutual interdependence and interaction both have upon and with each other. While the role of technology in democratic transitions has received ample attention in recent times, the ways in which it fundamentally restructures democracy has not received similar amounts of consideration — whether it is in the strengthening or hollowing-out of said democracy.

With the Arab Spring of 2011, the 'democratizing potential' of the Internet has received renewed attention all over the world. While few would argue anymore that social media have been the cause of the revolutions that have taken place in the Arab world, the new possibilities that they created

caught the attention and imagination of activists far beyond that region as the events in the Middle East unfolded.

The effectiveness and reach of social media took the governments in the Middle East by surprise. For instance, in a matter of weeks hundreds of thousands of Egyptians organized protests through hashtags on Twitter (*#jan25, #dayofrage*) and groups on Facebook. For their part, governments did their best to wrestle control of the internet from protestors. The peoples of Egypt, Libya, and Syria witnessed full Internet shutdowns as their respective governments attempted to quell protests, with Syria only permitting access to government sites. In Tunisia, the government hacked into and stole passwords from citizens' Facebook accounts. In Bahrain, bloggers and netizens were arrested and some allegedly killed. An increasing number of websites and discussion forums were blocked, telecomm lines leading to the city were severed, and ISPs were ordered to filter keyword searches and censor anti-government content.

However, whereas in previous uprisings around the world, governments were able to crush protests by cutting down communication channels and then overpowering protestors, the sandbox ecosystem of social media proved the internet's 'ace-in-the-hole' here, taking away the governments' advantage and even giving the protestors the edge in some situations. Protesters were able to set up rendezvous points for meetings and then quickly change them if they saw authorities building up a presence. They were able to warn each other if they noticed police vehicles converging to any area. They were also able to share practical advise on how to avoid detection and coordinate sabotage of security apparatuses. The strategic advantage of controlling communication that governments once had was now blunted

But in the uplifting climate of hopefulness that has been created as a consequence of these events, there is an important issue that seems to have by and large escaped attention. It is true that critical

voices have pointed out that the the link between the Internet and democracy is by no means direct: that the Internet can just as easily be used to strengthen dictatorships as to improve democratic elections, to increase surveillance as to enhance freedom of speech. How the Internet and the new possibilities it enables – both good and bad – affects democracy, as a system, as a practice, is something that ought to receive considerably more sustained and systematic attention in recent times.

When Reporters Without Borders issued its 2011 report on 'Enemies of the Internet', Belarus and Libya were included as 'countries under surveillance' in that report, but other surprising entrants such as Australia found a place on that list as well. When riots hit the country's capital, UK Prime Minister David Cameron suggested a clampdown on social networking sites. France has a law that cuts off its citizens from the Internet if they have violated copyright provisions three times, in clear contravention to the obligation states have to make the Internet available and accessible for all, as highlighted by UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression Mr. Frank La Rue. [10]

When examining the relationship between the Internet and democracy, there are a number of worthwhile questions to ponder, the most crucial of these being — "What does the Internet do to democracy in places where democracy as a political system has already been put into place?"

All around the world, the Internet seems to have become both an outlet to expand the rights and freedoms that people in the democratic enjoy, as well as an excuse to contract the enjoyment and access of these very same rights and freedoms. How to fight growing levels of surveillance when bomb blasts rock the country on an all-too-regular basis? How to advocate on privacy issues when culturally, privacy as a concept has relatively little meaning? How to protect expanding possibilities for freedom of expression when censorship has a certain level of acceptance across the political spectrum as a legitimate way to contain conflict in a diverse country? All of these are questions

worth thinking about as the Internet continues to burgeon and assume the role of a democratic watchdog upon the governments of the world.

3. CASE STUDIES

3.1 Jasmine Revolution: Role of social media in Tunisia's democratic transition[11]

The Revolution began in 2010 as civil unrest broke out in the interior of the country after a young street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire -- to protest mistreatment by a government functionary. As protesters marched and police beat them down, political organizers traveled to the area and started using digital video and Twitter to spread the word throughout the country. Within a day of Bouazizi's immolation, people were already organizing around a common Twitter hashtag. Within two weeks, and ominously for the government, protests began to spread to the more prosperous parts of the country. It was then that the movement became almost a viral phenomenon, and as it drew more and more people, the center of online action moved to Facebook. A much more popular medium in Tunisia than Twitter, it was also a more visual one -- photos and videos posted on Facebook made the protesters' case in a visceral way.

Television also came into play as the protests spread, though not the heavily-censored domestic channels. The satellite/cable channel Al Jazeera in particular began taking videos posted to the web and broadcasting them to a mass audience, something that Nour mentioned was crucial in spreading the revolution beyond a younger demographic: as long as anti-government messages were restricted to personal internet channels, the protesters' parents and grandparents could ignore or dismiss them. But once they started showing up on television, they became real. Finally, as the government pushed back via mass media, the internet provided a way for protesters to poke holes in stories promulgated through official channels. When video of a counter-protest in favor of President Ben Ali was shown on television, for instance, activists could post their own footage of the same event that showed that

very few people had actually attended (the television cameras had been carefully placed to give the illusion of a large crowd).

Online channels helped people fight more insidious enemies as well: rumors and disinformation. Claims might spread of massive shootings in a neighborhood, for example, but people in the area could pipe in and say what was really happening. In other cases, rumors of poisoned water or cutoffs of electrical power might threaten to spark a public panic, but again Facebook and text messages let people pass along the truth. Overall, online social tools helped activists counter those who were trying to terrorize the population, helping to calm the entire situation down -- they spread the message that people were helping to keep things in control.

3.2 Investigative Journalism: Media as a Watchdog[12]

Perhaps the most instructive case is that of Latin America, where it is widely acknowledged that sustained investigative reporting on corruption, human rights violations and other forms of wrongdoing has helped build a culture of accountability in government and strengthened the fledgling democracies of the continent. There, media exposure, particularly of corruption in high places, has helped bring down governments. The downfall of four presidents − Fernando Collor de Mello of Brazil in 1992, Carlos Andres Perez of Venezuela in 1993, Abdala Bucaram of Ecuador in 1997 and Alberto Fujimori in 2000 − was due in large measure to investigative reporting on their complicity in corrupt deals. Such reporting has made the press a credible — and prestigious — institution in the region's new democracies. Because it has functioned effectively and independently, the media enjoy the public's support and trust.

In Southeast Asia's new democracies, sustained reporting on malfeasance in public life has resulted in the ouster of corrupt officials and raised public awareness on the need for reform. In the Philippines, investigative reporting provided evidence that led to impeachment charges being filed against President Joseph Estrada in 2000 and fuelled public outrage against his excesses. Estrada was ousted from office in a popular uprising on the streets of Manila in January 2001. In Thailand, investigative reports unearthed evidence of the shadowy business dealings of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. In Indonesia, the press has uncovered wrongdoing that led to the filing of charges against high officials, including the powerful speaker of Parliament, Akbar Tanjung, in 2001. This success has come at a great cost. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists tallied 117 journalists killed in Latin America from 1988 to 1998.

In the Philippines, 36 journalists have been slain since the restoration of democracy in 1986. In Thailand and Indonesia, crusading journalists have been beaten up, threatened and killed. Worldwide, 15 of the 68 murdered journalists in 2001 were slain because of investigative work related to corruption. Most of the murders have taken place in countries where the rule of law is weak and the judiciary is unable and unwilling to defend press rights. It is obvious that at the most basic level, a free press — and investigative reporting — are possible only where journalists enjoy some protection. Fledgling democracies have constitutional and legal provisions to defend the press, but these do not always ensure that the media can report without fear or favour. In Latin America and Southeast Asia, many of those murdered were the victims of small-town bosses able to terrorise communities because weak states cannot enforce the law and provide protection to their citizens, journalists included.

4. NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF MEDIA AND THE INTERNET ON CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

The media, internet enabled communication and related new surveillance technologies nowadays seem to be inextricably linked to the debated on civil rights and democratic participation. From the Arab Spring Uprisings (2010-2011), to Los Indignados in Spain, Occupy in London and New York (2013), to Bulgaria, Brazil and Turkey (2013), the media, of which specifically the social media, has significantly contributed to the increased participation in demonstrations of a political nature but can it be called a one of a democratic nature? This raises a question on the reshaping of civic involvement and democratic participation in a digital world. The risks and opportunities involved in political online activism vary considerably according to political context and culture. It is shaped by the conflicting interests of media and internet corporations, governments and citizens and in this triangle, corporations are liable to their shareholders, governments are concerned for their over national security, while disenchanted citizens demand a bigger say in politics while at the same time expecting their right to privacy protected. There is a strong will to believe that the media is indeed making political processes more democratic, yet the evidence is not always there to support such assertions.

However, **three important aspects** must be considered while considering the negative impacts of the media in participative democratic processes:

- The considerable ambivalence in approaches to the role of media in political processes, particularly with respect to democracies and its various forms.
- The impact of media on the engagement of the poorest and most marginalised in political processes.

-The emphasis on governments to enable all their citizens to have an equal opportunity to participate in these new forms of political engagement.

With this regard the few questions that come to mind about the media's role in the political process in a participative democracy are whether there will be uniform access to digital means, such as internet broadband, etc. that contribute to the facilitation of the public's opinion on a political platform. Additionally, it must be considered that the mere technology and connectivity in itself will not enhance the democratic process if there is a lack of will to include the society in the processes of policymaking. Yet again comes the question of the form of democracies that foster a sense of civic engagement and the extent to which the society participates.

The next aspect to consider is the 'dark' side of the media and its legal implications. This doesn't merely restrict itself to that acts of copyright and intellectual property infringement but also those of cyber crimes. It should be noted that not just the government and corporate entities could use the media for a negative purpose by way of paid lobbying and propoganda but that smaller groups may use it with an intent to force their opinion by way of digital monstering and hijacking the process of a democratic participation. Additionally, the concept of privacy and security is an age old debate on the matter.

It can be argued that the media, of which social media surely, has undoubtedly changed the political map, but this may not necessarily have been in the interests of democracy.

5. BLOC POSITIONS

5.1 Arab Group

Bahraini journalists risk prosecution for offences which include "undermining" the government and religion. Self-censorship is widespread. The government uses the 2002 Press Law to restrict the media from publishing criticism of Islam or the king, inciting actions that undermine state security, or supporting regime change. Maximum punishment is five years in prison and some well-known journalists and bloggers are currently behind bars.[13]

In Iraq the media remains fractured. The autonomous Kurdistan region has its own established media. Freedom of expression is protected by the constitution. But Reporters Without Borders says armed groups "have no compunction" about killing media workers. Jihadist group Islamic State has been systematically persecuting news media and their employees since the start of its offensive in Iraq, IS aims to "monopolize media activity in the territory it conquers. It does not permit the free flow of news and information and only the most courageous journalists dare to transmit or share information."[14]

The Palestinian media have great freedom to document and publish the daily events of this conflict. Journalists have no hesitation about writing on this topic because they are sure the material will be published. On the other hand, the coverage of some internal Palestinian issues is heavily censored, with reports about the occupation normally taking priority in newspapers and on radio or TV. It is no secret that there is more than one form of censorship in the Palestinian media. There is political and social censorship and there is personal and professional censorship, stemming from the opinions and interests of the owners and managers of the different media outlets.[15]

Influential pan-Arab and international TV broadcaster Al-Jazeera has raised Qatar's media profile. The censorship is limited to filter political criticism, material deemed offensive to Islam, pornographic content and online privacy resources by the authorities.

Saudi investors are major players in the pan-Arab TV industry, but the country has one of the regions most tightly controlled media environments. Criticism of the government and royal family and the questioning of Islamic tenets are not generally tolerated. Self-censorship is pervasive. [16]

The UAE is a regional and international center for TV and media, alongside Egypt and Lebanon. Organizations including Reuters, CNN, Sony and Fox have moved in. The UAE is home to major pan-Arab broadcasters, including Saudi-owned MBC and Orbit Showtime Network. The constitution provides for freedom of speech but there is strong regulatory and political control of media content. Publications must be licensed and follow official guidelines on reporting. Foreign publications are censored before distribution. Journalists tend to practice self-censorship.

In a country troubled by internal conflicts, poverty and humanitarian crises, Yemeni media have long been facing a number of serious challenges. Yemen is found at the bottom end of international press freedom rankings, and journalists working for independent outlets have been subjected to restrictions, detention, threats, and attacks. Lack of appropriate media legislation has presented a further obstacle over the years. The media sector is also characterized by a general lack of professional journalistic skills and ethical standards.

Since a political agreement was signed in November 2011, Yemen has embarked on a challenging transition process presenting an opening for the country's media. Problems and restrictions persist, but there is renewed hope that the media gradually will be freer to operate than previously and

thereby will be able to play a constructive role in support of the political transition and endeavors to democratize the country. [17]

5.2 12PLUS Group

TV is by far the most popular medium in Albania, but the internet is beginning to close the gap. The press and radio hold considerably lesser market share. The media are generally free. Broadcasters are regulated by an independent body and the press self-regulates. The biggest threat to freedom is from self-censorship, sometimes arising from media owners' business and political interests.[18]

Belgian broadcasting mirrors the unique political and linguistic nature of the country. The cultural communities, rather than the federal authorities, are responsible for regulating radio and TV.[19]

There is specific legislation for broadcasting, film but no press law and, like in most other European countries, very little specific legislation for the Internet in Denmark. Legislation concerning media ownership is not an issue in Denmark however media are considered to be an important tool for the promotion of democratic processes in the society.[20] France enjoys a free press and has more than 100 daily newspapers. Most of them are in private hands and are not linked to political parties.

While the press and broadcasters are free and independent in Germany, the display of swastikas and statements endorsing Nazism are illegal. Germany's competitive television market is the largest in Europe, with some 34 million TV households. [21]

Italy's heady blend of politics and media has often made headlines at home and abroad, with concern regularly being expressed over the concentration of media ownership in the hands of one man - former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. Most newspapers are privately-owned, often linked to a political party or run by a large media group.[22] Whereas, Israel enjoys a lively, pluralistic media

environment in which press freedom is generally respected. However, due to ongoing conflicts with Palestinian groups and neighbouring countries, media outlets are subject to military censorship and gag orders, and journalists often face travel restrictions. [23]

The national media policy of Britain has been one of 'light touch' control and an open market environment. The main drive is to increase private ownership and to 'be digital'. This has led to progressive reductions in regulation.[24]

5.3 Eurasia

A media law prohibits censorship in Armenia. However, libel and defamation can be punished by prison terms and journalists have been sentenced under relevant laws. Whereas most of the media is subject to political influence as key outlets are controlled by the government, or government-friendly individuals. Internet access is on the rise.[25]

Belarus's media environment has remained extremely restrictive as the government of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka continued to suppress independent journalism. The regime has been facing pressure to move towards European integration as well as political meddling by the Kremlin leading to continuous persecution of media.[26]

Most media outlets in Kazakhstan are controlled or influenced by members of the president's family, including his daughter and her husband, and other powerful groups. Many of the 1,000-plus newspaper titles are government-run and the state controls printing presses. Constant measures are taken through state machinery to drive national independent and opposition media into extinction.[27]

TV is the main news source for most Russians. Since the Ukraine crisis, Russian state media have intensified the pro-Kremlin and nationalistic tone of their broadcasts, pumping out a regular diet of adulation for Mr Putin, nationalistic pathos, fierce rejection of Western influence and attacks on the Kremlin's enemies. Some observers have accused pro-Kremlin TV of spreading disinformation and conducting an information war both at home and abroad.[28]

The media has greater freedoms in Tajikistan than in some other Central Asian states, but officials dictate editorial policy at the state media and obstruct critical outlets. The authorities silence dissent by intimidating journalists and by using "exhaustive" litigation.[29]

5.4 African Group

In Africa, censorship of content has occurred more through traditional forms of media, although direct censorship of Internet is beginning to develop as a significant problem too. Specifically, governments are moving to control the provision of TV and Internet services through their monopolies of existing telecommunications services.

A number of states within the African Group possess some of the other form of public security preservation acts within their legislature that grant the government a wide range of powers for curtaining media and communication services deemed to have a detrimental effect on public order, unity of the state, or cohesiveness of society. The experience of traditional forms of media in many African countries suggests that governments will try to limit freedom of expression in order to curtail political opposition, while justifying their attempts to control and monopolize the Internet by the need to protect national security, public safety and morals, etc. [30]

Recent developments in the continent have not been particularly promising for the continued advancement of media freedom. In September 2015 in Ghana, protestors and media-persons calling for a new national voting register were attacked and arrested by the police, many of whom continue to be in custody. [31] The same month, Ethiopia curiously arrested a World Bank translator and a group of activists running food-security workshops for acts of terrorism against the state. [32]

Elsewhere in Burkina Faso, journalists and reporters have faced constant harassment since the regime change in the October 2014 coup, and continue to face harsh conditions and threats of violence that seek to prevent fair reportage. [33] In Burundi, violence against media allegedly manifested, with the country's security forces reportedly executing a cameraman and his family in the capital city of Bujumbura. [34] Similar reports of a TV journalist being shot to death emerged from Uganda in October 2015, while covering an incident of vote rigging during the National Resistance Movement party elections. [35]

It's worth noting that free and fair elections are the cornerstone of democracy, be it in democratic rule or democratic transition, so the actions of various governments across Africa ring in direct and alarming opposition to the preservation of democratic valuers in the continent. In Cote d'Ivoire, reporters were apprehended by the police and held in arbitrary detention which continues to this day. [36]

Attempts to curtail the media's reach have gone beyond cronyism and blunt violence, with attempted systemic dismantling of infrastructure. A law to permit confiscation of data and video evidence from NGOs and civil society organization is under discussion in Kenya. In Tanzania, weekly newspaper *Maiwo* was permanently banned after the incumbent government took umbrage to their reporting on the Zanzibar elections. [37] Elsewhere, Nigeria approved a Frivolous Petitions Bill

in December 2015 to crack down on public interest litigation that used evidence from non-state sanctioned media to build a case against the government. [38]

5.5 Grulac - Caribbean Group

Until the 2000s, the private sector in Latin America held monopoly over much of the media's ownership. However, due to the rise of left-wing governments throughout the continent within the last 15 years, media rules have been re-drawn through new reforms. These have pushed substantial changes, but failed in completely altering the system. [39] Some media groups are now labeled as pro-government and have defended the executive branches of their respective countries while other conglomerates have presented themselves as defenders of freedom against the censorship of the State, by broadcasting ideologically-oriented content against elected governments. [40]

In the name of democratizing mass media, governments in Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador, Bolivia etc. have played significant roles in change. A 2014 report by UNESCO, stated that the "information and communications markets of each country were controlled by one provider [and] several Latin American countries have approved new media laws [in order to make the] landscape more pluralistic and less concentrated." According to the UNESCO, this movement has been viewed as "an opportunity for the governments to act against media outlets that have been critical of their administrations." In these countries, there is a strong battle over the application of these regulations, which could have been rendered more positive if they had not been tainted by a degree of political polarization at the moment of practical improvement. [41]

In Argentina, the Audiovisual Communications Services Law was enacted in 2009, which aimed to reform the concentration of media ownership and redistribute broadcasting licenses into three

different sectors: private, public, and communitarian. It was followed by an anti-terrorism law in 2011, which "holds the media liable for reporting on issues that could 'terrorize' the public." [42]

Similar regulations have been passed in Venezuela. In 2000 and 2004, Venezuelan lawmakers approved new regulations under the Social Responsibility in Television and Radio Law (*Ley Responsabilidad Social en Radio y Television, Resorte*), which forbade content inciting hatred, intolerance, and racism. Because of the polarized political climate in Venezuela, it is difficult to trust the neutrality of any overseeing regulatory body. [43]

In Bolivia, the Law Against Racism and Any Form of Discrimination states that the government has the right to act against the mass media. The freedom of the press is also a subject seen as very polarized. Tensions between media and government are not well integrated in the political culture, and the political actors see every critique as an act of hostility against the government, allegedly backed by the political opposition, with the government publishing a list of the journalists "hostile" to the country, in September 2006, further intensifying tensions. [44]

In Mexico, a new Audiovisual Reform was promulgated in June 2013. The Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto declared that its goal was to reduce the shared monopolistic position of the Mexican conglomerates, such as *Televisa* and *Tele Azteca*, however numerous media factions including journalists, associations, and individuals, criticized it because they felt it sought to push restrictive regulations under the veneer of a reportage sharing system, was susceptible to economic and crony interference, and had the potential to reduce Internet privacy under the excuse of security. [45]

Elsewhere in Colombia and Brazil, controversy has raged in public debate since late 2015 calling for better measures by the government for protection of journalists against professional and individual interference. Murders of prominent, provocative regional bloggers, the public shooting of a Brazilian

radio reporter in Pernambuco, [46] and apparent intimidation and gunfire upon the house of a journalist covering land disputes in Paraná all bringing the spotlight firmly on the government. [47]

5.6 Asia - Pacific Group

The past few years have shown that even in the Asia-Pacific, democratic countries and governments can be extremely sensitive to criticism. Media freedom continues its struggle against censorship pressure, intimidatory tactics by state and other forces, political instability, impediments to access of official information, criminalization of online speech and a near-perfect climate of impunity for attacks and threats against journalists. [48]

The Philippines remains a prime country of concern across the region. Since May 2014, five journalists have been brutally murdered, bringing the total number of journalists killed since 1986 to 172. In Thailand, since the coup in 2014 that saw the military junta take over, the country's media has been attacked from all angles. Almost immediately following the coup, martial law was installed and the media came under fierce attack: several journalists were detained and 100 websites, 15 television stations and numerous community radio stations were blocked under the guise of 'preserving peace and order'. Some media outlets were shut down and premises were 'guarded' by armed soldiers.

Press Freedom in Myanmar has been on the steady decline over the past 12 months with journalists facing charges of defamation, erroneous reporting and lengthy jail sentences. Ten journalists are serving prison terms and another 20 are awaiting trial. They join five other journalists who were

jailed in July 2015 under Section 5 of the Emergency Provisions Act which prohibits 'spreading of false news'. [49]

In China, the situation has steadily evolved since Xi Jinping became President in 2013. President Xi set up the Central Internet Security and Informatization Leading Group to focus on cyber security, whose efforts have allegedly limited the freedom of at least 600 million netizens to exercise their right of expression to date. China's constitution affords its citizens freedom of speech and press, but the opacity of its media regulations allows authorities to crack down on news stories by claiming that they expose state secrets and endanger the country. The definition of state secrets in China remains vague, facilitating censorship of any information that authorities deem harmful to their political or economic interests.

The Chinese government deploys myriad ways of censoring the Internet. The Golden Shield Project, colloquially known as the Great Firewall, is the center of the government's online censorship and surveillance effort. Its methods include bandwidth throttling, keyword filtering, and blocking access to certain websites. In 2009, Chinese rights activist Liu Xiaobo was sentenced to 11 years in prison for advocating democratic reforms and freedom of speech in Charter 08, a 2008 statement signed by more than two thousand prominent Chinese citizens that called for political and human rights reforms and an end to one-party rule. When Liu won the Nobel Peace Prize, censors blocked the news in China. [50]

In the Indian sub-continent, impunity continues to fester. In Nepal, Maoist party activists were more aggressive towards journalists who criticized their leaders, especially in the run-up to constituent assembly elections. In Bangladesh, independent bloggers, especially those covering the trials of former political leaders accused of war crimes during the 1971 independence war, have been the targets of constant attacks. Journalists were targeted by police during a series of demonstrations in

2015 regarding a blasphemy law. A similarly alarming situation was found in Pakistan, where the government seems powerless against not only the Taliban, Jihadis and other armed groups but also the military apparatus, which international observers describe as a "state within the state." Seven journalists were murdered in connection with their work in 2013-14. The intelligence agencies, especially Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), continue to represent a danger. Journalists who dare to speak out accuse the military of spying on media personnel, abducting them, torturing them and even murdering them.

In India itself, freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed, but provisional to certain restrictions on content, with a view towards maintaining communal and religious harmony, given the history of communal tension in the nation. According to the Information Technology Rules 2011, objectionable content includes anything that "threatens the unity, integrity, defence, security or sovereignty of India, friendly relations with foreign states or public order". There is no sustained government policy or strategy to block access to Internet content on a large scale, but measures for removing certain content from the web, sometimes for fear they could incite violence, have become more common. Pressure on private companies to remove information that is perceived to endanger public order or national security has increased since late 2009. Internet users have sporadically faced prosecution for online postings, and private companies hosting the content are obliged by law to hand over user information to the authorities. Both bloggers and moderators can face libel suits and even criminal prosecution for comments posted by other users on their websites. [51]

Censorship in Iran is largely seen as a measure to maintain the stability of the country. Censorship helps prevent unapproved reformist, counter-revolutionary, or religious proponents, peaceful or otherwise, from organizing themselves and spreading their ideals. Some of the topics explicitly banned from discussion in the media by the Supreme National Security Council include Iran's

economic troubles, the possibility of new international sanctions targeted at Iran's nuclear program, negotiations with the United States regarding Iraq, social taboos, unrest among Iran's ethnic minorities, etc. Most forms of permissible media in the country are vetted for acceptability by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

The agents of censorship are sometimes not official government employees, but religious organizations. In 2007, after student newspapers at Amirkabir University of Technology published articles suggesting that no human being — including Muhammad — could be infallible, 8 student leaders were removed to Evin Prison. In the first decade of the 21st century, Iran experienced a great surge in Internet usage, and, with 20 million people on the Internet. When initially introduced, the Internet services provided by the government within Iran were comparatively open and many users saw the Internet as an easy way to get around Iran's strict press laws. In recent years, Internet service providers have been told to block access to pornographic and anti-religion websites. The ban has also targeted such popular social networking sites as Facebook and YouTube, as well as news sites. [52]

South Korea continues to imprison citizens, bloggers, and reporters for broadcasting 'false information' and 'defamatory content' about the President and his government, with crackdown on even airing or sharing of satirical content. Most found guilty were put into arbitrary detention, or forced to enlist for the army — South Korea being a state that mandates conscription for all adults. In North Korea, the situation for journalists remained as opaque as ever, with the information 'black-hole' in the country persisting across all forms of communication, along with zero internet access for ordinary citizens, leading to the DPRK finishing 179th in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index 2014

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