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undermining the
multilateral system

POWER SUPPLY

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assesses options for
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Using local supplies to
significantly improve
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FOCUS

Dangerous disinformation

Fighting for the truth

Disinformation can start anywhere and spread fast via social media. Africa is affected, so fact-checking has become indispensable, as Alphonce Shiundu of Africa Check points out. **PAGE 24**

Verification matters

People who work under great pressure are likely to make mistakes. That is no different in online journalism. In Uganda, the Hub for Investigative Media teaches journalists to check facts and ensure digital safety. The Hub's Edward Sekyewa reports. **PAGE 26**

Diligent media use

Social media thrive on active participation. It is essential to teach youngsters information ethics. That will enable them to produce content properly and digest information diligently. Namibia's Media and Information Literacy Learning Initiative is promoting this cause, writes staff member Julia Odoj. **PAGE 28**

Disruptive social media

Intentionally fabricated fake news resonates tremendously on social media. In digitised societies, people must learn at a young age to handle information well, argues Benjamin Gaul of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. According to Patrick Schlereth, a German journalist, Facebook and other social-media platforms must shore up their act and limit the scope for disinformation. **PAGES 30, 32**

Powerful lies

Two years ago, President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines rose to power on a wave of disinformation. While propaganda has always marked politics, it has become much more forceful thanks to digitised media, warns Alan C. Robles, a Manila-based journalist. **PAGE 34**

Pressure increasing on Indian journalists

Disinformation has become a serious issue in India, and independent journalism is increasingly on the defensive. TV journalist Arfa Khanum Sherwani assesses how the government and its Hindu-nationalist supporters are dividing the nation. **PAGE 36**

Discerning public

Disinformation is currently flooding entire nations. Authoritarian governments have always done anything they could to shape the worldview of the people they oppress, of course, but that citizens of democracies are exposed to fabricated lies is a worrisome trend. Too many people fall for forged news that is spread with the goal of manipulating the public.

This crisis has several dimensions. All must be tackled. Information technology has spawned new ways of communicating. Social media are especially important. There is an obvious need to regulate major internet platforms in ways to protect users' rights (including privacy), ensure the reliability of information and limit monopolistic power. Multinational corporations – and in particular the Faangs (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google) – must not stay beyond anyone's control. Action is necessary at the international level, and rich nations must lead. The EU directive on privacy, which will take force in May, is a good start.

Another reason disinformation has become dangerous is the crisis of long-established media. Business models have become obsolete as news has become freely available on the internet, and advertising has moved there too. All too often, revenues now bypass conventional media houses to the benefit of web businesses, in particular Facebook and Google. Both deny any responsibility for content.

At least in the advanced nations, journalists, who are responsible for content, tend to be less well-paid today than in the past. Staff has been cut, in some cases dramatically. No doubt, professional journalists must always strive to meet high standards, but if their workload just keeps growing, they are sure to struggle. If good work is not paid appropriately, it will not stay good.

Those who consume news must assume responsibility too. It is absurd to trust anything that pops up on one's screen and, at best, check whether it suits one's ideological leanings. To understand what is going on in the world, one must consider more than one perspective. Taking into account inconvenient truths is in everybody's self-interest.

Paying attention to sources and assessing their merit is probably the most important aspect of media literacy. Quality media indicate where information comes from, and they depend on a multitude of sources. News organisations that do not convey an understanding of both sides in any relevant dispute are unreliable. On the other hand, journalists who simply give both sides equal space are not doing their job either. Superficial equidistance does not help to reveal the truth. If, for example, a news organisation pretends that climate-change deniers and climate scientists are of equal relevance, it obviously fails to assess the relevance of sources properly.

The less people know about how journalists work and what standards apply for what reasons, the easier they will be fooled. Occasional inaccuracies do not add up to systemic disinformation. The real problem are fabricated stories that are designed to mislead and confuse.

Only a discerning public will understand these things, so media savviness is actually a civic duty. If too many people cannot tell reliable information from mere agitation or entertainment, we will one day discover that we are living in a disinformation nightmare rather than an information society. Populist leaders are currently attacking the freedom of the press – along with other democratic principles.

► You'll find all contributions of our focus section plus related ones on our website – they'll be compiled in next month's briefing section.



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Debate



Daunting challenge

Abiy Ahmed Ali is the new Ethiopian prime minister and belongs to the Oromo ethnic group. The 42-year-old leader has his work cut out for him. His country is deeply divided, and young people demand opportunities as well as political influence. Ludger Schadomsky of Deutsche Welle assesses the situation.

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Tribune



Global transformation

Germany's Energiewende has become an international model. To control global warming, however, switching to renewable energy is not enough. The entire economy needs to be reconfigured, as became evident during a conference in Berlin. D+C/E+Z intern Drake Jamali reports.

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Meals support learning

Children who are malnourished or even suffer hunger do worse at school than their peers. Free school meals are an effective way to fight poverty and promote learning. This is particularly true in countries with high enrolment rates, like Cambodia for instance. Frank Bliss, a social anthropologist, has done research on the matter.

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SDGS

Official statistics must improve

Growing demand for public services is putting pressure on local governments and stakeholders. Access to solid data might help policymakers. The goal is to reach neglected communities.

By Drake Jamali

Developing countries have a persistent problem regarding statistics. International institutions and governments alike cannot accurately assess progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without the help of trained personnel on the ground collecting reliable data. Presently, several organisations are rising to this challenge. One of them is the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

As OCHA officer Kareem Elbayar reports, one of the greatest problems facing many SDG stakeholders is the lack of data. OCHA has created an extensive data-exchange network, which has over 400 global partners who have helped create around 6,000 datasets; the New York Times being a prominent user. Elbayar says, “the goal of OCHA is to freely spread data for everyone everywhere”.

The idea is to build a trusted framework and set something like baselines to measure SDG progress, Elbayar told a UN-hosted conference on the SDGs in March. This framework could give stakeholders the needed information to draft more effective policy.

The greatest challenge, according to the UN official, is to gather the information that will later prove useful. That is not always an obvious task. Elbayar cited the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh as a prime example of authorities and relief organisations lacking reliable data to fully diagnose a disaster. “The goal for data collection is that no group should be left behind,” Elbayar reports.

Modern satellite mapping technology, GPS for example, can help non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to accurately send aid to where it is needed most. Joachim Post of Germany’s space agency DLR (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt) says: “Combining modern technology for the purposes of data-collection to maximise relief efforts is what we want to accomplish.” Post hopes relevant information will be made available to anyone concerned via a wider data grid. That could help developing countries create and manage reasonable baselines for achieving the SDGs.

Satellite images can help to assess the quality of the regional school infrastructure, but Catherine Blampied of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), a London based think-tank, insists that more trained statisticians are needed on the ground: “It is difficult to trust some of the local statistics agencies, because they usually are not collecting high-quality data.” More funding is needed to attract professionals to remote areas.

The scholar has been working on creating quasi-base-lines since 2016. So far, her case studies concern Ghana, Kenya and Nepal, focusing on projects relating to health, education and infrastructure. Blampied explains that, “during the initial collection process I discovered many regions had little to no aggregated or disaggregated data regarding the desired metrics.” The biggest disparities were between urban and rural communities.

In Ghana, for example, education is the government’s top priority, with public expenditures exceeding 25%, Blampied reports. Yet, even with the vast amount of money being spent on education, there is still a large gap in data to accurately measure learning outcomes. According to the scholar, “18% of children, in particular girls, in northern Ghana are not presently attending school, while the national average is just four percent”. Blampied surmises that this disparity is because northern Ghana is predominantly rural and less developed than urban areas in the south.

Another pressing issue is the lack of data on marginalised groups, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community. Justus Einfeld of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) says, “44% of the world population lives in countries where being in the LGBTI community is illegal or severely punished.” Discrimination makes data collection difficult everywhere, however. As Einfeld admits, the data situation concerning sexual minorities is not good in advanced nations either because stigmatised people tend not to respond honestly in representative surveys.



Satellite images help, but data-collection on the ground is indispensable: a settlement in northern Ghana.

SDGS

New development finance

Implementing the sustainable development agenda will cost huge sums. New financing methods may be the answer to bridge gaps.

By Drake Jamali

New financing methods may help to achieve development goals. One option are so-called “diaspora bonds”, says Tauni Lanier, senior advisor for United Smart Cities, a global multi-stakeholder platform. A diaspora bond is exclusively for non-resident nationals who still have strong ties to their country of origin. The India Development Bonds (IDBs)

frastructure and service projects”. She says that bond holders receive higher yields than those of 10-year US Treasury notes. To fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Government of India recently established the National Institution for Transforming India. Diaspora bonds will help to fund some of its programmes.

Lanier believes that so-called “social impact bonds” are another method of attracting potential investors to development. Bonds are very appealing to philanthropist investors, who want to donate their money for charitable causes. Social impact bonds

rencies are a kind of digital money that is protected from hacking and fraud. Bitcoin is the best-known crypto-currency. Using “block chain” technology, private and public-sector agents can create their own crypto-currencies to attract investment for specific development projects. “There are already 11 block chain start-ups specifically for the SDGs”, Lanier reports.

In Lanier’s eyes, enough funding for development purposes is available in principle, but a lot of it is not getting to the right places. “Blended finance” may help. The term means to combine traditional philanthropic funding with mainstream financing which seeks returns for investors. Lanier argues that philanthropic grants mean a 100% loss for the benefactor, but if the grant is paired with a market-driven approach “we could see grant funding receive yields as high as eight percent”. That would be perfect for pension funds, for example, Lanier explains.

According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the SDGs could cost more than \$2.5 trillion. Blended finance could potentially help to close the funding gap.

Domenica Carriero of the UN Economic Commission for Europe says that finding new financing streams is not the only thing that matters: “National or local governments are the main stakeholders in development.” If there is a lack of political will, she points out, it will be close to impossible to mobilise appropriate funding for the SDGs. In her eyes, it is essential to hold accountable the governments and other stakeholders who signed on to the SDGs. Grassroots projects, according to her, are especially important in countries with weak institutions that struggle to implement top-down programmes.

Carriero adds that emerging markets and developing countries must improve data collection (see article p.4). Reliable data are important for monitoring development projects and funding new ones. In her eyes, capacity building at the grassroots level would be helpful in many less-affluent cities. To make the most of new approaches to financing, policies must be well-designed and data-driven, Carriero says. Otherwise money may just be wasted. Input from citizens and various institutional stakeholders should be considered. Promoting literacy helps, she says.



The Government of India wants expats to invest in development schemes: celebrating Tamil Heritage Month in the Canadian province of Ontario.

were created by the Government of India which wants Indian expatriates to invest in development schemes. They send home some \$70 billion of remittances per year.

According to Lanier, the IDBs are a prime example of “seeking new financial streams for the purpose of investing in in-

can, for example, fund a jail’s efforts to treat inmates well, provide skills training and ensure they do not re-offend after being released, Lanier told a conference on SDG issues in Bonn in late March.

Crypto-currencies can make a difference too, according to Lanier. Crypto-cur-

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

Budding businesses

Burundi's recent past is marked by political unrest and violence. Nonetheless, entrepreneurs – especially women – are starting new businesses and taking innovative approaches. They want to make a difference and hope to contribute to improving the investment climate.

By Drake Jamali

Annick Kabatesi wants to make Burundi the fashion capital of eastern Africa. Her own firm Murundikazi markets a range of products. Besides clothes, it includes accessories and household items which are made from used plastic bags. In 2014, the East African Community passed several measures to reduce plastic waste. Burundi was one of the first countries to ratify those measures. "If we can utilise these clean-up initiatives effectively, we can establish more robust sustainable business models like this all over Africa," Kabatesi says. The carbon footprint of her goods is minimal she says, because the plastic she uses was produced and disposed of. Kabatesi emphasises that all her products are locally sourced and create local employment.

Burundi is seeing substantial growth in its business climate. Anny Darlene Ndorimana, founder of the consultancy RC



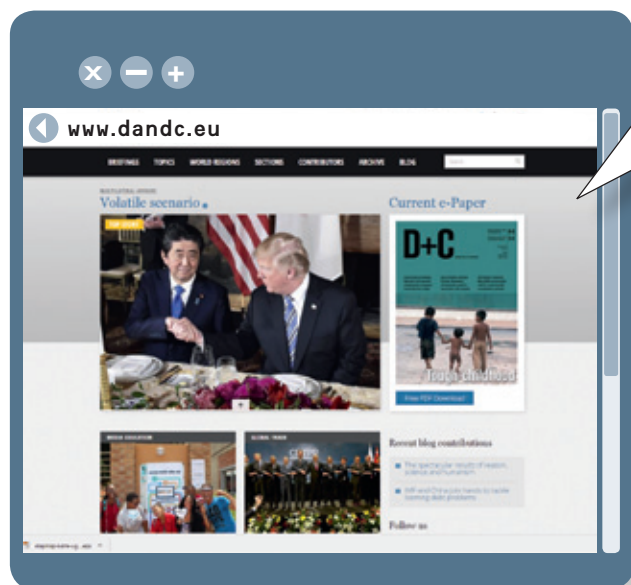
Burundian garment manufacturers increasingly see the merits of vocational training.

Retraining, says: "Entrepreneurs are determined to create a robust business culture in Burundi." This is especially true in the emerging fashion and textile industries. Ndorimana explains that digitalisation is making markets more accessible and states: "This is a great time for business expansion in Burundi."

As Ndorimana stated during a panel discussion in Stuttgart in April, some small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are beginning to copy the German model of vocational training by developing apprenticeships for young people. Stuttgart is the capital of the Baden-Württemberg, the German state that has a partnership with Burundi. The event was hosted by the SEZ, the state's foundation for development cooperation (Stiftung Entwicklungszusammenarbeit).

Ndorimana believes there is a chance to create a sustainable business climate: "Burundi needs to experiment with business models that work best for locals and must look to create their own unique direction for private sector growth." Young entrepreneurs still face several difficulties. Major obstacles include finding adequate financial partners and institutional support. Ndorimana hopes that the government will contribute to improving the business environment for SMEs.

Ginette Karirekinyana is the founder of Karire products. Her business is fighting Malaria. She sells a mosquito-repellent soap and a tea that reduces consumer's risk of mosquito bites. In her eyes, the Malaria problem should be mitigated through the use of local resources. "I want to allow Burundians to have alternatives to more expensive and often not available western drugs that help fight malaria." Karirekinyana says. She uses locally sourced plants and herbs with mosquito-repellent qualities. She says she is proud that "my home-grown enterprise can help to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals."



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2030 AGENDA

Room for improvement

In order for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved worldwide, partnerships between different actors are needed. A current study deals with the question of which partnerships are successful. It also shows what partnerships already exist. Experience to date is mixed.

By Sabine Balk

The study “Partnerships at the service of the sustainable development agenda” was written by Marianne Beisheim and Anne Ellersiek of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP – Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik). It focuses on multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs). These are long-term cooperative efforts that involve state and non-state actors (such as non-governmental organisations or private-sector businesses) and aim to promote the common good.

According to SDG 17, MSPs must contribute to mobilising knowledge, technology and financial resources for SDG achievement. An examples of a successful MSP is the GAVI vaccination alliance, which relies on the governments of developed and developing countries, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, NGOs, vaccine manufacturers, research institutions and private donors.

To be successful, a partnership must be effective, inclusive and act responsibly, the scholars argue. Numerous preconditions must be met, which is why “targeted frameworks” and “continuous learning processes” are important. An MSP’s work should be reviewed and improved constantly.

Among other things, the authors present the results of a survey of international actors from UN organisations, donor institutions, governments and private initiatives. Their respondents assessed what partnerships have achieved so far and commented on what framework conditions would serve future partnerships.

All respondents agreed that partnerships must become more transformative, in-

clusive and responsible. However, opinions diverged as to whether and how this can be done. According to Beisheim and Ellersiek, many NGOs completely rejected public-private partnerships (PPP) that involve the private sector. At the very least, the NGOs argued, governments should have decision-making power and impose strict rules on companies.

In contrast, more business-oriented groups rejected too much bureaucracy, arguing that red tape would deter potential partners and prevent innovation and flexibility. However, most respondents took a pragmatic stance. They wanted to build partnerships, but often did not know exactly how. Beisheim and Ellersiek regret that they are unable to provide tangible recommendations on how to improve MSPs. Only few interviewees offered tangible ideas.

The major part of their study discusses the extent to which the UN, donor institutions, governments or private actors are already providing “meta-governance” in order to establish, steer and review partner-

ships in a more targeted manner. The authors understand meta-governance to mean overarching principles and rules that serve to boost partnerships. Once more, the results are mixed. Some approaches to meta-governance have been taken, but action is fragmented and often incoherent.

As an example of meta-governance, the authors point out donor governments using the allocation of funds to promote and shape partnerships, regulations and conditions. However, donors have not yet made sufficient use of their potential.

Germany currently co-chairs the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) together with Bangladesh and Uganda. One of the objectives is to build partnerships in accordance with the principles of aid effectiveness. According to the authors, Germany should push the topic forward. They consider it useful for the GPEDC to provide a platform on which partnerships could exchange experiences and work together.

LINK

Beisheim, M. and Ellersiek, A., 2018: Partnerschaften im Dienst der Agenda für nachhaltige Entwicklung (SWP) (only in German):

https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2017S22_bsh_ellk.pdf



GAVI is a successful multi-stakeholder partnership – pneumococcal and rotavirus vaccination in Ghana.

POVERTY

Poor conceptions

Neither the staff of development agencies nor scholars tend to ask poor people about how they see their own situation. Such neglect limits our understanding of poverty and distorts policymaking.

By Monika Hellstern

Mariano Féliz and Aaron L. Rosenberg are researchers with an interest in improving matters. A book they edited explores options. In “The Political Economy of Poverty and Social Transformations of the Global South” the two editors argue that poverty is commonly believed to be a purely quantifiable phenomenon. A case in point is the World Bank’s widely accepted measure of poverty (less than the purchasing power of \$ 1.90 per day and head). However, poverty is about more than a lack of money. For subsistence farmers, for example, money is less important than other resources. Ideas of wealth are complex too. The two scholars generally find the understanding of poverty in official development discourse to be disconnected from the affected people’s personal experience.

As Jude Ssempebwa and Jacqueline Nakaiza argue in one of the book’s chapters, many poverty alleviation programmes have failed in sub-Saharan Africa because the target groups’ views were not taken into account. Drawing on research done in East Africa, the authors suggest that poverty alleviation programmes are more effective when the people, whose life they are supposed to improve, are involved in design and implementation.

In contrast to academics’ perception, the people concerned may actually not consider themselves poor. Development professionals tend to ignore the resources that poor people possess, Ssempebwa and Nakaiza warn. They write that the communities living in poverty must not be viewed as passive consumers but regarded as agents.

In another chapter, Pablo E. Pérez and Brenda Brown analyse changes in social protection systems in Latin America.

They argue that the introduction of conditional cash-transfer policies since the 1990s has had only limited success. These programmes transfer money to poor families under the condition that they send their children to school or attend health services. They also seek to improve unemployed people’s job prospects by linking cash benefits to participation in skills training.

The authors point out that such programmes may reduce the severity of poverty, but they do not allow people to escape poverty. While target groups’ ability to cover basic needs improves, they do not become upwardly mobile. Pérez and Brown also bemoan that cash-transfer programmes serve to control and manage poor people’s behaviour. They find it irritating that people not only have to prove that they are needy, but also that they are worthy of support.

Innocent Chirisa did research on peri-urbanisation in Africa. The results show that poor people are resilient and exert agency in the face of adversity. Slums have proliferated around major African cities leading to new environmental, socioeconomic and political challenges. Many slum dwellers do not have access to basic services like water and sanitation, electricity or transportation. Compounding the problems, informal settlements are often located on disused landfills and wetland areas prone to flooding.

Nonetheless, residents manage to grasp opportunities, Chirisa writes. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for example, people generate income with peri-urban agriculture and horticulture. They supply food to urban markets. Studies show that they produce about one third of the vegetables consumed in the city. Their share of the leafy-vegetable supply is even up to 70%.

Another example concerns township residents in Cape Town, South Africa. Chirisa reports that they make a living by selling petty commodities, running shops and making repairs. When designing city management systems, policymakers would therefore be well-advised to consider inno-

vations made by those who dwell in informal settlements.

The different chapters show that poverty is not a perpetual state of lack, nor can it be defined simply in terms of money. It makes sense to recognise “the poor” as actively engaged people who address their situation by innovative means. Moreover, there may not be a universal idea of the good life that can be implemented in top-



In Cairo, Egypt, garbage collectors make a living by collecting and sorting trash.

down approaches – whether by national governments or international donor agencies. To be effective, development efforts should take target groups’ perspectives into account.

BOOK

Féliz, M. and Rosenberg, A.L. (Eds.) 2017: *The Political Economy of Poverty and Social Transformations of the Global South*. Stuttgart, ibidem-Verlag.

Obesity is the new health challenge

From young children to adults in their 70s, ever more people in Zimbabwe are obese. This is a consequence of the changing lifestyle, especially in urban areas and among the emerging middle class. People get less physical exercise and consume more pre-processed food. Health officials' warnings are falling on deaf ears.

At the age of 24, Tigere Chitagu is overweight. He is from a low-income suburb of Mabvuku in Harare, the Zimbabwean capital. Chitagu's parents migrated to neighbouring South Africa a decade ago in search of work. They regularly send him and his siblings staple foodstuffs, such as mealie meal and cooking oil.

"My siblings and I depend on food and groceries that our parents send us

from Johannesburg. Food is cheaper in South Africa," Chitagu explains. Asked about weighing almost 90 kilogrammes at a young age, Chitagu claims he is happy the way he is. To him, it is a sign of good living. "I have enough food, and that is why I am big," he brags.

But behind his back, Loveness Chipiri, one of his neighbours, accuses Chitagu and his siblings of gluttonous dependence on processed foods from South Africa. "These boys eat too much food items sent by their parents living in South Africa. As a result, all of them are obese," Chipiri says.

Today, an increasing number of Zimbabweans are overweight. Their dietary habits put their health at risk as hypertension, diabetes and other illnesses are related to obesity. Long-term consequences may include stroke, heart attack and kidney failure.

According to Takudzwa Mhere, a medical doctor in private practice based in Harare, health experts are urging people to adopt healthy diets and exercise more. He regrets that "many abhor sports". Lack of exercise compounds the health risks, but overweight people find exercising particularly hard.

The 2015 Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey shows that 35% of Zimbabwean women are obese, and so are 12% of men. Overweight in this Southern African nation is most common among women with more than secondary education (57%) and those belonging to the wealthiest households (50%). Zimbabwe has a population of approximately 16 million, 54% of whom are women.

Bernard Madzima, the director of Family Health in Zimbabwe's Ministry of Health and Child Care, says the current environment "encourages energy consumption and discourages energy spending". This may be contributing towards the upsurge of obesity in Zimbabwe: "Obesity is a result of poor diet and inactivity. Unhealthy foods are also believed to account for the increased pervasiveness of obesity," Madzima explains.



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DR CONGO

Dangerous power play

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, President Joseph Kabila has postponed parliamentary and presidential elections for a third time. They are now scheduled for 23 December 2018, leaving the country in political limbo that is aggravating a situation that is fast deteriorating in social, economic and human-rights terms.

By Gesine Ames

As Kabila's family continues to expand its burgeoning business empire to line its own pockets, Congo's president is tightening his grip on office. He has recently hired private presidential guards and, under the guise of reforms, installed loyal supporters in the police and army. Informal networks which are loyal to the president have emerged, bridging chaotic gaps that result from state institutions' dysfunction. These developments have quashed any hope that Kabila might still willingly renounce an unconstitutional third term in office.

The government expects the elections to cost about \$1.2 billion and has announced it will take the money from state coffers. It also stated it will resist any attempts to impose conditions from the outside. While it is hard to predict the ramifications accurately, these assertions seem to indicate that the

government sees no need for external funding, logistical and technical support or independent elections monitors.

Electronic voting machines have become the topic of hot debate. CENI, the formally independent electoral commission is in favour of their use, while many from the opposition and civil society disagree. Detractors argue that it would be unwise to experiment with an unfamiliar technology that is not only hard to deploy, but impractical in rural areas. Moreover, critics claim voting machines could be used to manipulate the election in the government's favour.

In the current political vacuum, the security situation is deteriorating seriously. Violent assaults have become a daily occurrence. In addition to the dozens of active militia groups (see interview with Christoph Vogel in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/02, p. 26), criminal gangs are taking advantage of the absence of law enforcement and an effective judiciary. Ongoing conflicts and crises used to be limited primarily to the resource-rich eastern provinces, but they are now spreading. Militias are re-organising, forming alliances of convenience and touting political slogans to underscore their business ambitions. Civilians frequently become victims of increasing violence. The UN Refugee Agency UNHCR currently estimates that

around 4.5 million people are internally displaced while another 622,000 have fled to neighbouring countries.

In January and February, Catholic lay organisations called for peaceful demonstrations against the abuse of power and for a non-violent regime change. Security clamped down with brutal force all over the country. The UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO has reported at least eight dead, over 150 injured and more than 220 arrested – including many members of the clergy.

Instead of condemning these events, the government has gone on the attack, accusing the Catholic Church of meddling in politics. The Church, it says, should stay out of government affairs and confine itself to addressing social issues. The Kabila administration also emphasises its right to stop "terrorist violence", a catch-all term applied indiscriminately to anyone who dares to criticise the regime. It is absurd that the DRC was chosen to be a member of the UN Human Rights Council on 16 October.

On 27 March, the UN Security Council agreed to extend the peacekeeping mission and give it a mandate to protect peaceful rallies. The mission thus faces additional challenges. The Security Council is under pressure to act more assertively as the peacekeepers' operations are unlikely to make much progress in the DRC's difficult setting.

The opposition is too fragmented to challenge the current government, so people are placing high hopes in the churches. Despite all the reprisals, the Catholic Bishops' Conference (CENCO) still demands a peaceful transfer of power. It calls for political responsibility, respect for the constitution and transparent and fair elections. Catholics urgently need Protestant support, and all eyes are currently on the new president of the ECC, the Congo's large union of Protestant churches. The EU should support the churches and civil-society movements in the DRC, putting pressure on the government. Moreover, it must intensify talks with the African Union and neighbouring countries.



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Security is rapidly deteriorating: internally displaced people in Bunia in eastern Congo.

EU POLICY

Tackling trade and migration

To mitigate the root causes of flight and migration, Germany's Federal Government is contemplating fair-trade agreements with the countries where refugees come from. The North African experience shows this will require a re-think of EU policy.

By Nassir Djafari

Most migrants and refugees who arrive at Europe's borders are fleeing countries whose most important trading partner is the European Union (EU). The exchange of goods with Europe has an impact on crisis countries' economic and social conditions and affects the circumstances that drive people to abandon their homelands.

North Africa plays a key role in this context, since it is a region of origin and transit of migrants to Europe. Furthermore, the EU concluded bilateral preferential agreements with North African countries about 50 years ago. Recent research shows that free trade with the EU has had adverse impacts on the region's economies. After trade barriers were removed, industrial goods from EU member states conquered North Africa's markets. EU-based compa-

nies displaced less competitive regional suppliers, curtailing local production and destroying jobs. This downward trend was driven in particular by the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which redefined trade relations from 1995 on.

The EMP replaced the cooperation accords that had been concluded in the 1970s. The previous agreements had included protections for North African manufacturers, but given them free access to the European market. Partner countries were allowed to levy customs duties to protect businesses. The association agreements concluded in the framework of the EMP, however, set a 12-year deadline for lifting all customs barriers.

In contrast, protectionism still marks the agricultural sector. So far, only few trade facilitations apply to this sector. The EU continues to impose high tariffs on a number of products, such as fruit and fish for example. Moreover, EU subsidies give European farmers a competitive advantage over North African ones.

The EU is now pursuing what is called the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). The idea is to further expand free trade with the region. Negotia-

tions with Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have begun. Unlike previous association agreements, DCFTA will liberalise agricultural trade, services and foreign direct investment. Moreover, the EU wants to harmonise rules on public procurement and quality standards. Partner countries are expected to adopt EU regulations. Doing so will require comprehensive reforms, for which the EU has pledged technical support.

Liberalisation of the agricultural sector will take place after a transition period. The EU is ready to open its markets for the most part, but is granting partner countries no more than ten years to lift tariff barriers.

In principle, giving partner countries preferential access during a transition period so they can prepare for competition is a sensible approach. But the EMP deadlines set were too tight to allow the Moroccan textile industry, for example, to gain sufficient ground on European markets. The development gap and slow pace of reforms make it difficult to predict how long it will take North African economies to catch up with Europe.

Of course, North African countries cannot avoid opening up to the world market forever. Nonetheless, import protection deadlines should depend on the competitiveness of local sectors rather than rigid deadlines. Otherwise North African companies are likely to be forced out of business – and joblessness will rise accordingly.

The complexity of DCFTA is incompatible with the ground realities. This is especially true of the demand that North African countries adopt EU norms and standards. They lack the prospect of joining the EU, which might justify such sweeping reform measures. North African governments are struggling to keep social tensions from escalating further, and they must shore up eroding state institutions. The EU would make a significant contribution to improving the economic circumstances if it adopted a trade policy that was less ambitious but more responsive to the interests of partner countries. Such an approach would open new perspectives for people in their homelands.



Sugar cane harvest in Luxor, Egypt.



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HORN OF AFRICA

Huge challenge

Eloquent and polyglot Abiy Ahmed Ali is Ethiopia's new prime minister. He hails from the Oromo majority group. The 42-year-old policymaker must rise to daunting challenges since his country is deeply divided.

By Ludger Schadomsky

After Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned, six long weeks passed before a new head of government was nominated. During this time, violent protests flared up across the country. Journalists and opposition members were freed from prison – only to be re-arrested. Speculations ran wild as to who would rise to power and which ethnic group that person would belong to. Behind-doors politicking showed that the ruling EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front), which has been in power for a quarter of a century, was nervous and struggling with internal dissent.

The EPRDF is an alliance of four parties which represent Ethiopia's most important ethnic groups, including the Oromo. Making up about one third of the 105 million Ethiopians, they were always dominated by the Amhara, Ethiopia's traditional rulers, or the Tigre minority. The latter, from the early 1990s on, called the shots in economic and political affairs. They also controlled the military and the intelligence services.

Abiy only became involved in politics in 2010, rising fast in the ranks of the Oromo party OPDO. He became a member of parliament and briefly served as minister of science and technology, before becoming the vice president of Oromia, his home region.

Following his ascent to the premiership, some people are now asking pointed questions about his earlier stint in the leadership of INSA, Ethiopia's cyber spy-agency, as well as in military intelligence. His army rank is lieutenant colonel. Nonetheless, most Ethiopians appear to consider him a good guy who is serious about national reconciliation and reforms.

The big issue, however, is whether the newcomer can prevail in the struggle with

the ancient regime in Ethiopia's security establishment.

Having grown up under EPRDF's infamous system of patronage and surveillance, young Ethiopians lack first-hand experience of a peaceful transition of power. They in particular are not likely to give Abiy the benefit of doubt. They are cynical about their nation's political leaders – including those of the opposition. In view of inflation and widespread unemployment, politicians are



Hailemariam Desalegn (r.), Ethiopia's previous prime minister, hands over duty symbolically to Abiy Ahmed Ali, the new leader.

believed to be out of touch at best. Abiy cannot expect any kind of political honeymoon. He must deliver fast.

Not least, his own power base is restless. These young, potentially violent Oromo youngsters call themselves "Qeeroo", the Oromo word for "youth". The symbol of an Oromo top leader means little to them. They want genuine change, jobs and political influence.

So far, Abiy has pressed many right buttons. He released journalists and opposition activists from detention and re-opened mobile internet access, which was shut for the better part of the past years.

Highly symbolic, he has visited regions of unrest emphasising his message of mediation and reconciliation.

The trouble is that many Ethiopians do not believe that the divides that have opened up between different ethnic groups over those past three years can be bridged easily. To date, every government has refused to become involved in any kind of meaningful national dialogue. Compounding the problems, the much hated state of emergency is still in force. If the new government wants to win the trust of its people it must suspend it once and for all – better sooner than later.

Abiy's academic achievements may come in handy. The soft-spoken cyber expert-turned-politician has a master's degree in

change management and a doctorate in conflict mediation. In an interview last year, the then little known politician said that it is easier "to convince people of democracy than to pressure them into a democratic system". Ethiopia's new leader is a work-out enthusiast and is known to patronise the gyms of Addis Ababa. To achieve his ambitious goal of reuniting Ethiopians he will most certainly need stamina.



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ELECTIONS

A looming national crisis

Early next year, a new president will be elected in Nigeria. A power struggle is raging in the political class, and there is a campaign against the incumbent, Muhammadu Buhari. Should he win re-election, that might spark a national crisis. Its impacts would be felt all over West Africa.

By Heinrich Bergstresser

Nigeria made international headlines in February when the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram once again kidnapped over 100 schoolgirls, this time from Dapchi, a town in the northeast. Nevertheless, the reaction was little more than a shrug, even within Nigeria. Most of the girls were released in March. Their kidnapping was at best a poor imitation of the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014.

As cruel as the fate of those girls was, it seemed like business as usual to Nigeria's public. After all, Islamist terror, kidnappings, organised crime, ethnic clashes and piracy have been part of everyday life for years. What is often overlooked, however, is that Nigeria's democratically legitimate institutions have been remarkably stable for almost 20 years, despite violent conflicts, crushing poverty and systemic corruption. So is everything the same as it has always been?

No, it is not. One must consider the situation in light of the elections scheduled for early 2019. There is a lively debate going on about the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari. At the same time, a power struggle is raging within the political class. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president, has once more raised his voice and given the signal to take down the incumbent. Four years ago, Obasanjo spoke out against President Goodluck Jonathan. This time, his target is his former subordinate, Buhari.

His attack against the head of state has fallen on fertile ground. It reflects the disappointment felt by many people from all walks of life, particularly among the power elite and to a certain extent the large middle class. Even during Buhari's first year in office, it became clear that expectations

were exaggerated. The former coup leader and military dictator did not manage to set a stable course for the ship of state, which had sprung many leaks under Jonathan's leadership. He lacked the appropriate political and socio-economic expertise as well as competent senior staff. Indeed, he was overthrown as junta leader back in 1985 for the same reasons. Today, he is 76 years old and in poor health. He looks helpless as domestic turmoil is rocking most of Nigeria's 36 states. Though he proved able to hamstring the military capability of Boko Haram, an end to the terrorist attacks is not in sight.

Islamist terror has largely overshadowed the country's other causes of conflict. They include, above all, the ethnically and religiously-tinged violent crime of central Nigeria, the resurgence of Igbo nationalism in the southeast and the constant threat of another insurrection by new militia groups in the Niger Delta and along the coast. Such issues are evidence of complex dynamics. Power is being consolidated at regional levels in a way that Buhari has long ignored and probably does not really understand. His loss of authority is unmistakable. His credibility as a crisis manager has foundered

in the minefield of Nigerian domestic policy. Anti-Buhari forces are forming a broad front. Among their ranks is the National Assembly, which has used budget law and the legislative process to test the president's power and further erode his authority.

Buhari's electoral victory in 2015 prevented a national crisis and put a stop to the plundering of the state coffers committed by his predecessor. Now the economic and political elite must find a way to solve the urgent problem of leadership, not least to their own benefit. So far, they have always managed to preserve a system that grants them enormous wealth.

The political fate of the president remains uncertain. It is still possible for him to step down with dignity. In this regard, his sharpest critics are actually helping him. If Buhari campaigns for the highest office once more and wins re-election, a national crisis is more or less guaranteed. It could turn out to be moderate or severe, and devastating impacts would be felt all over West Africa.



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President Muhammadu Buhari with kidnapped schoolgirls, who were invited to the presidential palace after their release.

DEVELOPMENT

Overwhelmingly positive progress

The western development paradigm is currently under attack. Leftists argue that capitalism is an unmitigated disaster, while right-wing populists are promoting an aggressive nostalgia for a supposedly better past. There seems to be little faith in reasoned debate, scientific evidence and global cooperation. Ever more people deny that humankind has been making progress at all.

By Hans Dembowski

That stance is wildly exaggerated. Empirical data tell a different story. Life expectancies have increased dramatically. In 1960, the world population's average life expectancy was 52 years, by 2010 it had risen to 70 years. In Africa, the poorest continent, the increase was from 40 years to 57 years. Europeans can now expect to live 80 rather than 69 years. Before the Industrial Revolution, life expectancy was about 35 years.

Not only are we getting older, our number has increased dramatically. In 1960, not quite 3 billion people inhabited earth. Now we are more than 7 billion. Nonetheless, the share of undernourished people has gone down. In 1970, more than one third of the people living in developing countries did not get enough food. By 2015, the ratio had declined to less than 15%. Today, twice as many people are overweight as are undernourished.

In the 1950s, natural disasters annually claimed nine lives per 100,000 people. In the past ten years, the comparative figure was one per 100,000. Disasters have not become less forceful or less frequent. Infrastructures have improved.

Overwhelmingly positive trends of this kind are thoroughly assessed in "Enlightenment Now", a new book by Steven Pinker, who teaches psychology at Harvard University. It considers deaths due to road accidents, diseases and war. Pinker takes account of human rights, incomes and life satisfaction. He provides ample evidence of reason, science and humanism having led to dramatic progress. He argues that this recipe can lead to yet more progress.

Pinker deserves attention. He does not suggest that everything is fine and will only get better. On the contrary, he warns that we risk forsaking institutions and norms that have served us well if we underestimate

Irrational attitudes are becoming more forceful and more dangerous. The Harvard scholar warns that the way western nations practice democracy compounds the problems. He argues that elections increasingly resemble sports events, with citizens identifying with one team and resenting the other the way spectators do. It would make more sense to make and implement policies according to the model of scientific experiments. Campaign slogans and polemical agitation prevail where nuanced hypotheses



Better disaster preparedness in Bangladesh: in 1991, a devastating cyclone killed 130,000 people. Due to a new system of storm shelters, a similarly strong cyclone claimed only 3000 lives in 2007.

what we have achieved. Pinker spells out clearly that human beings are not by nature reasonable creatures. His point is that we are endowed with reason and should make good use of this capacity.

To drive progress, we must adopt intelligent policies based on diligent analyses and empirical evidence. Ideological purity and romantic yearning for the past will not help us to cope with global challenges like climate change, terrorism and economic slumps.

and diligent number crunching are needed. Media pundits would do a better job if they carefully weighed arguments instead of reinforcing their audience's entrenched world view.

We have made progress, and further progress is both possible and urgently needed – in particular in regard to climate protection. We should improve the development paradigm that has served us well, not abandon it.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The quirks of misguided decentralisation in Benin

Re.: Focus “Tax disputes”, D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/01

One Sunday last November, I visited Benin’s historic Royal Palaces of Abomey. The former seat of the Kingdom of Dahomey is a UNESCO world heritage site. I paid 1,500 CFA francs (about 2.25 euros) to get in, only to be asked by the man behind the counter for an additional 1,000 CFA francs. A surcharge of two-thirds on the admission price is certainly significant, and it turned out that the reason was that the mayor of Abomey had recently introduced a tourist tax.

I took a photo of the ticket, which I consider a political issue. Why do I do so? Well, a common thread running through your focus section on taxes was the negative correlation between political-administrative decentralisation and fiscal decentralisation. As occurred in Benin, central governments typically cede some rights and, more significantly, transfer some tasks to municipal authorities. However, neither the government nor the parliament want to cede the funds that must go hand in hand with the new responsibilities. Such disconnects are known

everywhere, including in Germany, but they are especially blatant in sub-Saharan Africa. Lacking the funds they need, municipal authorities only rudimentarily live up to their decentralised responsibilities.

Schools fall apart, drinking-water systems are not kept up, and public spaces and buildings are neglected. The mayor of Abomey came up with a unique solution for this last challenge by the way: the moment you step out of your car to take a photo of a national monument, a city employee is likely to pop up and sell you a ticket as your contribution to “the maintenance” of the monument.

The tax dramatically cut the number of visitors to the UNESCO cultural heritage site. A museum guide told me very few locals came anymore because they too had to pay the same surcharge on the considerably cheaper ticket of 500 CFA francs. In view of plummeting numbers, the mayor reconsidered and the fee was cancelled with little fanfare in March 2018. His attempt to generate municipal funding was a clear failure, but at least it caused little lasting damage.

As a rule though, inadequate decentralisation and attempts by local authorities to recoup at least some of the shortfall cause tremendous harm. International development cooperation often contributes to making a bad situation worse. All over Benin, for example, you’ll see brand-new marketplaces, mostly built on the outskirts of a rural centre. They are easily identified due to the “funded by xyz” signs, but often some goats enjoying a bit of shade are the only signs of usage.



Tourist revenue stamp on the museum ticket.

Such infrastructure gifts (they come in other forms too, like commercial hangars and “service areas”) are driven by the idea that local governments will charge usage fees to plug budget holes. In reality, however, they are the antithesis of development and poverty reduction. Typically, poor rural communities are charged hefty fees for services they urgently need, sometimes as simple as a spot on a market or parking at a dusty truck stop.

A market woman in Atakora, for example, may earn 1,200 CFA francs (around 1.80 euros) a day selling cassava. She’ll take home half as profit and will spend four hours walking to and from the market. Now the mayor plans to levy 300 CFA francs a day for her spot at a new market facility, cutting her income in half. It’s no wonder so many marketplaces stay empty. Some are in use, but only because there is no alternative, and, as usual, the poorest are paying the highest price.

Frank Bliss, Remagen

CORRECTION

Sage promises not to cave in

Re.: Jonathan Sullivan: “Access denied” in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2018/01, p. 14

When asked whether any updates will be needed to include the essay on internet censorship in China in our next print edition, our contributor Jonathan Sullivan asked us to remove one line. It concerned the academic publisher Sage. According to the essay, Sage was considering to block sensitive content, should Chinese authorities make that demand. The publisher, however, has since contacted Sullivan and told him that its position had been erroneously portrayed in the FT article he was referencing. The essay was written after Springer Nature decided to block online-access to social-science content in China on request of the regime.

GLOBAL TRADE

“I do not know whether the WTO will survive”

US President Donald Trump's trade policy looks incoherent. Last year, he withdrew his country from the almost concluded negotiations to form the Trans Pacific Partnership. The other partners have gone forward, nonetheless, and now Trump has asked his staff to consider rejoining that alliance. In April, the president imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium imports, only to fast exempt many countries temporarily. At the same time, he threatened another host of tariffs on Chinese imports. Where this all will lead to is unclear, but one thing is certain: uncertainty has grown dramatically. The Indonesian economist Iwan J. Azis assessed matters in an interview.

Iwan J. Azis interviewed by Hans Dembowski

Why is unpredictability a problem in global trade?

- First of all, the patterns of trade that we have today are very different from what we had 30 years ago. Everybody now depends on everybody else because of complex supply chains. In the past, international trade was basically made up of commodities and finished goods. Today, intermediate goods matter very much.
- Second, we should consider why this change happened. The reason is that everybody tried to become more productive and more efficient. The new patterns of trade thereof reflect comparative advantages.
- Third, there are no victims and perpetrators in trade. If there is a trade deficit, both partners are responsible. Tariffs, moreover, hurt both sides. It is mindboggling that Trump should think he can somehow “win” the game by imposing tariffs.
- Fourth, we should not only consider trade, but finance too. One reason the USA

has a trade deficit is that its huge budget deficits have allowed the USA to consume more than it produces. Its people and companies are spending more than their income on goods and services, from both the USA and abroad. The resulting savings-investment led to the trade deficit, and it includes government debt. The tax cuts that Trump's Republican Party has recently passed in Congress will compound the problem, allowing Americans to spend yet more money, which means they are likely to import more, not less.

- Fifth, both trade restrictions and government debt mean that inflation is set to rise, and that is likely to make the Federal Reserve raise interest rates in the USA. Higher interest rates, however, will hurt the corporate sector, not least in emerging markets and developing countries. Private-sector companies everywhere have grown used to cheap money and many have assumed considerable debts. Rising interest rates mean that the cost of credit will rise, and that will be like a break on investment.

- Finally, after World War II, increasing trade was always seen as a way to entrench peace. If countries cooperate closely and depend on one another, warfare becomes less likely. If globalised trade is certainly a disincentive against military war, a trade war can make military war more likely.



The ministers of 11 nations celebrate the conclusion of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership in Santiago de Chile in March. The participating countries are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

So who would suffer in a trade war?

Everyone would suffer. Germany will feel great pain because your economy particularly depends on exports including exports of German-made products produced in China destined for the US and other countries. The USA will suffer too. China has announced it will raise tariffs on agricultural imports from the USA, so farmers, many of whom voted for Trump, will be hit. At the same time, US manufacturers will have to pay more for components they need, and consumer goods will get more expensive.

How would emerging markets and developing countries be affected?

In several ways. Of course, all companies that are part of supply chains would clearly feel some kind of impact. But that is not all. The investment goods that emerging

markets and developing countries import would become more expensive, yet many industries including exporting ones in these countries depend on imported components, and this problem would be compounded once interest rates start to rise. In recent years, money was cheap and flowed to Asian, African and Latin American countries, so capital for expanding production capacities was cheap. Monetary policy has been loose in the USA and the EU, and cheap capital was invested in other countries where returns were higher. If those capital flows dry up now and then go into reverse, growth will slow down. Early alarm signals are flashing, and we saw the first as early as 2013. Back then, Ben Bernanke was the chairman of the Federal Reserve, and he stated that monetary policy would be normalised. The financial markets of emerging

markets reacted frantically even though interest rates in the US had not even changed. At the same time, higher interest rates in rich countries can reduce foreign direct investments in poorer ones.

Can and will the multilateral World Trade Organization (WTO) survive the current turmoil?

You are raising two different questions. Yes, the WTO can survive, but I do not know whether it will. Tensions can be resolved in several ways. The USA might turn to the WTO dispute-settlement system. It might also strike a deal with China in bilateral talks, or perhaps some kind of multilateral debate will lead to solutions. But whether any of that will happen is impossible to say in this era of unpredictability. Not least, the impasse in the appointment of Appel-

Volatile scenario

When this e-Paper was finalised in late April, the scenario of international trade remained volatile. Important issues had not been settled.

For example, the EU, Australia and other US allies still did not know whether the new tariffs on steel and aluminium, which the Trump administration introduced in March, will apply to their nations from 1 May on. The exemptions they were granted initially were only temporary, and diplomats were still working on the matter. In mid-April, Cecilia Malmström, the EU's trade commissioner, had demanded permanent exemptions. Should that not happen, the EU was threatening to impose tariffs on US goods.

In regard to China, Trump announced that he would send a high-level team for negotiations to the People's Republic in early May. It would include Steven Mnuchin, the treasury secretary, and Robert Light-

hizer, the trade representative. Trump had been threatening to impose more tariffs on Chinese imports for weeks. Beijing, in turn, had indicated it would retaliate. Moreover, it has turned to the World Trade Organization (WTO), disputing the legitimacy of Trump's steel and aluminium tariffs. The trade-related tensions between the USA and China may well escalate further. Compounding problems, the WTO needed new arbitrators for disputes, and Washington had been blocking the appointment process for months.

Should tensions with China escalate, Trump might make yet another U-turn in regard to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Trump prominently withdrew from the negotiations last year. In April, however, he told his staff to consider joining the alliance, after it was formally agreed by 11 other countries. A few days later, he declared



Shinzo Abe visiting Donald Trump in April.

that he appreciates bilateral agreements and does not like the TPP after all. That he made the statement on Twitter after meeting Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was considered a snub to this ally. If Trump finds he needs partners in his dispute with China, however, he may suddenly find the TPP attractive again.

In the meantime, observers speculate that the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) may proceed fast. The reason is that Mexico will hold

elections later this year, and the frontrunner in the polls is leftist leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador, whose stance is protectionist. The EU agreed an up-date of its existing bilateral trade partnership with Mexico in April, and it includes rules on issues such as intellectual property and government procurement, in which advanced nations are interested in. The US administration might want to settle the NAFTA dispute while current Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto is still in office. Who knows? (dem)

late Body members can adversely affect the credibility and functioning of the WTO.

Can bilateral trade agreements serve as a cushion if the WTO is eroded?

Well, we are living in a second best world. The best world is the WTO. It makes sense to have global rules that apply to all parties and facilitate trade. Bilateral deals make things more complicated. The reason bilateral deals and free-trade agreements have proliferated is that the WTO has not been moving ahead for a long time. The Doha Development Round of negotiations was launched in 2001, and it has not been concluded. On the up-side, however, the various free trade agreements are likely to defend the WTO in view of a looming trade war.

In March, 11 countries concluded what they now call the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) without the USA. Why did that happen? We were told for years that the TPP was an approach that US President Barack Obama took to boost the interests of US-based corporations and ultimately entrench US supremacy. Then Trump took office, and – in line with his protectionist rhetoric – withdrew from the TPP. Nonetheless, the remaining countries decided to establish it. It is true, the entire process reflected competition between the USA and China. Many observers saw the TPP project as a coun-

terweight to RCEP, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a proposed agreement that would unite China with the members of ASEAN and other nations. RCEP would exclude the USA, and China is pursuing those plans. The USA, on the other hand, wanted to forge an alliance from which China would be excluded. However, the TPP that has now been agreed is different from what Obama wanted. His version would have included many clauses concerning investment disputes, intellectual property rights or state procurement, for example. These things go beyond trade. They are related to trade, but not directly. Many Asian countries are uncomfortable with binding rules on these matters, so after Trump opted out, the respective clauses were softened. In that case, I wouldn't be surprised if other Asian countries will join. To them, the conditions look more favourable now.

The topics you mentioned – investor rights, intellectual property and state procurement – were discussed at the WTO's Doha summit in 2001. The advanced nations wanted to put them on the agenda of the new round of negotiations, but the developing countries rejected that proposal. I think the proliferation of bilateral trade deals afterwards resulted from the insistence on part of the EU and the USA to regulate these matters internationally, nonetheless. Now the TPP has gone ahead under the full name Com-

prehensive and Progressive with limited rules on these issues, and Trump says he'll rejoin, provided he gets a more favourable deal than Obama was ready to accept. That does not seem to make sense.

You are right, the USA and EU must bear some of the blame for the WTO's difficulties. They have been pressing for agreements on things that many governments of developing countries believe their nations are not ready for. On the other hand, governments weigh the costs and benefits of agreements. They know that market access is very important, so compromises are made. Once an agreement is concluded, however, it is very difficult to renegotiate it. I don't think that the USA will get more favourable TPP terms than the Obama administration did, and that certainly will not happen any time soon.

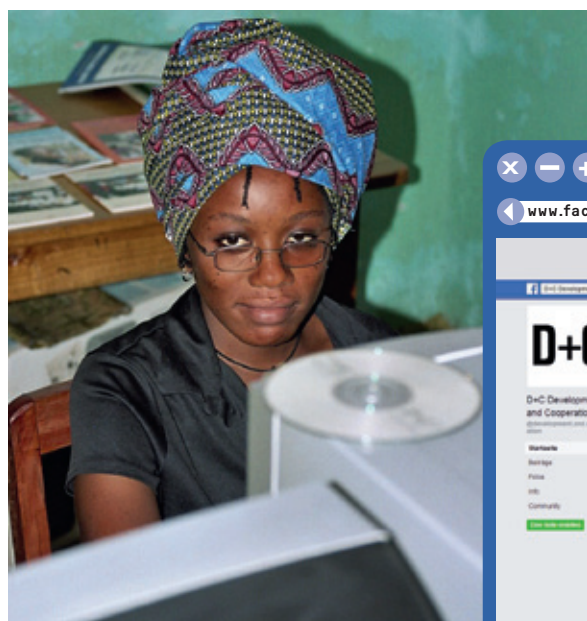
Could China now join the TPP?

No, it won't. The RCEP will be gaining more prominence, and that is what China wants.



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SUSTAINABILITY

Energy shift

Germany remains committed to achieving the “Energiewende”, say cabinet members. The term stands for the transition to a renewable-energy society. It has become evident, that economic growth and environmental protection must go hand in hand. Carbon pricing can set appropriate incentives.

By Drake Jamali

Germany’s new federal-government coalition remains committed to the idea of a global energy transition or “Energiewende”. The plan is to rely on renewable energy and improve energy efficiency.

In view of climate change, Svenja Schulze, who heads the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, pledges that Germany will have a zero-emission energy sector by 2050. Some sectors of the economy – including agriculture, for example, – will get more time to become fully carbon free. As Schulze admits, however, “Germany is missing some of the desired targets, and, to address shortcomings, needs more policy cohesion in regard

to climate and energy.” The new coalition has dropped the previous renewable-energy target for 2020, but reiterates its commitment to generate 65 % of electric power with renewables technology by 2030. If the figure is not at least 55 % by then, Schulze says, Germany will lose its credibility completely.

Peter Altmaier, the federal minister of economic affairs and energy, argues that partnerships between advanced countries are vital: “The Energiewende is akin to doing open-heart surgery on a national economy.” He believes that such surgery, though painful at the moment, is inevitable – and conducive to long-term development.

Altmaier insists that switching to sustainable-energy technology will create more jobs than it will cost. In his eyes, renewable-energy employment is long term, while fossil-fuel jobs are unsustainable. He notes that eastern Europe, including eastern Germany, will face immediate difficulties due to the phasing out of fossil-fuel power plants, but adds that this trend must not become a “polarising issue”. There is the potential to create millions of new jobs in renewable-

energy generation, he says, so structural unemployment can be avoided. Workers should be retrained early on.

At an international conference hosted by Germany’s Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt – AA), Altmaier boasted, moreover, that “the Federal Government remains firmly committed to the total phase out of nuclear energy by 2023”. Whether in Germany or elsewhere, policymakers must avoid both political and energy blackouts, according to him, fully aware that societies must be put on a sustainable path.

THE PRICE OF CARBON

Sustainable development has many dimensions. Supply systems must be made eco-friendly, and in many developing regions, new infrastructure must be built. To some extent, the patterns of advanced nations can serve as examples. In other cases, it makes sense to deviate from those models. Expanding national power grids is important, for example, but small-scale local solutions can be more attractive, especially in remote rural areas (see box next page).

Large-scale innovations matter too, of course. Amani Abou-Zeid, the AU infrastructure commissioner, sees East Africa’s geothermal initiatives as flagships. This technology is viable in much of the East African Rift, which is almost 6,000 kilome-



Geothermal power station in Kenya.

tres long. Djibuti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia stand to gain in particular, the AU commissioner reports.

All over the world, industries and transport must be decarbonised. If the right incentives are set, people are likely to be nudged to opt for environment-friendly solutions. Carbon pricing and emissions trading systems (ETS) set price incentives. They have been gaining momentum as tools for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Most OECD nations have a carbon pricing mechanism in place. China launched its nationwide ETS in December. In the USA, California and north-eastern states have established carbon pricing, and other states are considering to join those schemes. Private-sector companies have begun accounting for a price on carbon, particularly in risk assessment.

Nonetheless, opposition to the ETS approach is still quite strong. Ottmar Edenhofer of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research points out that 80% of global emissions are still not covered. If the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are to be achieved, that ratio must decline, and carbon prices must rise. By 2020, he reckons, a ton of carbon emissions should cost \$40 to \$80, and by 2030, the

price should be \$50 to \$100. In late April, the European ETS price was a mere \$16 (€ 13).

Brune Poirson of the French environment ministry calls for a common floor price in Europe. She says her country should lead in cooperation with Germany. She warns that the EU is not on track to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, so it must do more to promote decarbonisation. She says European emissions should be reduced by 100 million tons per year. The French politician does not worry about the costs, arguing that climate damage will far exceed those sums if climate change goes on unmitigated.

Anton Anton, the Romanian energy minister, expresses more caution. In his country's energy mix, he says, renewables already account for 60%. Carbon pricing would hurt Romanian industries, but not make much of an environmental difference. In his view, every country needs to progress at its own pace.

Costa Rica's Foreign Minister Manuel González Sanz disagrees. Carbon pricing is needed, he argues, since people will make money with fossil fuels as long as that is possible. We should be ashamed that we pollute our planet and senselessly hurt ourselves. "We are smarter than that," he said in Ber-

lin. Costa Rica is a small developing country, he says, and its share of renewables is close to 100%. Others should follow its example.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas says he remains committed to both the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda. He emphasises that multilateral compromises are of vital importance. "Climate change, which has been amplified by the more developed west, dramatically impacts those regions which have the least amount of resources to combat it." Environmental issues are global, not local – and they directly trigger climate-induced migration. Ultimately, Maas considers achieving the SDGs a question of war and peace: If global problems are not solved, global security will prove illusive.



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Harnessing off-grid power

Millions of people in Africa and Asia have developed off-the-grid (OTG) cultures. Decentralised renewable power generation has given millions access to light, cooling and heating and the use of modern appliances such as radios, televisions and computers. To some extent, however, OTG culture embraces diesel, which is a fossil fuel. Continual advances in renewables technology will facilitate the phasing out of diesel, experts say.

According to Jeremy Gaines of the Nigerian-German Energy Partnership, sub-Saharan-Africa accounts for about

13% of the global population but almost half of all people who live without electricity. From 2010 to 2016, sub-Saharan people spent over \$7 billion on diesel generators. In Gaines' eyes, African policymakers must fight two issues: "One is how to achieve climate goals while millions of people use diesel generators, and the other is how long can they rely on imported fuels for OTG electrification once prices start to rise again." Renewables are an obvious response to both challenges.

The African Union (AU) has adopted the ambitious 2063

Agenda. Amani Abou-Zeid, the AU's commissioner for infrastructure and energy, says that the aim is "to transform the entirety of the continent's socioeconomic standing through every avenue". Better infrastructure is needed. According to estimates, \$ 100 billion funding is needed just in the next decade. Abou-Zeid acknowledges that OTG electrification is often the most cost-affect approach to meeting current and future energy demand.

Seleshi Bekele Awulachew, Ethiopia's minister for water, irrigation and electricity, recently told a conference hosted by Germany's Foreign Office in Berlin (see main article, p. 19) that the national power grid must be expanded. So far, however, only

about 25% of Ethiopians live near enough to the existing grid to benefit from access. To improve the power situation in the country, his government is therefore relying on OTG approaches as well as on grid expansion.

Mamisoa Rakotoarimana of Madagascar' agency for rural development agrees with this assessment. His government wants to ensure that an additional 200,000 households get access to electric power by 2030. That would raise the country's electrification rate to 70%. The officer says that the government alone cannot afford these measures, but points out that decentralised mini grids are comparatively cheap and could contribute to closing the supply gaps. (dj)

SCHOOL FEEDING

It's hard to learn on an empty stomach

Hungry or malnourished children find it harder to learn than their well-fed peers. Free school meals are a successful policy measure to promote development, for instance in a country like Cambodia, which has a high school attendance rate of over 95%. Schools are the best place to reach a large number of children from the poorest households.

By Frank Bliss

The main goal of school feeding is to improve the nutrition of children in primary schools. Better nutrition benefits children's health and reduces or eliminates delays in their physical development. Properly fed, the children are also better able to follow along in class and less likely to leave school in the middle of the day because of hunger.

Providing meals is thus the first step to achieving a further goal: improving performance in school. School meals lead to a sharp reduction in the number of pupils who drop out and increase the number of children, including from poorer households, who go on to secondary school.

The World Food Programme supports school feeding in Cambodian schools in poor districts (see box, p. 22). Last year, in 18 of the participating schools, researchers

from University of Duisburg-Essen's Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) conducted a study, assessing the programme component that demands that the necessary food be bought from local sources. The researchers found that the project was almost 100% successful. They considered the following factors decisive:

- All primary school children in the participating schools receive a free hot meal every morning regardless of the socio-economic status of their parents. On the one hand, this makes the programme easier to implement. On the other, it eliminates discrimination against children who receive free meals and envy on the part of those who fall just short of qualifying. The advantage of obtaining ingredients for school meals locally is that the children know and like the diet, which gives them a feeling of satisfaction alongside the other physical benefits. Both school attendance and school performance were boosted accordingly.
- The second advantage is that the procurement of food drives the local economy. Many families are able to earn additional income by growing and selling rice and vegetables, and increasingly fish, to the schools. This has resulted in extraordinarily high levels of support for the programme even



beyond the school community. The municipalities in question appreciate the economic benefits and are actively involved in the programme accordingly.

- Due to close cooperation with parents and communities, all schools were able to solve organisational problems that arose from the need to provide firewood, ingredients and cooking stuff on a daily basis.
- The municipal administrations were involved in the implementation of the programme from the very beginning. That helped to create high levels of support among municipal staff. In an effort to further increase support, several local governments are planning to put cooks on the village payrolls. Thanks to broad-based support, the procurement and preparation of food has worked out without a hitch in all 18 schools that take part in the programme.
- Local procurement has also led to quantitative and qualitative improvements in the vegetables that are available. Many farmers are now intentionally producing surpluses that they then sell on the local markets. Such developments have a positive impact on people's food security, but their significance has not yet been studied.



The school day begins with a shared meal.

CONCLUSIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Providing free school meals in primary schools is probably the best way to reduce malnutrition in children between the ages of six and twelve. It makes sense to include preschools in the programme, as many of the school systems under review do. Children can benefit starting at the age of three. Furthermore, school feeding is a very inexpensive measure that directly targets every enrolled child – and thus almost all of a country's households with children

of primary-school age. In contrast, much publicised alternatives like educational campaigns by health centres or work with women's groups are less effective.

By exchanging information about school food with parents, particularly mothers, it is very likely that families' eating habits will slowly change, thereby allowing younger children to benefit indirectly from the programme. Thus it is expected that one secondary effect will be better nutrition for children during their first 1,000 days of life.

School feeding builds on almost three decades of experience, most of which was collected and analysed in Latin America, especially Brazil. The strengths and weaknesses of this approach are therefore well understood. It has been demonstrated, for instance, that the poorest of the poor are not reached in places where school attendance rates are low and primary schools do

not exist, are of poor quality or difficult to reach. On the other hand, school meals are an excellent way to provide good nutrition to enrolled pupils from poor households, improving their health and thereby their chances for success at school.

School meals also encourage parents from extremely poor backgrounds to send their children to school in the first place. Often, the free meals are the main motivation or even the only one. And in desperately poor countries like Chad, Mauritania, Niger and Sudan, providing regular meals at school is the only way to guarantee children a modicum of school success.

In countries where the nutrition situation, particularly of children, is poor compared to the average income, school feeding can make a significant contribution to healthier nutrition and thereby reduce the number of children who are underweight

or suffer from delayed growth. Apart from Cambodia, this applies to Tajikistan and Laos, for instance, where poverty rates are declining without corresponding to improved nutrition for women and children.

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Contribution to nutrition security

In Cambodia, free school meals have proven to be very beneficial to both school success and overall nutrition security. The World Food Programme currently supports around 1,220 schools across the country. Negotiations are underway with Cambodia's Ministry of Education to expand the programme on the country's own initiative starting in about 2020.

Poverty has declined sharply in the Southeast Asian country, and nutrition security has improved considerably. However, infant mortality and morbidity have not been reduced in a proportionate way, and the mental and physical development of children still suffer because of poor eating habits.

For one thing, many people don't eat breakfast. Farming families typically eat their first warm meal around midday.

The second problematic habit is overreliance on rice as the central component of the diet, which is common even among wealthy families. People eat hulled rice, which they supplement only scantily with protein and other ingredients rich in vitamins. This one-sided diet has a negative influence on the growth and overall health of children.

In this context, the provision of regular morning meals at school can have a big impact. Given that school attendance rates are very high in Cambodia, almost all boys and girls are reached. Many children, particularly those from poorer strata of society, either repeat years or drop out of school early. School feeding counteracts these trends. It promotes school success and ensures that more children go on to further schooling.



Villagers produce vegetables for school meals.

Discussions with programme participants conducted by researchers from the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) of the University of Duisburg-Essen (see main text) painted a clear picture of success: at the school level, participants reported regular school attendance since school feeding was introduced. Previ-

ously, up to a third of children would simply „disappear“ from the classroom in order to get something to eat. The teachers report that the children are healthier and better able to concentrate. Significantly fewer are forced to repeat years, and hardly any children are taken out of school before classes are over.

The economic impact of procuring ingredients locally has been equally clear. The increase in purchasing power and in the demand for high-quality food like vegetables, fish, meat and eggs has encouraged villagers to grow more vegetables in particular. The number of producers who are involved in the programme is remarkable: in a village with four participating schools, up to 200 households will be selling food. Finally, the programme has intensified interaction of teachers with parents and community representatives, and that benefits school life. (fb)

Russian President
Vladimir Putin on TV.

Disinformation

Intentionally fabricated fake news is an international phenomenon. Digital communication technology is exacerbating the impacts of political propaganda. Counter measures are needed, and they concern many different areas. Multinational tech corporations must be regulated, media users need a solid understanding of how journalists work, and media workers have to live up to high standards. Democracies can protect themselves from those who attack them, but that is not a trivial matter.

Fighting for honesty and truth

Disinformation can start anywhere – and, with the help of the digital grapevine and the political rumour mill, spread to all corners of the African continent within minutes. Fact-checking is a necessity.

By Alphonse Shiundu

Spectacular examples of fake news include stories of:

- a South African pastor mauled at Kruger National Park after challenging lions to a fight,
- an elephant stealing millions from Nigerian bank in Nigeria or
- Kenyan women who believe marijuana smoke cures measles among young children.

There is no evidence that any of this ever happened. In societies steeped in myth, folklore and irrational beliefs, however, that did not stop hoaxers from circulating the stories online.

Those who see these hoaxes usually do not question the stories, try to verify

them or demand proof. They click forward on WhatsApp, share on Facebook, retweet on Twitter and double-tap on Instagram. They laugh about it. Some believe it. Some do not.

The psychology of the merchants of disinformation is well understood. As early as 1710, the great British satirist Jonathan Swift wrote: “As the vilest writer has his readers, so the greatest liar has his believers; and it often happens, that if a lie be believed only for an hour, it has done its work, and there is no farther occasion for it. Falsehood flies, and the truth comes limping after it; so that when men come to be undeceived, it is too late; the jest is over, and the tale has had its effect.”

Rumours, gossip, spin, myth, beliefs, lies and opinions have always been part of human civilisation. Technology does not change that. If anything, it has boosted the spread of disinformation.

“What is different today is the fact that we are in an information-rich society and people have found multiple ways to lie and

share their distortions quickly and widely. In other words, it’s not a technology problem, it’s a human problem,” argues Sam Kamau, a digital-media lecturer at the Nairobi-based Aga Khan University’s Graduate School of Media and Communications. He says the “human problem” in the fight against disinformation includes “low media literacy” and “low digital literacy”. In his eyes, many Africans – and especially the youth – lack the knowledge, values and critical-thinking ability they would need to “manage their experiences in the cyberspace”.

POLITICALLY RELEVANT DISTORTIONS

Things become dangerous when deliberately distorted information begins to shape public opinion or guide policymaking. That’s where fact-checkers come in. Africa Check is a leading fact-checking organisation. It was established in Johannesburg in 2012. Its declared mission is to “sort fact from fiction” in order to keep public debate honest. Africa Check has offices in three other countries as well: Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal. Peter Cunliffe-Jones, Africa Check’s founder and executive director, says all bureaus are in countries that are regional leaders, have a comparatively free media environment and good internet access. Africa



President Uhuru Kenyatta campaigning for re-election last summer.

Check disseminates online content in English and French.

The organisation debunks myths, exposes hoaxes, corrects wrong information and provides or amplifies the correct information (see box below). It also has a dedicated platform – the InfoFinder – with reliable sources of information from different African countries. Cunliffe-Jones says the idea is to make “accurate information available through our reports, factsheets and the InfoFinder tool”.

Cunliffe-Jones was appalled when he witnessed religious leaders and prominent politicians badmouth polio vaccination in Nigeria after the turn of the millennium. They argued it was an international conspiracy to make women infertile. At the time, he was the chief of the French news agency AFP’s Nigerian bureau. The false claims crippled the vaccination campaigns run by the UN Children’s Fund and the World Health Organization, and Nigeria did not achieve the goal of eradicating the disease.

Similar claims about vaccinations causing infertility in African girls and women continue to surface throughout the con-

tinental, most recently during the election campaigns in Kenya last year. Africa Check continues to debunk such claims.

It is now well known that the data analytics firm Cambridge Analytica did what it could to influence the Britain’s Brexit referendum as well as the US presidential elections in 2016. The same firm polluted the information environment in Nigeria and Kenya during elections. Journalists obviously have a duty to tackle disinformation.

According to Eric Oduor, the secretary-general of the Kenya Union of Journalists, content launched by different political camps on social media coloured the editorial perspectives of the country’s main news organisations in election times. The media found themselves “playing catch up with social media that seemed to have stolen the thunder from mainstream media”, he says, as social media enjoyed the trust of content consumers in spite of neglecting key journalistic principles such as “truth and honesty”.

Oduor echoes the findings of media monitoring reports that pointed out a lapse

in professional media gate-keeping: “When ‘fake news’ finds its way into the mainstream media, the quality control system must be questioned. Editors must take responsibility because all stories must be verified and confirmed.” The Kenyan trade-union leader insists: “We need a clearing house where all fake news should be flagged out once spotted.” The warning should then be shared widely.

For wider reach and greater impact, Africa Check cooperates with media houses in the countries where it operates. Its staff members inform journalists, editors and media practitioners about the basics of fact-checking. Moreover, it hosts events to educate the general public.



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The methods of fact-checking

Fact-checking is a replicable process. People who check the same fact relying on the same set of documents must arrive at the same conclusion.

Did ousted South African President Jacob Zuma dance with a skimpily dressed woman as depicted in a viral picture doing rounds online? No, that was a sleek photoshop job. Did Uganda get more refugees every day in 2016 than some of the European countries got in a year? Oh yes, that’s correct. Is Kenya’s unemployment 40% as widely reported and repeated? That’s incorrect. Did “at least 50,000” Nigerians die from terrorism in 2017? That’s wildly incorrect.

All these claims were checked for accuracy. The

verdicts were rendered by researchers and editors at Africa Check, a leading fact-checking organisation.

The first step, according to Africa Check’s fact-checking manual, is to identify the exact claim that is to be verified. It must be a factual claim, not an expression of an opinion or belief. The next step is to contact the person who makes the claim to ask them about the source or proof of their claim. In cases where such contact is impossible, a review of relevant publicly available documents is the next step. Then, fact-checkers must turn to experts in the field – people with a track-record of solid research in that particular field – to add

nuance and context. After that, Africa Check authors write their reports, setting out the evidence step by step and indicating the sources used. Then the manuscript is passed on to an editor for review. Only once a verdict is agreed, is the article published. In case a mistake is detected at a later point (a very rare occurrence at Africa Check), the correction is made transparently.

Fact checking is necessary. In the digital world, people will always make claims, circulate pictures and videos, misinterpret official data or even opinion polls and exaggerate the facts to tell their story. Fact-checkers must help the public stay informed about the facts.

The good news is that the fact-checking community is growing globally. The International Fact-checking Network

sets the standards. Its code of principles spells out the rules that fact-checking organisations must follow. Beyond the methods elaborated above, relevant aspects include a commitment to non-partisanship and transparency of sources. Moreover, fact-checkers should reveal the sources of their funding. The standards are reviewed annually. So far, at least 49 verified signatories comply with the code of principles.

Africa Check is not the only fact-checking initiative in Africa. Others include

- Pesa Check, which checks financial information in Kenya,
- Nation Newsplex, which is run by East Africa’s major media house, the Nation Media Group in Nairobi and
- Dubawa, a fact-checking outfit launched by Nigeria’s Premium Times. (as)

Learning to cross-check facts

High production pressure leads to mistakes, not only in online journalism. In Uganda, independent media organisations are training journalists to cross-check facts and watch their digital safety.

By Edward Ronald Sekyewa

At the end of November 2017, the premises of the RedPepper tabloid in Kampala were sealed off. Anti-terrorism police that had surrounded the offices frog-marched all journalists and other staff into one corner of the compound. Eight editors and directors of the media house were taken to the notorious Nalufenya Prison, where the Ugandan state keeps its biggest enemies.

The reason was that the paper had published a story for which it did not have any reliable sources. It was about a plot by Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni to

assassinate his Rwandan counterpart, President Paul Kagame. Upon reading this story, the Ugandan president was reportedly infuriated and ordered the closure of RedPepper. The editors and directors were arrested accordingly. The media workers spent more than 10 weeks in prison.

The media house maintained that they picked the story from a Rwandan website, and many Ugandan journalists tried to



find that website. No one found it. The state claimed the tabloid had invented the story.

Ultimately, the directors of RedPepper sought an audience with Museveni, apologised for their misbehaviour and promised to “behave” in the future. Soon after, RedPepper was back online.

FACT-CHECKING AND DIGITAL SAFETY

This scenario was not new in Uganda; it keeps happening to media houses big or small, rural or urban, private or public. All too often, stories lack credibility. That is true of government-owned as well as private-sector media. Journalism needs to become more diligent.

If a news organisation wants to earn and keep the trust of its audience, fact-checking and the verification of sources are very important. This is particularly true in the era of online media. Today, all media houses in Uganda – newspapers, radio and TV stations – have an internet presence and try to beat the others on any breaking news. Moreover, there are numerous online-media firms. Consequently, the scramble for stories and the pressure to beat competitors is at an all-time



Edward Sekyewa (right) training a South Sudanese journalist.

high. Because of it, many journalists and media houses have made serious mistakes. The case of RedPepper was an example.

In Kampala, the Hub for Investigative Media (HIM) offers training programmes that teaches East-African journalists in matters of fact-checking and digital security. The sessions are designed to address the real needs of journalists, whether they are working on quick or long-term stories. A quick story has to be aired or published the same day, while a long-term story may require several weeks of research before it is published.

With support from Deutsche Welle Akademie, the German agency that supports media development, HIM has launched a learning tool for digital security: the “Wekuume App”. It can be downloaded from the Google Play Store and provides journalists with answers to immediate digital-security questions. For example, how does a journalist deal with malware, espe-

cially from fake websites, or how does one recognise fraudulent “phishing” mails, or how to identify fake online sources. It also offers links to deal with topics that require time to comprehend.

Wekuume is a Luganda word and means: “be safe”. The process to develop the App started in 2014 and was completed in October 2017. It is accessible on Android devices, free of charge and comes with supported content.

Cyber security is an important dimension of being safe. Many media houses have lost content because of online and real-life attacks. In February, the newsroom of NBS TV was attacked. Computers were vandalised and terabytes worth of content were destroyed. It was clear that whoever carried out the attack wanted to make sure that a specific story would not be aired. One can only hope that the station management had some form of backup of their information.

HIM has trained many journalists country-wide on how to backup their content.

What about the security of information on a lost gadget? What happens if one’s laptop or smartphone gets into the wrong hands? Do they have a strong password to protect their devices from intruders? Is encryption necessary? Journalists must understand these tools and know how to use them. In today’s digitalised world, this is part of a media practitioner’s basic skills.

LINK

Hub for Investigative Media (HIM):
<http://www.him-ug.org/>



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Making information laws work

Some Ugandan laws have the potential to benefit journalists’ investigations and contribute to governmental transparency. They remain meaningless, however, if neither the public nor government officials know them and the media do use them. The Access to Information (ATI) Act is a good example.

The law itself passed by the parliament in 2005, but its regulations were not passed until 2011. Before that had happened, the law could not be entirely applied. Our independent Hub for Investigative Media (HIM) in Kampala has been advocating for full implementation. Since 2012, we have been filing information requests with different government agencies in line with this law.

Government officials in Uganda are known to behave like semi-gods who are doing

the country the favour to serve. The notion that citizens – and especially journalists – can demand accountability from a government official seems like a myth, though it is the truth. The officers of many government entities that HIM contacted were startled that citizens were bold enough to demand information – which, in essence, is demanding accountability. The most common reaction was: “How dare you ask us for information?”

HIM actually conducted the exercise exactly as the ATI law provides. We knew that many government offices would deny us the information, but we did not relent, fully aware of the law allowing us to take any government entity that denies information to court. And that’s what we did. We dragged more than 10 government entities before judges

for failure to comply with the ATI Act.

The government officials did not realise how serious the matter was until they lost case by case. Only then did they start calling HIM for dialogue. We kept on filing more and more requests for information with different government entities. We thought that in our endeavour to advocate for the implementation of the ATI law, it was better to work with government officials than against them. We realised that many of them were not even aware of the existence of the ATI law under which they can be sued for non-compliance.

Our action has made government officials aware of the ATI law and its provisions. HIM has also conducted a nationwide campaign to train journalists on the knowledge and application of the ATI law as right-holders.

Despite efforts to engage government entities to provide information, some have not re-

sponded to the call. Makerere University is one of them. One would expect the administration of this prestigious academic institution to be fully aware of the obligation to provide information to the public. But the university leadership is not, so HIM dragged them to court.

In the event, HIM requested information about the number of beneficiaries of the “State House Scholarship Scheme” at Makerere University. The president of Uganda established the scheme using public funds. It was meant to provide financial assistance to students from poor backgrounds, but it has been widely abused to benefit children of wealthy government officials.

Media freedom activists are optimistic that implementation of the ATI law will slowly pick up. This will not only make it easier for journalists to do their work, but also contribute to the improvement of good governance and transparency in the country. (es)

Discerning media consumers

Social and community media are reliant on active participation. Therefore, training the youth in producing ethically correct media, but also consuming media in an appropriately critical manner is crucial. In Namibia, the Media and Information Literacy Learning Initiative helps to spread these skills.

By Julia Odoj

We live in a world of fast progress. Global media open opportunities to connect, communicate and exchange with audiences all over the world. Within a few seconds, messages can reach millions of people. Thanks to the internet, young people have ever better access to a great diversity of media.

But what good does it do to our daily lives if we are unable to truly decipher the messages because we don't know what and who is behind media? Because we don't know how to use the media responsibly? Because we cannot actively participate and fully tap the web's potential? All progress and media development will only benefit

us if we are able to analyse and manage it properly.

Namibia has media houses and skilled journalists, and it enjoys the freedom of press. Fifty five percent of the people are younger than 25. They will shape the future of the country. However, most of Namibian youths are deprived of gaining the skills that constitute media and information literacy (MIL), including an understanding of the ethics surrounding media use.

One initiative has begun to promote this cause. The Media and Information Literacy Learning Initiative (Milli*) was established in 2016 by the Media Arts Technology Studies (MATS) programme of the College of the Arts in Windhoek, Namibia's capital. Milli* is supported by Deutsche Welle Akademie, an agency that works on behalf of Germany's Federal Government. The aim is to make Namibian society media literate. Milli* educates local facilitators who subsequently share their knowledge and experience in projects all over Namibia. Joost van de Port, the head of the MATS programme,



says that Milli* focuses on the urgent societal need for media education among young Namibians.

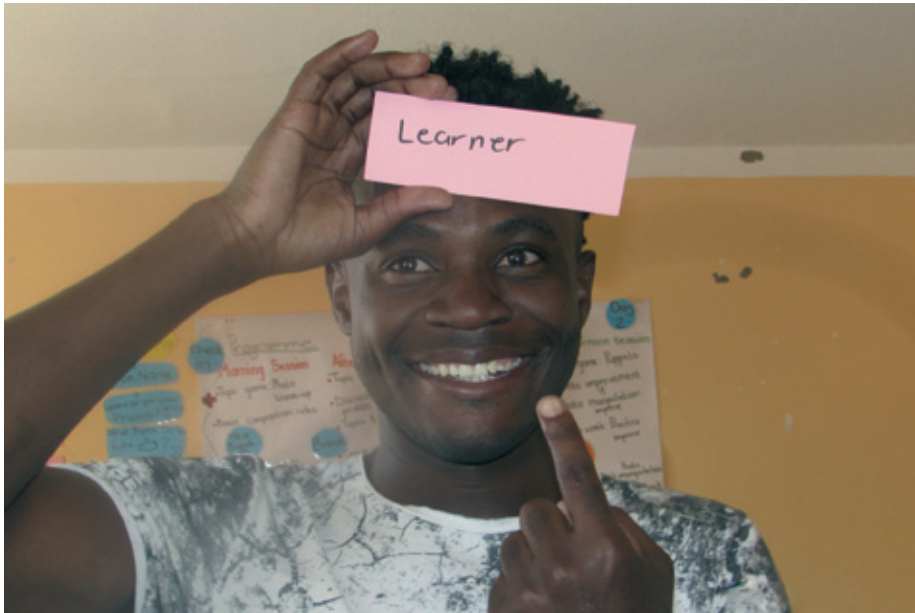
As a non-profit initiative, Milli* relies on a network of partners, including community radios and civil-society organisations at the local level as well as the National Youth Council of Namibia, the National Institute for Educational Development, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies.

Among other things, the initiative organises the annual Milli* Summer School, a ten-day workshop in Windhoek. The target group is energetic youngsters from all over the country.

Founa Kazongominja took part last year. She is a volunteer with Base FM, a com-



Opening of the Milli* Summer School 2017 in Windhoek, Namibia.



Participant of media and information literacy training in Windhoek, Namibia.

munity radio. She says: “The Milli* Summer School prepared me for my role as a MIL youth project facilitator.” After the event, she organised “a music and sound youth project” for eight producers and radio presenters at Base FM. Her message was that it makes sense to pay more attention to the music they play in order to raise awareness of songs’ relevance. “If they want the music to have a positive impact to their listeners, they need to think about the message that each song brings with it,” Kazongominja points out. The idea is not simply to entertain listeners, but to involve them in public discourse.

The Milli* Summer School teaches participants to analyse various kinds of media messages critically. Relevant issues in-

clude identifying the source of information and paying attention to crucial facts, such as the names of persons, places and dates. These things can – and should – be checked. Participants, moreover, get the opportunity to produce media content that meets high professional standards. They later go on to train peers.

“After the training, I started really listening to the radio,” says Farah Judith Isaacs, a Summer School participant. She now also pays more attention to what kind of pictures she shares on social media because she has become “aware of implied messages”.

The Milli* Certificate Course trains participants from civic education, youth organisations and media outlets. They already

know the basics of MIL and will become Milli* educators themselves. They must complete eight modules in a time period of two years, after which they are able to organise various kinds of MIL projects for different target groups.

The Certificate Course started its first module in April 2017 with a core group of 15 participants as part of a piloting phase. Olivia Ebas, one of the participants, works for the Omaheke Regional Library in Gobabis and is already making use of her new skills. “I started a media literacy club at my library for children between the ages 10 and 12,” she recounts. “I integrated the knowledge I had received to come up with content and training methods for this media club.”

Ebas attended the Summer School in 2016 and is now a member of the Milli* Board of Trustees. “This initiative has groomed my personal capabilities. I gained broad understanding of media literacy in Namibia and the world,” she says. Other Milli* alumni are similarly enthusiastic. Deonerica Kuhlmann, a trained facilitator, says that “Milli* is not only an initiative: it is a movement, a feeling, a FaMilli*”.

LINKS

Media and Information Literacy Learning Initiative (Milli*):

<http://www.milli.edu.na>

Milli* Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/millinamibia/>



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Empowering citizens

Media and information literacy (MIL) means that a person is able to access, understand and analyse media messages as well as to share and create content herself. MIL training courses empower citizens to use and engage competently with dif-

ferent types of media. Three steps are important for achieving media literacy:

1) People must know how professional media work and how media outlets make decisions. Important standards include indicating the sources,

conveying a diversity of view points and providing facts. Citizens who pay attention to these things can tell which websites are reliable and which are more likely to be spreading fake news.

2) For citizens to engage in public discourse, they must be able to make themselves heard. Therefore, it is not enough to be informed about how to consume media; a basic

knowledge of producing content is valuable too. It includes technical skills, starting with simple smartphone photography, for example.

3) The final step is to have a broader understanding of the media landscape. Such an understanding allows people to assess the environment they live in, to claim their rights and to demand media quality. (jo)

Think twice before sharing

The flood of news and information on the internet keeps rising as websites compete for user attention. Some sites just want more clicks, while others intend to manipulate public opinion. It can be hard to tell fact from fiction. Clear legal guidelines and transparency are essential – and so are users' critical thinking and media literacy.

By Benjamin Gaul

Critical thinking, according to Julian King, the EU commissioner for the security union, is the best line of defence against the rising tide of fake news. At the same time, he argues that media literacy is the most effective weapon in the fight against disinformation campaigns that target the EU and its member states. The Russian government is known to support such campaigns.

Politicians, media outlets, non-governmental organisations and fact checkers are important, of course, but the most important job falls to us, the citizens. To be part of the solution, we all must stop and think twice before sharing content. The essence of social media, unfortunately, is to share huge numbers of information snippets for rapid consumption. This business model facilitates the dissemination of disinformation, half-truths and lies.

The most popular Facebook post (with 960,000 engagements) in the three months before the US presidential elections in 2016 was entirely fabricated, according to BuzzFeed. The message was: "Pope Francis shocks world, endorses Donald Trump for president, releases statement." In this critical time span, the top 20 fake-news posts on Facebook from unreliable websites or blogs

racked up more than 8.7 million shares, reactions and comments during this critical phase, BuzzFeed has reported. In contrast, the top 20 posts from long-established news organisations triggered only 7.4 million engagements.

So far it is unknown whether such fake-news stories had a lasting impact on voters and, if so, how many people were swayed to what extent. Shortly after Trump's surprising victory, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg dismissed accusations that his platform helped put Trump in office as a "crazy idea". Public pressure to uncover the real extent of Russian interference via social media has been intensifying ever since, however, and he has qualified his initial response, promising his platform would redouble its efforts to tackle fake news.

Zuckerberg has pointed out a core conflict with no easy solution, however: in most cases it is relatively easy to distinguish completely true from utterly fabricated stories, but it is much harder to identify stories of mostly accurate facts where a few details have been tweaked or left out.



In the fake-news era, serious journalism is retaking lost ground – online as well as in the analogue world: news agent in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh.

Germany too has been affected by disinformation. One example was when the Huffington Post reported that a Woolworth store in Dortmund had taken all Christmas articles off the shelves in November 2016. Line three of the story suggested the apparent reason: “According to media reports, a store saleswoman said: ‘We are a Muslim business; we don’t want to sell Christmas articles.’”

This was untrue. The retailer’s real motive was that Christmas items were not selling well at this particular location, so they were shipped to other Woolworth stores with stronger demand. This information was contained at the end of a video that accompanied the news item, but the news item itself did not convey it. Moreover, the “media reports” Huffington Post claimed to quote could not be substantiated, according to a study done on behalf of Vice magazine. Yet, the Huffington Post story was shared over 600 times, so it was a PR success.

OUTRAGE AS A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

More than 2 billion people use Facebook, and a growing number of internet users have been turning to social-media sites rather than established news organisations for the bulk of their news. While the flood of information is steadily rising, our attention is limited. On average, a mobile Facebook user takes just 1.7 seconds to decide whether to engage with content that pops up on the screen. In the race to generate outrage, a lurid title makes the cut more often, driving up views and shares and increasing the ripple effect of false reporting and disinformation.

The Vice study nominated “champions of disinformation” among the German-language news sites with the widest reach and full editorial staffs. Sputnik DE, Huffington Post DE and RT Deutsch took the top spots. An estimated 42 to 47% of these websites’ Facebook postings were found to contain information that was misleading at best and completely false at worst.

Internationally, the spotlight is turning on pro-Kremlin platforms such as Sputnik and RT in particular. For example, British Prime Minister Theresa May and many others accuse Russia of interfering in elections and referenda. Moscow is being blamed for manipulating opinions around the world. Experts fear that disinformation may destabilise Germany’s democratic constitutional order as well.

Russia plays a special role in the battle for hearts and minds. An analysis by the London School of Economics and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue revealed that, apart from some international extremist right-wing networks, particularly pro-Kremlin media emphasised divisive issues. It remains unclear whether such action has had any significant impact on elections.

No doubt, false reports can have a tangible impact, not least, because they reinforce the notion that the “mainstream” media are biased or complicit in some political agenda. Agitators from the political fringes have been spurning established media houses for quite some time, and they are increasing their pressure.

Discrediting the truth and denigrating established media is generating uncertainty. That became evident in the Edelman Trust Barometer of January 2018 for example. This most recent edition of an annual research effort showed that seven out of ten people worldwide now say they fear fake news. The times when people ridiculed and disregarded the phenomenon of false information online is over.

ESTABLISHED JOURNALISM WINNING FAVOUR

The good news is that traditional journalism is regaining public trust, whereas confidence in search engines and social media is declining. In 21 out of 28 countries surveyed, respondents said they trusted established media houses more than Google, Facebook and the like. People seem to crave trustworthy facts and the professional take of pundits who know their business.

Fundamental values – including tolerance, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression – make democracy vulnerable to mass disinformation in cyberspace. It is a challenge to protect democracy from the massive amount of fake news. Politicians and parliaments certainly must lead the charge.

In Germany, the Network Enforcement Act took effect recently. Among other things, this law forces Facebook and other social media sites to remove hate speech, fake news and other “obviously illegal” content from their platforms fast. Such regulations put pressure on social media firms, but many critics have pointed out some serious shortcomings, including the following:

- It is hard to tell exactly what constitutes an “obvious” violation of the law. Not

everything that is hurtful, fabricated or stupid is necessarily illegal.

- Outsourcing authority for determining the legality of content from the courts to private corporations seems like the de-facto privatisation of the judicial process.
- There is a risk of platforms pre-emptively deleting potentially controversial content, which a society that values freedom of opinion should be willing to tolerate.

Public debate on these issues must continue. Otherwise, there is no hope of achieving our democratic objectives while avoiding dangerous pitfalls. Important first steps have been taken. The EU Commission has set up the High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Disinformation consisting of international representatives from NGOs, the media and researchers. Their recommendations are to be incorporated into a comprehensive EU strategy to combat fake news. As with other issues that do not respect national borders, Europe must pull together to tackle the harmful side-effects of digitisation.

The work of the established media must become yet more transparent. Many media houses have set up teams who fact check online stories in order to identify fake news and disinformation. Editorial offices need to keep up the fight. They must also disclose the journalistic criteria they employ so people understand what they do report, what they do not report, and for what reasons. This is the only way established mainstream media can successfully counter the accusation of holding back inconvenient truths.

Ultimately though, we users must assume responsibility. Just like we all learn how to navigate road traffic safely, diligent citizens of digitised societies must learn to navigate web traffic safely. We must avoid hazards while reaping the benefits. Whether you are crossing the road or travelling on the digital highway, a good rule of thumb is to stop, look and listen before you go.



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Fakebook

At any mention of fake news, people automatically think of Facebook. So far, the world's largest social network has only proposed half-baked solutions to the disinformation problem. It has recently been tarnished by one of the most serious data scandals of all time.

By Patrick Schlereth

“If the message is right, we don’t really care where it comes from or how it was created. That’s why it’s not such a big deal if it turns out to be fake.” This statement was made by Christian Lüth, the spokesperson for the AfD, Germany’s right-wing nationalist party. It referred to a composite image of a member of the Christian-Democrats’ youth organisation Young Union. The picture was tweeted in 2017 and supposedly showed an antifascist activist about to throw a rock. The quote showed that we are living in a post-truth era in which stoking fears of left-wing rioters, refugees and critical media is more important than factual accuracy.

Fake news is not a new phenomenon. Consider the forged Hitler diaries that “Stern” magazine published in 1983 or Iraq’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction which served to justify the US invasion in 2003. What is new is that, thanks to social media, anyone and everyone can spread disinformation, while traditional media are increasingly losing their traditional gate-keeping and mediating roles.

Another problem is what is known as social bots: easily-created computer programmes that perform certain tasks automatically. For example, they pose as real people, use fake accounts on social networks and overwhelm the network with fake reports and smear campaigns. Social bots exchange messages with each other, creating inauthentic trends that marginalise real conversations.

Any discussion of fake news almost automatically becomes one about Facebook. This social network has almost 2.2 billion active users, involving significantly more than a quarter of the world population. Many young people, including in develop-

ing countries, get their information almost exclusively from Facebook.

Facebook loves extremes. And it loves news that stirs up emotions and has been shared by a large number of people. Many users find fake news appealing because it seems much more exciting than news from the established media.

IMPACTS OF DISINFORMATION

The referendum on whether the UK should leave the EU shows how big the influence of fake news is. The British voted for Brexit after supporters spread the lie that the National Health Service would get an additional £ 350 million a week if the country left the EU. During the US presidential campaign, the candidate Hillary Clinton was vilified in several ways – alternatively as the leader of child pornography rings or as an Al-Qaeda and ISIS sympathiser. In the end, the winner was Donald Trump, someone who probably knows more about fake news than politics.

The ties between the American president and Russia are currently under investigation. Troll factories, which use bots to spread false information online on behalf of the Russian government, are suspected of having had a relevant impact on the US election.

During Kenya’s presidential election campaigns in 2017, fake videos circulated on social media. They supposedly showed CNN and BBC reports, using fake numbers to show that the incumbent, Uhuru Kenyatta, had a significant lead over his opponent, Raila Odinga. The fact that Kenyatta’s victory was met with only limited protest that did not escalate into the kind of violence that occurred after the 2007 election may be linked to voters’ exposure to such fake news. Portland, a consulting firm, did a survey of 2,000 Kenyans, and 90 % of the respondents reported seeing fake news before the election.

On social media, fake news is not only politically motivated, but also a profitable business. Only in August 2017 did Facebook come up with the idea to block ads from pages that are known to repeatedly spread

disinformation. Facebook argues that this measure will make it unprofitable to continue to do so. The ban is lifted, however, if a page stops the behaviour.

Private accounts pose a larger problem. Facebook refuses to give researchers access to anonymised data about the production and spread of fake news via private accounts. The multinational corporation justifies this stance by emphasising users’ privacy rights. At the same time, the protection of privacy never seemed to matter much when Facebook cooperated financially with data brokers. That is what the most recent data scandal shows.

THE DATA SCANDAL

In March, a whistleblower leaked that the British data analysis firm Cambridge Analytica (CA) had collected data illegally. Facebook reportedly knew of the data theft in 2015, but did nothing about it. The company only requested that the data be deleted without ever checking whether CA actually complied with that request. CA used an app designed by a third party. This app was downloaded by 270,000 Facebook users. What they thought was a harmless personality test that would serve research, was actually an instrument to target political advertising in a way that matched users’ psychological profiles.

By participating, the 270,000 users did not only disclose their own data, but that of their Facebook friends as well. CA was thus able to collect detailed information concerning up to 87 million people.

An undercover investigation by the British television station Channel 4 has revealed that CA manipulated the voting behaviour of social media users with fake news and staged sex scandals. The company, which Trump’s former chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, helped to set up, has boasted on the record that it or its parent company SCL influenced not only the US election, but also the Brexit referendum, the elections in Kenya in 2013 and 2017 and many other elections on every continent. Some of the claims may be exaggerated for marketing purposes. The truth is that Cambridge Analytica also worked for Ted Cruz, a Republican senator who wanted to run for president, but was beaten by Trump in the primaries.

In one way or another, the CA scandal has permanently damaged Facebook’s repu-



Facebook is not taking the fight against fake news seriously.

tation. Several companies have announced their intention to leave the social network. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s founder and chief executive, had to testify before the US Congress in April. There are demands to break up his tech company because it dominates the market as a quasi monopolist.

Especially after the 2016 US election, Facebook was heavily criticised for not addressing the spread of disinformation on its network. Trump supporters relied more unabashedly on false reports than their opponents. It helped them that Facebook’s algorithm prioritises frequently shared content and pushes it into users’ newsfeeds. Whether the content is true or not, makes no difference. A false report about the pope endorsing Trump was shared over 960,000 times before election day; a correction of this piece of disinformation was shared only 34,000 times. Nevertheless, Zuckerberg said that the accusation that Facebook had influenced the election results sounds “pretty crazy”.

In response to intense public pressure, however, Facebook came up with

a half-baked approach to slow down the spread of fake news. In collaboration with external news sites, the corporation introduced a new way for its US users to identify questionable content in the spring of 2017. An article that at least two fact-checking sites considered objectionable, would be flagged as “disputed” and marked with a red warning triangle. It had to be at least two fact-checkers because Facebook wanted to set the bar as high as possible. The strategy passed responsibility on to the network’s users. For the fact-checkers to become involved, they had to report news that was potentially forged.

Ultimately Facebook acknowledged that this strategy did not work. The fact-checking often took several days, and in that time the disputed fake item was shared thousands of times. Moreover, content that wasn’t flagged suddenly looked more reliable. By Facebook’s own admission, the “disputed” flag was usually ineffective – and in the worst-case scenario, it had the opposite effect. Demagogues like Trump turned the

tables and accused their political opponents of lying. No one on Twitter screams “fake news” as often as the American President – while at the same time spreading plenty of lies of his own.

In late 2017, Facebook dropped the “disputed” flag. Instead, it has started displaying related content that puts the false report in context. According to Facebook, this method, which is less stigmatising, only requires one fact-checker, so the response is faster. The new strategy has not reduced the click rate of fake news, though the company claims that it is not shared as often. However, it is impossible to know for sure because Facebook guards this kind of data jealously. External fact-checkers have complained that the corporation is not cooperative, which makes their work more difficult.



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Powerful falsehoods

Rodrigo Duterte, the president of the Philippines rode to power on a wave of disinformation two years ago. He has not delivered on campaign promises, apart from one thing. His phoney “war on drugs” has claimed some 12,000 lives.

By Alan Robles

Rodrigo Duterte is the best president in the solar system, according to the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). He is admired by Queen Elizabeth II who says, all world leaders should consult him. Bill Gates, the tech tycoon, is so impressed by how peaceful the Philippines has

as aljazeera-tv, bbc101.co.uk, dailymail or dw-tv3.

Tens of thousands of FB users like, promote and share these lies, which then wash up, like toxic detritus, on many Filipinos’ screens. There is nothing accidental or random about this flood. It is deliberately engineered, targeted and maintained with specific goals. The idea is to make Rodrigo Duterte look good, trash his critics and confuse the people.

Disinformation is nothing new in politics. “Fake news” is really just propaganda, something that has been around for centuries. But it is now supercharged by social-media platforms. Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi

cebook is the most popular platform. The Philippines currently has 101 million inhabitants, 119 million mobile phone subscriptions and 47 million Facebook accounts, as the website www.rappler.com reports.

An unknown number of the Facebook accounts belongs to trolls – online personas who are the equivalent of stone throwing hooligans. In the early days of the internet, trolls were random unpleasant individuals who delighted in spoiling discussions and provoking anger. Today, however, paid agents lead organised armies of trolls. Some use bogus accounts to spread their vitriol; some use automated software programmes (“bots”).

Many people believe Donald Trump was the first populist leader with authoritarian leanings to win high office thanks to fake news. But six months before Trump won the presidency on November 2016, Duterte successfully rode on a tide of online disinformation to power. He polarised the electorate, tapping into feelings of fear, hatred and resentment.

CYBER ASSAULT

Reconstructing what happened, scholars and journalists have revealed how Duterte’s strategists mobilised trolls, manipulated public opinion and used stolen data to target individuals. They also relied on foreign consultants. One of them was possibly Alexander Nix, the infamous former head of Cambridge Analytica, the company that has been accused of stealing the personal data of almost 90 million Facebook users in support of the Trump campaign.

As Hong Kong’s South China Morning Post reports, Nix visited Manila in 2015 as the head of a Cambridge Analytica’s parent company, Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL). He told the National Press Club: “The most powerful way to have elections is to have the people themselves campaign for you.” Instead of relying on surveys, campaign strategists should use data to influence personal behaviour. According to Nix, even “fundamentally flawed” candidates who might otherwise never win could use a strategy that would maximise their “likable traits”.

SCL claims to have successfully given advice to scores of candidates around the world. An SCL webpage, which has since been taken down, stated that one client was



Anti-Duterte protests on 21 September 2017, 45 years after Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law.

become under Duterte that he went to Manila to invest \$ 20 billion.

Each of these statements is a crude lie. They are among a host of similar fabrications circulating on Facebook. All are presented as “news stories”, completed with spurious headlines, fake photos and quotations in fractured English. They often refer to misleadingly named websites, such

minister, could only have dreamed of this kind of instant delivery, around-the-clock availability and individual targeting.

Three things facilitate the rapid proliferation of fake news in the Philippines: mobile devices, Facebook and trolls. Today, most Filipinos have smartphones. Low-budget telecom subscriptions allow them to access the internet at any time, and Fa-

a Philippine candidate whom it advised to play up the character of a tough, no-nonsense leader who is hard on crime. Duterte was not named, but the description fits him. The National Press Club's president, by the way, has since become Duterte's undersecretary for communications.

In April 2018, Facebook revealed that Cambridge Analytica stole the private data of more than one million Filipino Facebook users. What exactly SCL and Cambridge Analytica did in the Philippines remains shadowy. That is true of another foreign group, which has been described as "Rumanian". A campaign manager of another candidate said he was offered an automated system that used special software to monitor social-media activity, identify issues, mobilise supporters, spread content and even generate thousands of fake accounts. Everything would be managed from a high-tech command centre. That particular candidate turned down the offer but others might have accepted it.

Facebook however, is the multinational corporation that quite openly helped Duterte. The company trained the staffs of any interested candidates on how best to use the social-media platform. Duterte's strategists eagerly accepted the advice. According to Bloomberg.com, the service was delivered by Facebook's "global governments and politics team". Headed by Katie Harbath, a former strategist of the US Republican party, this team taught political parties to set up campaign pages, create content and livestream events. It may also have sold advertising space.

Harbath said in an interview in 2016: "What we are trying to do is give users access, making them informed." That is not how things turned out. Duterte's strategists organised supporters in real-world and online groups that played two basic roles: they pumped out a steady stream of fake news and disinformation about Duterte and his opponents, and they harassed and intimidated any critics, dumping thousands of

frenzied comments on any Facebook post that dared to criticise their candidate. The trolls did not necessarily want to convince everyone. Intimidation and confusion served their purposes too.

Facebook has proudly declared that 22 million Filipino users were actively engaged in the election campaign. Depressingly, this was not a laudable example of broad-based participation in a democratic process. Much of the activism was toxic and just spread disinformation.

A recent study by the Newton Tech4Dev Network concludes that the Duterte campaign did not only use volunteers and fans. It also relied on professionals from advertising and public relations. The Newton study adds: "Under Duterte's presidency, 'trolls', or 'Dutertards' as his fanatic followers have been dubbed, are seen to have debased political discourse and silenced dissidents in their vociferous sharing of fake news and amplification of hate speech."

No lie is too blatant

The Philippines is being flooded by a tide of disinformation in favour of the Duterte administration. The falsehoods are outrageous, but apparently, they are effective nonetheless.

In the election campaign two years ago, no lie was too blatant, no conspiracy story too primitive. Fake reports said the Pope as well as the Singapore government had endorsed Rodrigo Duterte's candidacy. US President Barack Obama was falsely quoted as saying Benigno Aquino, the outgoing president, had made the Philippines suffer. Plans to "steal" the election were reported. The Duterte campaign fed fears of lawlessness and spawned resentment against the country's corrupt elites.

Fake news sells because it stokes readers' fears and ha-

treds, especially if aimed at selected audiences. Also it seems that when they use their mobile devices, many Filipinos just read headlines and not stories, possibly because accessing the entire story incurs additional data charges from the telco. It doesn't help that a recent global survey by Ipsos MORI found that of 38 nationals sampled, Filipinos were the third most ignorant on specific issues such as religion, vaccination, murder and suicide rates and teenage pregnancy. Ironically they were also the third most confident about their knowledge.

Many have never learned how to tell a trustworthy website information from a propaganda outlet. They do not understand that quality media must convey more than one viewpoint and cannot simply



Martin Schulz alias Prof. Dr. Alfred Sanders: <https://memebuster.net/icc-cannot-prosecute-duterte/>

endorse a single party or political leader.

The disinformation industry has not stalled since Duterte took office. The latest gems it has produced include the following fabrications:

- Agnes Callamard, special rapporteur for the United

Nations High Commission on Human Rights, is a drug addict. Why? Because her hair is unkempt.

- The southern city of Marawi, pulverised in a five-month battle between government troops and Islamist militants, is rapidly and beautifully being rebuilt by the government. The proof? A photo of the harbour of the French resort town Nice.

- Oxford University professor Alfred Sanders says Duterte can't be prosecuted for crimes against humanity because of his high approval ratings. There's no such professor – and the accompanying photo is that of German politician Martin Schulz.

LINK

Ipsos/Mori poll: Perils of perception
<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perils-perception-2017>

Proudly calling themselves “cyber-warriors”, the troll hordes pushed the same unrealistic narrative during the campaign. According to it, the country’s existence was threatened by a dramatic drug crisis, and only Duterte could save the nation. Neither national nor international statistics provided any evidence for such a drug crisis.

Duterte was 70 years old at that time and known as a foul-mouthed ex-mayor of Davao City with links to death squads. But on Facebook he was painted as a diamond in the rough, a reformer who would fight drug syndicates as well as the established elites, including business oligarchs, politicians and the mainstream media.

Two years after he won the elections by a plurality of not quite 40% of the votes, Duterte has not fulfilled his campaign promises. His main political initiative is an attempt to ram through a new constitution that would perpetuate his power (see my essay in D+C/E+Z e-Paper 2017/02, p. 31). The entrenched elites are still very much entrenched. The main beneficiaries of his regime so far seem to have been his cronies

– among them the family of the late Ferdinand Marcos, a former dictator.

On the other hand, Duterte did promise to fill Manila Bay with the corpses of ten thousands of criminals and drug addicts. Indeed, the so-called war on drugs that he launched after taking office in June 2016, “has claimed an estimated 12,000 lives of primarily poor urban dwellers, including children”, according to Human Rights Watch. The killers apparently belong to death squads and the police force. Because of the many extrajudicial killings, President Duterte is now at risk of being tried by the International Criminal Court one day. Nonetheless, his popularity rating remains high, his trolls continue to infest Facebook, and the disinformation machinery continues to churn out content.

There has been some pushback. Belatedly, the Senate has held a series of hearings on fake news, but nothing has come out of it. Wikipedia has published a list of Filipino fake-news websites. Mainstream media, which chose to ignore the deluge of disinformation on Facebook, have slowly been

reporting on fake news. Last year, Vera Files, an investigative reporting group in Manila, analysed 16 weeks of fake news activity and found the content clearly favoured two people: Duterte and Ferdinand Marcos Jr., son of the late, murderous deposed dictator.

LINKS

Newton Tech4Dev Network, 2018:

<http://newtontechfordev.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ARCHITECTS-OF-NETWORKED-DISINFORMATION-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

Vera Files:

<http://verafil.es.org/>

Wikipedia list of Filipino fake news websites:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fake_news_websites#For_Philippine_audiences



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Hindutva trolls

Disinformation has become a serious problem in India. The ruling party’s ideology is divisive and relies on self-serving myths. Fact-based, public-interest journalism is increasingly on the defensive.

By Arfa Khanum Sherwani

In March, India’s Ministry of Information and Broadcasting introduced a new rule according to which it would suspend the accreditation of journalists who spread “fake news”. Within 15 days, regulatory bodies would decide whether the journalist concerned was guilty or not.

The ministry had to retract the new scheme the next day. Public opposition had proven too strong. Apparently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi intervened himself.

The big question remains whether the plan was meant to put a check on disinfor-

mation or to prevent journalists from reporting news the government is uncomfortable with. Many people saw the scheme as an attempt to curb press freedom before the general elections next year.

Disinformation has become a serious issue in India. Many mainstream-media platforms are guilty of spreading fake news occasionally, but most damage is done on social media. Sometimes news items are faulty by mistake, but the worst ones are created intentionally. An army of paid trolls is spawning a vicious ecosystem of disinformation which consists of lies and tricks and serves political objectives.

RIGHT-WING NETWORKS

Since Modi rose to power in 2014 after his party, the BJP, won the general elections, a host of new right-wing websites has come

up. Examples include OpIndia.com, Postcard News or Swarajyamag.com. They selectively pick up news items, twist them to suit their ideology and feel free to invent stories.

The BJP is a political party that keeps Hindu supremacy at the centre of their politics. It belongs to a network of organisations which promise to restore greatness to Hindus. This message is divisive because it marginalises minorities, in particular India’s more than 180 million Muslims who make up almost 15% of the population. The BJP ideology is called “Hindutva”, and Modi is one of its more aggressive proponents.

When Modi was chief minister of Gujarat, more than 1,000 people were killed in riots in 2002. Most victims were Muslims; most perpetrators belonged to Hindu mobs. The state government did not contain the violence as would have been its constitutional duty.

To understand the viciousness of disinformation in India, one must know how the internet trolls operate, who funds them and how they influence the social climate. In her book “I am a troll”, Swati Chaturvedi describes how the BJP paid internet activists



Protestors commemorating Gauri Lankesh, the murdered Bangalore-based journalist.

to attack political opponents and celebrities perceived as opponents during the election campaign. She alleges that trolls worked on creating a favourable climate for Modi. Even Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan became a target.

It has become obvious that this was not just a campaign strategy. The trolls continue to abuse opponents, incite supporters to violence and threaten people with rape and death. They want to suppress dissent and turn India into a Hindu state.

Not all people among whom the Hindutva ideology resonates are affiliated to the BJP or one of its allied organisations. However, their message is basically the same. Their world view is not based on historical facts, but on self-serving myths. Moreover, it ridicules all other faiths, in particular Islam and Christianity.

Hindutva adherents praise the “superiority” of Hindu culture and demand supremacy for the Hindu religion, which preaches upper caste dominance over all other people. Hindutva proponents make bizarre statements about long-ago history, claiming, for example, that modern science and technology were already known to Hindus thousands of years ago.

In Mumbai in October 2014, Modi himself publicly claimed that ancient Indians understood genetics and performed plastic surgery. His proof: Ganesh, a Hindu god, has an elephant head. He made his statement in Hindi, and it is documented on YouTube (in Hindi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeIWu1NLuzE>).

Irrespective of what the history books say, the Hindutva foot soldiers argue that In-

dia was exploited by invaders for centuries. The only way they know to repair their sense of inferiority is to humiliate Muslims, Christian and other minorities. Of course, they equally harass any Hindus who support the minorities – be they liberals, leftists or communists. As is typical of populist movements which claim to speak for “the nation”, but actually pit communities against communities, Hindutva activists need “others” as permanent enemies.

Hindu supremacists foster hate online and in real life. Incidents of violence have been organised on social media. Moreover, Hindu supremacists have begun to spread news about their hate crimes on Twitter and Facebook to attract additional supporters.

The aggressive agitation has not eased, now that the BJP is in power. As the Modi government is apparently unable to implement policies that might lead to the kind of greatness it promised in the campaign, it keeps fuelling resentment. After four years in office, the government is still projecting the image of a country in which the Hindu majority is suffering while the Muslim minority is supposedly “pampered”. In truth, it is mostly poor, marginalised and ever more often exposed to violent attacks. The government’s agenda is not one of solving problems, but one of stoking tensions.

Not so long ago, Indian media used to pride itself on being free and vibrant. Today, a large section of the press is either bowing down to political pressure or has become complacent. This makes it easier for BJP-affiliated organisations and their trolls to hound the remaining few who still question the government and uphold the democratic

principles of objective, fact-based journalism.

In September, Gauri Lankesh was murdered in Bangalore. She was an out-spoken journalist with a long track-record of opposing Hindu supremacism. Many more journalists are being bullied, harassed and silenced – online and in the real world. I have suffered troll abuse myself (see box, p.38).

Ahead of the next general elections, the online and offline intimidation of journalists is set to intensify. The government’s recent attempt to curb the freedom of press was an opportunity to stand up. This time, we managed to defend the principles of independent journalism. A battle has been won, but the war is not over.

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Plastic surgery? A statue of Ganesh, the elephant-headed Hindu god in Kolkata.

Veiled threats and blatant harassment

India's Hindu supremacists claim to love peace, but such statements are often double-layered. All too often, agitators with authoritarian leanings point out that there will be peace if they get their way, implicitly threatening to resort to violence if they do not. Media workers who challenge them risk public abuse.

The advocates of Hindu supremacism can be quite soft-spoken. Some do not have any formal ties to the BJP, India's Hindu-nationalist ruling party. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, an influential spiritual guru with millions of followers, provided a recent example.

Gurudev, as his followers call him, says he wants to help to resolve the Ayodhya dispute, which is probably India's most vexing faith-related controversy. It has triggered many riots and claimed thousands of lives in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

According to Hindu mythology, the Hindu god Ram was born in Ayodhya. This legend was first documented in the 19th century. In the 16th century, a big mosque was built in Ayodhya under Mughal rule, and it probably replaced a Hindu temple. The historical evidence is not entirely clear. In late 1992, after a long nation-wide campaign, a mob of Hindu fanatics tore down Babri Mosque because they wanted to build a temple in its place. Brutal violence immediately erupted across South Asia. The Mumbai riots in 1993, the Gujarat riots in 2002 and many

less prominent ones were also linked to Ayodhya.

The Supreme Court has stayed construction of the temple and maintained the status quo. The case is still pending.

The guru has suggested an out-of-court settlement. He wants Muslims to cede the

truth, of course, is that his "solution" is to give Hindu supremacists what they want and that he speculated about terrible things that would happen otherwise. His stance on Ayodhya is actually similar to that of the BJP, which has declared in the election manifesto it will build a Ram temple.

The guru and his organisation Art of Living are not officially part of the BJP network, but they are obviously close to the government. One devotee is



Hindu fanatics on the roof of Babri Mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992.

land on which the mosque stood to Hindus so a temple can be built. In return, Muslims would be allowed to build a new mosque somewhere else in Ayodhya. In Sri Sri's words, this arrangement would bring peace. Should the Supreme Court decide against building a temple, however, India would become like Syria, according to him.

His followers fast insisted that the Syria metaphor was not supposed to be a threat, but merely a warning. The plain

a BJP member of parliament. In 2016, Art of Living organised an international cultural festival in Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several cabinet ministers attended it.

An interview that the guru granted me in March did not go well. Unable to take my questions concerning the promotion of Hindu supremacy in a country with a secular constitution, Sri Sri abruptly ended the interview, and his followers shut down our camera. Earlier during the interview, one of his

media managers had broken into the frame and demanded that I only ask "positive" questions. All this was recorded, and TheWire website published the video uncut. It went viral on social media and millions watched it.

Predictably, the troll army was unleashed on me and TheWire. It is not humanly possible for me to give an exact number of people sending me hateful and vicious tweets, but for three consecutive days, dozens of people with hundreds of tweets flooded my timeline.

Devotees were upset that I challenged their spiritual leader's divinity by asking him serious questions. I had experienced troll abuse before, and what really surprised me this time was that prominent right-wing ideologues with substantial Twitter followers used their power to ridicule me. They obviously wanted to discredit me into silence.

An official BJP spokesperson claimed that our video was doctored. Ravi Shankar's media team came up with their own version of the video, challenging the authenticity of ours. Such disinformation serves to confuse the public.

The impatience the guru revealed in the interview showed that he is not the honest broker he claims to be. It undermined his carefully crafted public image, and that was something the Hindu supremacists could not tolerate. (aks)

LINK

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar interviewed by Arfa Khanum Sherwani (in Hindi):

<https://thewire.in/video/watch-interview-sri-sri-ravi-shankar-faith-constitution-ayodhya>

Reasons why you can trust us

Disinformation has become an issue of great international concern. Media outlets are under pressure to prove that they are trustworthy. That obviously applies to D+C/E+Z too, so as the editor, I feel obliged to tell you what our approach is.

By Hans Dembowski

In journalism, sources matter more than individual facts. We systematically tell you who the authors of our stories are, in what capacity they are contributing and how you can get in touch with them. We normally indicate an e-mail address or something similar. The people who provide us with content are real persons, and if you want additional information, you can ask them.

We are not promoting some kind of echo chamber by giving voice only to members of a small, like-minded group. Our contributors work for a great diversity of institutions all over the world.

Disinformation websites tend to shroud themselves – and especially their funding – in secrecy. We do not. Our mission statement spells out clearly that D+C/E+Z is “funded by Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and published on behalf of ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL”. ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL is a government agency that reports to the ministry. Our mission is to provide a credible forum for controversial debate, and we have the editorial freedom to decide on content and contributors independently. If you want to propose a story, please do.

Another aspect is that we do not try to stimulate outrage, as public-opinion manipulating trolls typically do. In the editing process, we actually tend to tone down aggressive rhetoric. We are interested in reasoned debate and do not want to fan anger. Our aspiration is to connect sober minds.

That does not imply that we claim to be unbiased. Nobody is unbiased. Our approach is pluralistic. We publish diverging views. Some of the articles on our platform reflect the views of our paymasters. Others do not. If you follow the global-development debate in Germany, you will know the difference, and some-

times it will even be obvious to people who are not interested in inner-German debates.

More generally speaking, however, we think that our Federal Government’s stance on multilateral cooperation to safeguard peace and bring about sustainable development is basically correct. We also appreciate German global-development policy’s long-standing emphasis on human rights, the rule of law and people’s involvement in policymaking. These points are largely uncontroversial in Germany.

Objectivity is of course an important journalistic principle, but it does not mean that media workers must always give equal space to “both sides” of an argument. At D+C/E+Z, we do not want to promote the views of those who evidently deviate from fact-based discourse and disrespect democratic principles. We do not accept

anybody’s claim to be somehow entitled to speak directly for “the” people or have some kind of privileged access to “the” truth.

The editorial team of D+C/E+Z is small. We do our best to check the facts in the articles we publish, but there are limits to verifying grassroots-level data from Burundi, Bolivia or Bangladesh. As is true of all news organisations, inaccuracies sometimes escape our attention. Journalists are human, and all human beings fail occasionally. We correct the mistakes we become aware of and do so transparently.

Whether you trust us or not, is up to you, of course. We hope you do. And to encourage your trust, we give you solid background information concerning who we are, how we work, and who contributes the content to our product.



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