

Good morning in the “Brave New World”

The media are failing as a guarantor of democracy

by Thomas Scherr*

We live in a bubble. A medial bubble. In a media bubble of the “Western values”. We now know almost nothing about the world around us. Maybe the weather report is still correct. But even there we can expect “extreme weather”, “heat waves” and “...the hottest winter/spring/summer/autumn since 1970/1950/1900 or since measurements began ...”. Temperature information, pollen reports and information about wind direction are approximately correct. That's it. This situation is all the more bitter because we have to be well informed in the face of a worsening world situation.

Ladislau Ludescher from the Goethe University Frankfurt has made it his mission to compare how wars and famines around the world are reflected in our daily news. To do this, he examined the most widespread German-language news portals such as the Swiss “Tagesschau”, the German ARD “Tagesschau” and the Austrian “ZIB 1”. Comprehensive, serious reporting on the problems of our world? ...Well, you guessed it. For example, the news about the Oscars is more extensive than that about the war in Yemen, which has been going on for nine years, has cost over 377,000 lives and, in 2017, resulted in the largest cholera epidemic ever recorded.

Human suffering is ignored

Ludescher notes: “Reports apparently only occur when people or interests of the Global North are affected in some way. It is frightening to note, using a concrete and very real example, that humanitarian disasters and human suffering are clearly not enough on their own to be noticed in the news when the affected areas take place in the Global South. How else can the media's lack of interest in the 'deadliest war of the 21st century' and the 'worst humanitarian crisis in the

world' be explained?”¹ What is happening in the southern hemisphere is almost completely ignored. However, it is not a problem of supply and demand in the news market.

“Bush telegraph”

Let's move one step further. Whatever “information” is ultimately selected from the northern hemisphere is now so marginal and distorted that hardly anything of reality shines through. The few news agencies that still exist only accept reports that fit into their portfolio. The “quality media”, in turn, then only selects reports to which they give the finishing touches, i.e. “the spin”. In short: What we notice at the end of the “Bush telegraph” from the world outside our sphere of vision usually has little to do with what is actually happening in the world.

But how are we supposed to find out what is happening in the world when our “quality media” – to put it harmlessly – are constantly filtering and distorting it? In the meantime, it is not only media experts who consider this “filtering” – one could also call it brutal “direction of the masses” – to be questionable.

Who's “the bad guy” and who's “the good guy”?

Our big media companies hint at who is “bad” or “good” and exactly how to think about this or that. Look at some of the “quality media”, such as those funded by your taxes:

- What information do they choose to broadcast? Which one find its way onto the radio, TV, newspaper or smartphone?
- Who or what is portrayed and how? Who is “unlikeable”, who is “likeable”?
- Which opinions, feelings or attitudes are conveyed (connoted) in addition to the main message?

The most difficult question remains

- Which news did not appear? (You can only pursue this question if you can take note of news outside the mainstream bubble. This is now restricted in many EU countries. But, be careful,

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there is not comprehensive reporting outside the “Western values bubble” either).

Censorship is back

A radical shift in reporting has taken place over the past two decades. Today in the EU and NATO, with the support of secret services or “associations close to the governments”, inappropriate, i.e. disagreeable opinions are being “fought over”, and people also actively intervene in the area of opinion formation with their own contributions.²

Looking back: Due to the critical reporting by some alternative media³ on the 2014 Maidan coup, the EU felt compelled to actively intervene in the media sector. *Wolfgang Bittner* wrote about this in 2016:

“The *European External Action Service* [EEAS] is also not above spreading fake news on a large scale when it comes to Russia. In 2016, a special unit called the *East StratCom Task Force* (Strategic Communications Team East) was formed to take care of ‘large-scale organized propaganda’ by Russian authorities in EU countries. Experts at the *EU Commission* are certain that Moscow is pursuing the goal of destabilizing the European Union and is conducting ‘hybrid warfare’ with targeted disinformation and uncertainty.”⁴

“Institute for Statecraft’s Integrity”

It is therefore not surprising that “cyber units” of state secret services support the governments’ censorship efforts. In connection with a PR campaign for vaccination campaigns, the journalist *Whitney Webb* described how various secret service institutions, e.g. the British “Institute for Statecraft’s Integrity” or institutions affiliated with the CIA, were used on the Internet.⁵ The fact that “Western Values” abandoned their constitutional principles is shown by the years of illegal imprisonment of the journalist *Julian Assange*. He had published documents about US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Individual EU and NATO states are now directly threatening dissenting views with punishment. Think of the new EU *Digital Services Act* (DSA); the planned German “Democracy Promotion Act”; the French ban on expressing criticism of an mRNA-based vaccination or the Canadian proposal to impose prison sentences for dissenting opinions.⁶ – Sorry, that’s no longer called democracy. This is totalitarian.

And Switzerland?

Switzerland’s four largest media companies in also use the standardized “news pool” and thus

automatically follow the “opinion tapestry” of the EU and NATO. But the editors-in-chief also like to join in with the Brussels and Washington choir.

In 1940, the Swiss government and the press courageously defended themselves against German Reich’s “advice”. It was said at the time: “Switzerland need not have any fears, provided that its press does not commit any further carelessness. Even the small papers have to show discipline because everything is being read in Germany.”⁷ Unfortunately, today the large Swiss media companies are miles away from sticking their heads out even a little bit from the Western values bubble. Many small, independent news portals in the country now provide somewhat more balanced reporting.

No freedom without freedom of the press

One of the hallmarks and a characteristic of free societies and democratic states in general is the freedom of expression and, closely linked to it, the freedom of the press. They remain an existential basis for every democracy, as without them no free decision-making process is possible. But it is precisely these basic requirements that are being actively under fire today, as the new EU guidelines show.⁸

Let’s hold on: Over the past 250 years, citizens in Europe and the United States fought for human rights and freedom with blood and tears. Freedom of speech and expression and the associated freedom of the press form the foundation of every democracy because they are necessary for the free formation of opinions. Anyone who abuses this either thinks they know better or has sinister plans.

In times of nuclear overkill, let us not fall back into an absolutism in which conceited potentates think they know what is good for the people!

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

¹ <https://de.ejo-online.eu/qualitaet-ethik/wann-wird-ein-krieg-nachrichtenrelevant>, consulted on 11 February 2024

² Jonas Tögel. *Cognitive warfare. The latest manipulation techniques as a weapon of NATO.* Westend Editions 2023
Hannes Hofbauer. *Censorship. Publication bans reflected in history. From church index to YouTube deletion.* Promedia 2022
Stefan Kraft/Hannes Hofbauer (Hg.). *Consequences of war. How the fight for Ukraine is changing the world.* Promedia 2023

³ Ulrich Heyden. <https://www.nachdenkseiten.de/?p=71261>, 5 April 2021

- ⁴ Cf. Wolfgang Bittner. "The conquest of Europe by the USA", p. 168f., as well as the same in Göttinger Tageblatt from 24 February 2016, p. 2
Cf. Marcus Klöckner. <https://www.heise.de/tp/features/Unabhaengige-Medien-und-Medienvertreter-im-Dienste-des-Strategischen-Kommunikationsteams-Ost-3376363.html>, 30 October 2015
- ⁵ Withney Webb. <https://www.rubikon.news/artikel/pro-pagandakrieg-fur-big-pharma>, 24 November 2020
- ⁶ <https://apollo-news.net/70-000-euro-und-lebenslange-haft-trudeau-will-drakonische-strafen-fuer-online-hass-durchsetzen/>, February 28, 2024
- ⁷ Edgar Bonjour. History of Swiss neutrality. Volume V. p. 242. Basel 1971. The German ambassador *Ernst von Weizäcker* addressing Switzerland in the "New Europe" in 1940.
- ⁸ <https://apollo-news.net/beschwerdeverfahren-bussgelder-netzabschaltungen-bruessels-digitales-zensurgesetz-tritt-in-kraft/>, February 20, 2024
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