



AUSTRIAN INSTITUTE FOR
EUROPEAN AND SECURITY POLICY

Nr. 2024/4

Fair Elections – Fair Democracies?

The information-democracy nexus

by Ursula Werther-Pietsch
May 2024

AIES FOCUS

Fair elections – fair democracies? The information-democracy nexus

Abstract

Information, media and democracy build a fragile triangle in our times. Vulnerable, exposed and suppressed, as they often are, media professionals work as a building block to enable societies in managing political life. Information integrity and healthy information ecosystems are crucial for true dialogue in open societies, not least in the run-up of elections worldwide. Therefore, the targeted promotion and protection of free, independent media, which are under severe pressure due to digitalisation, social media, artificial intelligence and increasing autocratisation, play an essential role in strengthening democratic culture.

1. Introduction: Ideas and Change*

130 years after Gustave Le Bon's classical discover of mass psychology and its collective power¹, and the seemingly never-ending scourge of conflict and war², ever more people doubt democracy is the right way forward to collectively take political decisions³. Consequently, we have to ask ourselves whether we live in an era where the democratic idea needs to be vigorously revisited, renewed or abandoned. Did weaknesses emerge in the democratic construction which weren't predictable when democracy was born, simply because our cognitive horizon, ability to process information, and hence ideas changed? And, more generally,

do we agree on the thesis that the power of ideas drives the world, not geopolitics?

Hence, to answer this question, we must first discern what paradigm change is⁴. To stay concrete, in international law, one of the leading concepts of the post WWII global order, the principle of self-determination, transcended constantly all forms of normative hierarchies and, with the human rights regime, succeeded to move from scholarly thinking to centre-stage real life. Accordingly, states are no longer seen as the only bearers of self-determination, as it was the case in the decolonisation era⁵.

International lawyers now for decades argue self-determination as the “underlying rule of the world order”⁶, seriously challenging state sovereignty and realpolitik, a paradigm change. What adds, is the desire of people nourished by disorientation and fear of uncertain futures to be part of a movement, a grouping or other entity, not necessarily a nation state or political party, striving for social trust and reliability. Uncertainty creates appetite for collectivity while at the same time, in liberal democracies, isolation, decoupling and dissatisfaction grows. With the given high scores of fragmentations in heterogenous societies and the ubiquitous taste of complexity, established political parties lose their appeal of being responsive to people's needs and information providers increasingly fail in explaining.

This Janus-facetted unresponsiveness of our time may have more profound consequences on how societies, and thus global governance, evolves in future. This is exactly the reason why the New School of Multilateralism pleads for a “World Net Order”, which could make the normative ecosystem more representative, rather than to join the old misleading debate on relativity of human rights dividing the world into a puzzle.

Reality and Information

Following International IDEA, 44% of world population live under autocratic rule⁷. But how is this to be interpreted? Acknowledging what has already been said on psychological behaviour, are citizens today willing to follow leaders or just unable to early distinguish and counter secret signs of growing authoritarianism? Truth may possibly lie in both or more, repression on the one hand turning opposition all too often into a deadly business of defending open societies, entailing structures of blind obedience. Dictators and authoritarians, on the other hand, learned strategic lessons of attracting people by self-confident and visionary posture, the populist stance being only one of the many manifestations. So, what reality?

Reality is built by information⁸, and information will guide the electorate. Accordingly, information avenues to get messages through are explored, to reach out to audiences “by all tech

means”. One way to do it is to train chatbots for a more reliable AI, the other is quick adaption to changing consumer preferences, both in livestreaming and verification, to offer an appealing mix of informational and creative elements. Digital information space advanced to the top impact factor of moving the world’s convictions and beliefs.

At the same time, through IT revolution, inter-connectedness and rapid innovation of information ecosystems, the world ended up in an information superflux. Embracing the many different realities simultaneously, collapse looms as a daily perception: Since, in sharp contrast to the hopes of “Enlightenment”, information can also deeply fuel narratives, presumptions, false constructions and prejudice. Beyond deliberately deceptive practices, mis-, dis- and malinformation (MDMs) stands for contemporary forms of propaganda, online harassment campaigns and the ever more AI-fuelled content moderation that undergird social media⁹. Together MDMs may maliciously

transform the understanding of our world, political concepts and international relations at large. In doing so, fictitious narratives will potentially have more power to rule the world than any empirical scenario.¹⁰

2. The current state of information society

The Landscape

Open society as a term is not new¹¹. Modern democracies as open societies, in disposing of the technical equipment to reach out to everyone, heavily depend on correct, trustworthy and accessible information guiding the effective functioning of the state. One may say that they finally turned into full-fledged information societies. In normative terms, human rights as prerequisites of pluralism are best protected and promoted in information societies, the restriction of which being a substantial characteristic of autocratic regimes. But similarly, “shame”, “façade” and mere electoral democracies may

equally be far away from reaching these standards¹².

The V-Dem Institute distinguishes between four categories of forms of government: Democratic systems and electoral democracies (together 29% or 2.3 billion people), autocratic systems with (pseudo) elections (the main share of 44% or 3.5 billion) and genuine autocracies¹³. International IDEA speaks of fewer democracies than autocratic regimes in the global context in 2024¹⁴ with a ratio of 91 autocracies compared to 88 democracies. Autocracies comprise 71% of the world's population, compared to 48% ten years ago¹⁵. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) shows this alarming trend by the following world map of contemporary governance.¹⁶

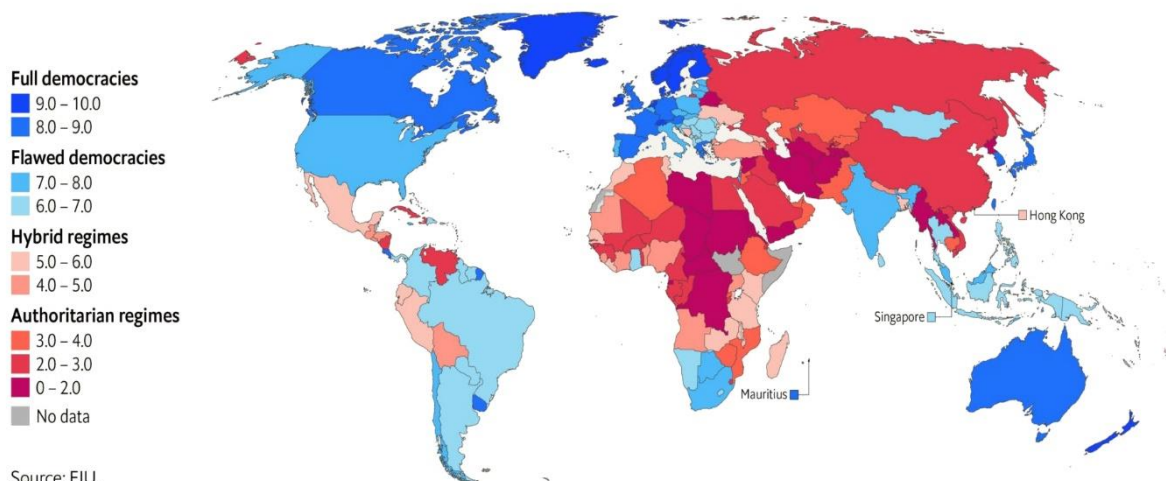


Figure 1 – Democracy Index 2023 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2024)

"Closing space"

Recent research of leading think tanks demonstrates the dramatic erosion of democratic regimes. Autocratisation is progressing in 42 countries (35% or 2.8 billion people, including China and India, each with 18% of the world's population)¹⁷. Out of 210 states and territories, 112 are considered partially or not free¹⁸. CIVICUS Monitor confirmed that in 2021, 87% of humanity today lives in countries whose public space and thus the degree of individual freedom are categorised as "closed", "repressed" or "restricted"¹⁹. Human rights-based governance systems are the exception; spin dictators governing repressive, corrupt regimes the norm²⁰. Evoked by and in parallel to these dynamics, there is growing mistrust in media²¹, a fact that is derived from hugely increased opportunities for manipulation: Generative AI is a powerful technology with low production costs that enables high-quality fakes in image and sound. Unsurprisingly, 16% of world population fear a decline in press freedom²². According to RSF Index, press freedom was rated as "good enough" in only 52 out of 180 countries in the last decade. Shrinking freedom ("closing space") is the result.

Concretely, the strongest pressure by authoritarian regimes is nowadays exerted on freedom of expression, followed by the intimidation of the electorate in elections processes or interference with the autonomy of electoral authorities, populism, and

cutting down freedom of assembly²³. Where the executive and legislative branches are weakened over time, courts and independent regulatory authorities, human rights organisations, civil society networks, social media movements and investigative journalism step in to compensate a lack of democratic control or transparency²⁴. But there is one thing they can only replace to a limited extent: Dialogue as a pillar of democratic decision-making. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has established four criteria that are decisive for genuine dialogue, democratic structures, and social cohesion: Understanding what the other is saying, promising to express oneself honestly, recognising what is said as true and acting in a morally reasonable way²⁵. Successful dialogue, predominantly outside SM, can reduce tensions and opinion "silos", eliminate mere echo chambers and prepares for compromise. This is what political participation, democracy and self-determined development are all about.

Creeping autocracies

The quest for full access to information in an autocratising world meets emerging threats to which free and independent media must adapt. However, evidence shows that media capture by political interests, shutdowns, relocation conditions, and platformization at large, as well as targeting journalists' safety, worsened in many parts of the world. Between 2006 and 2021, over 1.200 journalists were killed²⁶. 22 percent of Ukrainian

media outlets lost their offices following the Russian invasion, and subsequently 46 percent of staff have been reduced. The recent political situation in Gaza resembles almost total extinction²⁷.

Much has been said on subtle processes of autocratisation, less in which forms autocracy can emerge, and least on how to counter increasing autocratic rule. To investigate which criteria have to be looked at when trying to unpack authoritarian tendencies in political systems, two concurrent approaches, derived from the fragility discourse, were brought forward in the last years. The one driven by Birmingham University, team leader Nic Cheeseman, Professor of Democracy and International Development, the other developed by the German Institute for Development and Sustainability (IDOS) under the guidance of Julia Leininger, and Swiss experience.

For the time being, there are ongoing discussions on both models in the OECD and at EU level. The common ground of these new approaches is a categorisation of politically constraint contexts and regime types, further pushing forward the fragility discourse of the 2010s²⁸. A specific workstream on toolboxes of intervention in each of these situations requires data and analysis of what works in which circumstances. In any case, rule of law, separation of powers, participative governance including the free flow of information and respect for human rights remain core dimensions of governance;

all of them can be undermined by autocratic rule.

A central topic of autocratic rise today is how autocracies manage to liaise and engage in the international sphere²⁹ and in which ways multilateralism reacts to their continued and resilient participation³⁰. Compared to the rude, monolithic functioning of dictatorship, diversity and inclusivity bear the structural disadvantage of strategic weakness. In the light of this, the New School of Multilateralism (NSM), among others, explored the potential of multilateral reform with a focus on pluralism and people-centredness (“human centricism”), submitting the idea of a “World Net Order” to the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024 in New York³¹. The following underlying questions were addressed:

- Can multilateral fora assume and tackle democratic decision-making at global level?
- If yes, is democratisation of the international order actually (a) conceivable, (b) desirable and/or (c) manageable?
- And more generally, how can we imagine multilateralism to effectively build open space, by creating a spillover effect of democratic values?

After all, in search for sound policy making, societies and the political elites must depart from a jointly recognised, empirically ascertainable reality, if one still exists. This requires a large number of independent information providers free in practising their

profession, data collection and utilisation (exploitation). However, it is precisely this basic requirement that is fulfilled in only a minority of states.

Political needs assessment

At this point, we can sum up that concerns regarding the closing of space in democratic societies are grounded in a decline of trust in institutions and information reliability as well as in increasing doubts vis-à-vis democratic rule as such, as demonstrated in UNDP HDR 2024³² (fig. 5 of the report). In this constellation, free media and transformative information ecosystems as fundamental pillars of democracy appear to be an appropriate way out. The Austrian Appeal of Media Professionals of 8 February 2024 (AAMP), initiated by the new School of Multilateralism³³, calls for more targeted support to all actors involved in the information sector, journalists, bloggers, film producers, podcasters, online providers. Operationalisation of a much underfunded branch (0,3% of total ODA³⁴) which encompasses responsive answers to digitalisation, disinformation, challenges of AI, but also the fight against intimidation and repression is urgently needed. Strengthening the capacities and skills of media professionals to perform their businesses as multifaceted reporters will shape future performance.

The quest for unpacking, objective information on which the functioning of any democratic institution relies is a mandate from the electoral public in its

own interest. Quality information isn’t just about having an opinion, it is about enabling true Habermasian dialogue to take place³⁵. We firmly argue that transition to open information societies means both the adjustment of the media sector to current regime-type and digital challenges as a package to be handled by the “*j bubble*” developing new collective methods of consolidating democratic processes as a task for the governmental branch, and techno-prudential normative approach to AI of the networked international community as a whole. A selected number of better issues will be presented in the following.

3. On the media, development and democracy nexus

Election year 2024 and open space

A fresh look at the election calendar 2024 reveals the topicality of the nexus of media, development and democracy. Freedom of opinion and expression are essential for the full development not only of the human being, but of societies as well³⁶. Building fair and just societies as a prerequisite for sustainable development depends on accurate, impartial and informed public debate. As an essential cornerstone of preparing and conducting fair and inclusive elections, information ecosystems therefore must provide for the creation, exchange, flow and standardized clean utilisation of information. Furthermore, to perform

successfully, they need the capacity and freedom to absorb and adapt to changes in the social, political and IT areas. Reliable infrastructures should ideally contribute to plurality and transparency in the given governance context, guarantee the origin and authenticity of data and maintain their own independence³⁷ and span the open space needed for inclusive decision-making. All this is also essential to run fair elections, and hence for democracy. Democracy and information are closely interlinked, mutually reinforcing and, as stated above, democracy is underpinned by the pluralism of independent media.

In 2024, media will have plenty of things to do: Four billion people, or 45% of world population, are called to vote in their political systems this year³⁸. In 31 of the 64 countries holding elections, projections of democratic governance look bad. The EIU predicts a decline in democratic values, potential systematic dismantling of human rights, the separation of powers and/or the principle of the rule of law³⁹. Balfour and Lehne comment on far reaching right-wing influencers on EU foreign policy⁴⁰. The USA as an example of modern liberal democracy for many is, not least after the Capitol attack on 6 January 2021, also affected in the run-up of presidential elections⁴¹. Is there a danger that the 2024 super election year will herald the end of democracy⁴²?

Delivering on information integrity – rights, standards or policies?

But how is the international community equipped to guarantee that elections run fairly? Concerning information management, the freedom of opinion and expression, enshrined in Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948⁴³ and the UNESCO Declaration of Windhoek plus 30⁴⁴ (UNESCO), stipulating information as a global public good, are fundamental to democracies. In 2015, SDG 16.10.2 addressed the need to adopt and implement constitutional mandates, statutory acts and/or policies for effective public access to information⁴⁵. Will these instruments of legal protection and framework be sufficient to establish information integrity in the future?

Information integrity refers to the accuracy, consistency and reliability of information. It is at the same time threatened by disinformation, misinformation and hate speech. While there are no universally accepted definitions of these terms, a Code of Conduct for Information Integrity is taking shape, amid preparation for the Summit of the Future, aimed at steering nations and tech giants alike⁴⁶. The US legal order does not know a right to information yet, whereas human rightists of European law schools can make good arguments for such a right.

At the end of the day, further regulating innovations in the information space through a broad

range of issues is called for - digital rights and duties of consumers and producers, including being heard and read, or data protection from low-threshold hybrid threats to cyberattacks at governmental level. Finally, from a holistic view and in conjunction with current democracy and security discourses, contours of a right to peace and the broader AI regulation⁴⁷ will advance this question.

Public interest in today's information ecosystems

Information ecosystems are the real frameworks of information integrity. They consist of much more than fact reporting, comprising complex adaptive systems that include data infrastructure, tools, producers, consumers, curators, and sharers⁴⁸. In these contexts, media are classified as trustworthy when standards of editorial choices, journalistic methods, ethical rules and transparency are met, as stipulated in the draft European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), as of January 24, 2024⁴⁹. But of course, not every type of media has to fulfil a democratic function, only when the independent preparation of information for the public is at the centre, one speaks of so-called "public interest media".

According to IFPIM, public interest media creating and distributing content exist to inform the public or help to ensure that power is held to account; provide fact-based information in a trustworthy manner; commit to the demonstrable pursuit of

truth; are editorially independent; and transparent about processes, finances and policies used to produce it⁵⁰. Similar definitions are given in the British Online Safety Act 2023⁵¹ and the EU Digital Services Act 2023⁵².

Public interest represents a powerful social norm and, accordingly, the media profession’s social function is that of a “trusted third party” for societies and individuals⁵³. “Information well-being of all”, claiming both plurality of information to know what’s going on and speaking up, free writing and chatting in all media and digital spheres, is not only the highest ideal but has the potential to serve as the unifying vision for all cross-sectoral actors engaged such as civil society advocacy organisations, the media development community, democratic governments, very large online platforms (Meta/Facebook, Google, TikTok, X) as well as academia and research institutes.

Relying on the vibrant debate at the #ijf24 in Perugia⁵⁴, we are now in a position to grasp the challenges of public interest media in today’s information ecosystems. Professional quality of information as a public good and freedom of independent media as a democratic institution depends on the following developments:

- **On methods of work:**
The collapse of traditional business models, impact of AI and access to information at large, as well as disruptive and innovate aspects of AI or competitive social media.
- **On financing:**
Managing IT, changing consumer preferences and regime pressures; f.i. survival of quality media outlets going online making it transparent and comprehensible why information has its price.

- **On data:**
Knowing who disposes and receives content to and from whom; “pricing” the costs of data provision⁵⁵; upholding the independence of governmental action relying on state-owned data and sources.
- **On infrastructure:**
Media capture by state authorities in autocratic and democratic systems alike or by private companies via very large online platforms and search engines.
- **On trust:**
Decreasing trust in public interest media and information ecosystems, given the ever more dispersed consumer communities (BBC decrease of audience of 11 percent in the last five years), “news avoidance” and the quest for solutions/story telling.

Table 1 – 10 Top Challenges (AAMP)

Challenges, actor-wise

On the consumer side

UNMET DEMOCRATIC DEMAND

Closing democratic space: less and unreliable information created by threats to information as a global public good, information integrity and the overall functioning of the information ecosystem at large

On the producer side

ADAPTATION TO NEW BUSINESS MODELS

Changing business models & working conditions by shift/loss of audiences, digitalisation, financing gaps (paywalls and freemium models)
Upholding standards & ethics by self-regulation (“Press Councils”), labelling efforts to prove reliability

On the media outlets side

IMPACT ON MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Physical safety, harassment & violence
Digital safety, censorship & closing space by spyware (Pegasus), MDMs, and weaponization of information laws and privacy protection

On state and business infrastructure

REGULATORY RESPONSIBILITY

Very large online platforms (“platformatization”): content moderation, storage, data
Media capture by political and business interests, ownership transparency
Certification of reliable media (“fair value chain”): protection of authors & authentication of data provenance

Challenges, by timeline

Repression

GROWING AUTHORITARIANISM

Creeping bad practice of non-democratic regimes with focus on game changers, foreign correspondents, and investigation, as well as lack of preparedness of media

Crisis

FRAGILITY, CONFLICT, AND WAR

Emergency situations such as takedown notices, shutdowns, surveillance, relocation and extinction with focus on lacking emergency plans, backups, webhosting, visa, arrival solidarity, Hostile Environment and First Aid Training (HEFAT), Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

▪ **On localisation:**

Outsourcing of local media by very large online platforms leaving behind “news deserts”⁵⁶; the struggle of “niche” media specialised on gender, ethnic minorities or other.

▪ **On safety:**

Threats to personal safety of media professionals and preparedness to survive repressive attacks.

Challenges, categorised along all different groups of actors as well as a timeline along status of freedoms guaranteed by the political system, are demonstrated in Table 1.

In a rapidly evolving risk environment, public interest media can easily disappear. Google for instance promised to respect public interest in the big data gathering that is ongoing for AI. Let’s see how costs, transparency and space for plurality (i.e. the “decolonising” movement) will actually evolve. Depending on users’ behaviour, “news deserts” can result from these processes. However, places without reporting in general mean a

less informed public, fewer accountable people in power and an erosion of democratic governance⁵⁷.

New ways of supporting free media

Various governmental policy areas such as human rights, diplomacy and development cooperation, but also climate, defence and information policies are called to counter these threats for the sake of an informed public and do justice to the changed working conditions of media professionals in the wider public interest. As emphasised in the 2024 AAMP, the preservation and consolidation of a pluralistic structure of the media sector will remain a government priority and even develop more intensely as a basic prerequisite for democracy.

An in-depth assessment of entry points for action includes not only the fight against hatred and persecution of journalists, all sorts of “weaponisation” of information, disinformation through spyware such as Pegasus, but also adapting to new consumer

behaviour, financing online quality information or creating of emergency plans for crises situations. A special risk is “platformization”, which is defined by the progressive penetration of digital platforms and their economic, political, and infrastructural logic into information ecosystems in ways that fundamentally affect the operations, business strategies, and editorial choices of the journalism field⁵⁸. Evidentially, very large online platforms have their opportunities and constraints. Content moderation (COMO), while indispensable for human rights protection, is often experienced by small news media through content or account removals, (de-)prioritization, (de-)promotion, shadow banning, and (de-)monetization.

Taken together, this panoply can result in a holistic approach to media protection, promotion and resilience. A series of concrete measures focussing on local media, development of skills, responding to arising legal needs as well as access to data and search machines, as articulated in the AAMP, shall be put to test “in the air” (Table 2).

Table 2 – 10 Key Recommendations (AAMP, revisited)

1. Developing sustainable fair business models and resiliency, protecting intellectual property
2. Supporting locally led, evidence-based, and demand-driven solutions
3. Making fit for the use of generative AI, and detecting MDMs (mis/dis/malinformatoin)
4. Providing targeted support for female media professionals and local (niche) media
5. Promoting safety for women, investigative and community-based journalists
6. Strengthening legislation countering online harassment, propaganda, spyware
7. Pushing regulation efforts towards legal transparency regarding ownership, information access and reliability including data provenance and authenticity
8. Offering legal support, including on SLAPPs, and providing low-threshold legal advice
9. Raising awareness and trust through supporting on-site/ in-time analysis, verification and fact-checking & sensibilisation campaigns
10. Enhancing preparedness & emergency response, “first aid stations” (Gaza), migratory solidarity and networking

3. Information well-being for all - outlook

Free media are part of the core of democratic societies, says Teresa Ribeiro⁵⁹, the Special Representative on Media Freedom in Vienna at the occasion of the OSCE Council on 23 November 2023, and she vigorously reiterated her message at #ijf24 in Perugia in April this year. Doubtlessly, as argued in this AIES Focus Paper, independent media are among the advocates of an open society in the digitalised age⁶⁰.

The OECD DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET) adopted Principles to Support Free Media and the Information Ecosystem in March 2024⁶¹ to which the AAMP was honoured to contribute. This is a huge step forward given the fact that even criteria what media and the journalism sector really means is not given for the time being. We suggest making this much needed challenge a future task of OECD DAC GOVNET to deliver on.

At EU level, Team Europe Democracy⁶² (TED) is envisaged to further operationalise these

Principles, seeking and advocating a European way of doing it. A mapping exercise of EU actors from member states and civil society could contribute to bring clarity on what works in this rapidly evolving field. A separate workstream on media and digital democracy, co-chaired by France and Austria, will be launched on 15 May 2024.

Austria is supporting free media outlets i.a. in the Western Balkans and is ready to reach out to further destinations in the Eastern Neighbourhood partnering and consulting with the German Marshall Fund, German GIZ and the European Forum Alpbach. Starting from the OECD Principles and the AAMP, Austria will soon engage in Moldova in the forefront of the presidential elections and the EU referendum in autumn 2024. Newsroom leaders will present lessons learned in a future publication "The Case of Moldova". At the same time, we intend to reflect on this in the "European Voices" later this year, to be followed by TDHJ Special Edition 2/2025 focussing on the European way of media support. Let's build a network for resilience.

These initiatives all aim to counter the current downward spiral in the exercise of democracy and foster a healthy framework of "information well-being for all". They follow the overall presumption that the power of ideas can make a difference.

Democracy needs the free flow of information, and freedom of information needs democracy⁶³.

About the Author

[Ursula Werther-Pietsch](#), Professor, International Law and International Relations at University of Graz, Austria and University of the Armed Forces in Munich, Germany. Ursula is co-editor of the Defence Horizon Journal Special Edition, member of the German Society of International Law, and the Scientific Commission at the Austrian Ministry of Defence. Since 2016 scientific adviser of the Young United Nations Association. In 2023, she founded the New School of Multilateralism and was invited to co-chair the Team Europa Democracy Workstream Media and Digital. Her research focuses on collective security, conflict and fragility, resilience, multilateral system thinking, and human-centrism.

*I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mira Milosevic of Global Forum for Media Development for her suggestions and literature recommendations.

¹ Le Bon, Gustave, *La psychologie des foules* (1895), Paris.

² Keane, Fergal, *The Madness: A Memoir of War, Fear and PTSD* (2022), London: HarperCollins.

³ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2023/2024. Breaking the gridlock: Reimagining cooperation in a polarized world*, 13 March 2024,

<https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2023-24>.

⁴ Selk, Veith, *Demokratiedämmerung* (2023), Berlin: Suhrkamp.

⁵ Pavel, Carmen E., *Law beyond the State* (2021), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶ Thürer, Daniel, *Völkerrecht als Fortschritt und Chance* (2009), Baden-Baden: Nomos & Dike Verlag.

⁷ IDEA, *Global State of Democracy Report 2023* (2024), <https://cdn.san->

files.2e5hi812/production/f7b6fb692e1475af3927aff774dbc93f50771ba9.pdf.

⁸ Münkler, Herfried, *Welt in Aufruhr* (2023), Berlin: Rowohlt.; Selk 2023: 27.

⁹ Radsch, Courtney C., "URGENT: Understanding and Responding to Global Emerging News Threats." *Internews*, March 2023, <https://internews.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/19Apr2023-URGENT-Report-Final.pdf>.

¹⁰ Bremmer, Ian and Mustafa Suleyman, *The AI Power Paradox. Can States Learn*

to Govern Artificial Intelligence—Before It's Too Late? *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2023, August 16, 2023; Sulayman Mustafa, *The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the Twenty-first Century's Greatest Dilemma* (2023), Penguin Random House.

¹¹ Popper, Karl, *The open society and its enemies* (2013), Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹² Festl, Michael G. (ed.), *Handbuch Liberalismus* (2021), Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler; Letta, Enrico, *Much more than a market. Speed, security, solidarity*, Brussels: European Consilium (2024), <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>: 17; Balfour, Rosa and Stefan Lehne, *Charting the Radical Right's Influence on EU Foreign Polic*, Brussels: Carnegie Europe, 18 April 2024.

¹³ V-Dem Institute, *Democracy Report 2024. Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot* (2024), https://v-dem.net/documents/43/v-dem_dr2024_lowres.pdf: 12; *The Electoral Integrity Project* (2024), www.electoralintegrityproject.com.

¹⁴ IDEA 2024

¹⁵ V-Dem 2024: 11

¹⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), *Democracy Index 2023. Age of conflict* (2024), <https://www.eiu.com/n/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Democracy-Index-2023-Final-report-1.pdf>: 66.

¹⁷ V-Dem 2024: 19

¹⁸ Freedom House: *Freedom in the World 2020. A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy* (2021), https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/FIW_2020_REPORT_BOOKLET_Final.pdf.

¹⁹ CIVICUS Monitor (2024), <https://monitor.civicus.org>.

²⁰ Guriev, Sergei/Treisman, Daniel, *Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century* (2022), Princeton: Princeton University Press.

²¹ Edelman Trust Barometer 2024 https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2024-02/2024%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_FINAL.pdf.

²² World Economic Forum, *Global Risks Report 2024* (2024), https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2024.pdf.

²³ V-Dem 2024: 23

²⁴ IDEA 2024

²⁵ Lazar, Isabella/Strupp, Alexander/Weinreich, Florian, Jürgen Habermas and Modern Multilateral Dialogue, *TDHJ* 1/2024: 28-33.

²⁶ UNESCO, *Windhoek Declaration plus 30, Information as a Public Good*, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/windhoek30-declaration-information-public-good>.

²⁷ Rawan Damen, and Liz Baker, *Humanity United*, #ijf24 Funders Breakfast.

²⁸ Martin-Shields, Charles and Diana Koester, *State Fragility and Development Cooperation*, *IDOS Policy Brief 8/2024*, <https://doi.org/10.23661/ipb8.2024>.

²⁹ Fectas, forthcoming.

³⁰ Werther-Pietsch, Ursula, *Information Governance, Demokratie und Entwicklung*, in: *Kettemann, Grundlagen des Rechts* (forthcoming).

³¹ *New School of Multilateralism (NSM), Multilateralismus neu denken* (2023), Universität Graz, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, <https://unipub.uni-graz.at/obvugrveroeff/download/pdf/9150456>,

<https://www.kas.de/de/web/multilateraler-dialog-wien/detail/-/content/new-school-of-multilateralism-wiener-denker-innenkreis>.

³² UNDP 2024

³³ *New School of Multilateralism (NSM), Appeal of Austrian Media Professionals* (2024), Press Club Concordia, <https://concordia.at/uniting-for-democracy-appeal-feb-2024>.

³⁴ Mira Milosevic, *Silencing Independent Media: Challenges. Faced by Journalists in Crisis and Conflict*, *TDHJ* 4/2023: 8-11.

³⁵ Marsela Pecanac, IPI; Tim Sebastian, *DW*, #ijf24

³⁶ UNHRC, ICCPR, *General comment No. 34 on Article 19, CCPR/C/GC/34*, 12.09.2011, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/453/31/PDF/G1145331.pdf?OpenElement>.

³⁷ Adam, Iryna, Lai, Samantha, Nelson, Arthur, Wanless, Alicia and Yadav, Kamya, *Emergency Management and Information Integrity: A Framework for Crisis Response*.

³⁸ V-Dem 2024: 12, 40; link to list of countries.

³⁹ EIU 2023: 6

⁴⁰ Balfour and Lehne 2024

⁴¹ Werther-Pietsch, Ursula, *Democracy Forever, Sturm auf das Kapitol*, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21.01.2021.

⁴² Thun-Hohenstein, Christoph, *BMEIA Kult Newsletter* 1/2024, <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/themen/auslandskultur/aktuelles>.

⁴³ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN 1948*, <https://unric.org/de/allgemeine-erklaerung-menschenrechte>.

⁴⁴ *Windhoek Declaration*, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/windhoek30declaration_wpdf_2021.pdf.

⁴⁵ *UN SDG* (2015), <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>.

⁴⁶ *Diplo, Information Integrity on Digital Platforms | Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 8*, <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resource/information-integrity-on-digital-platforms-our-common-agenda-policy-brief-8>.

⁴⁷ Werther-Pietsch, Ursula, *The Impact of SDGs on International Law - a Nucleus of a Right to Peace?* *ÖPZ* 47 (1) (2018) 17-28, <https://ulb-dok.uibk.ac.at/OZP/periodical/titleinfo/4587982>.

⁴⁸ *Internews, Mapping Information Ecosystems to Support Resilience*, 2015, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/mapping-information-ecosystems-support-resilience>.

⁴⁹ *Reporters Without Borders, European Media Freedom Act encourages the use of JTI as benchmark for identifying reliable news media*, <https://rsf.org/en/european-media-freedom-act-encourages-use-jti-benchmark-identifying-reliable-news-media>.

⁵⁰ *IFPIM*, <https://ifpim.org/the-fund/> (IFPIM Feasibility study <https://ifpim.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/IFPIM-Feasibility-Study-Final-April-29.pdf>).

⁵¹ *British Online Safety Act 2023*, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50/contents/enacted>.

⁵² *EU Digital Services Act*, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/digital-services-act_en.

⁵³ *Forum on Information & Democracy, Sustainability of Journalism, A New Deal for Journalism*, 2021, https://informationdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ForumID_New-Deal-for-Journalism_16Jun21.pdf.

⁵⁴ #ijf24 in Perugia, <https://www.journalismfestival.com>.

⁵⁵ “We are flying blind”, Shailesh Prakash, general manager and Vice Director of Google News, #ijf24

⁵⁶ The Mill, Manchester

⁵⁷ Radsch, Courtney C., “URGENT: Understanding and Responding to Global Emerging News Threats.” Internews, March 2023, 86, <https://internews.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/19Apr2023-URGENT-Report-Final.pdf>: 86.

⁵⁸ Radsch 2023; Angwin, Julia, A letter from our founder, Proof News, <https://www.proofnews.org/a-letter-from-our-founder>.

⁵⁹ Ribeiro, Teresa, Representative on Freedom of Media of the OSCE, Speech before the OSCE Council in Vienna 23

November 2023, <https://www.osce.org/de/media-freedom-and-development>.

⁶⁰ European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC) (ed.), Understanding Human Rights (2009, 2014), Berlin: BWV Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag.

⁶¹ OECD, Principles on Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment (2024), https://www.oecd.org/dac/accountable-effective-institutions/Principles-for-relevant-and-effective-support-to-media-and-the-information-environment_draft-for-consultation.pdf.

⁶² Team Europe Democracy (TED) (2024), www.capacity4development.org.

⁶³ Werther-Pietsch, #ijf24 Perugia, video on LinkedIn

© Austria Institut für Europa und Sicherheitspolitik, 2024

All rights reserved. Reprinting or similar or comparable use of publications of the Austria Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES) are only permitted with prior permission. The articles published in the AIES Focus series exclusively reflect the opinions of the respective authors.

Dr. Langweg 3, 2410 Hainburg/Donau

Tel. +43 (1) 3583080

office@aies.at | www.aies.at

Layout Design: Julia Drössler