

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN A DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

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Abstract

According to western democracy, which demands the fundamentals of individual autonomy, freedom of expression is among those ground maxims that trigger critical and philosophical discourse. A democratic system of government, which wins popular legitimacy, is expected to lay down solid and systematic foundations with serious political will and practical commitment for the realization of “market place of ideas”. Besides, free and democratic societies, which have constitutionally stipulated rights to freely access, transfer, and choose information with diversity of sources and contents, could naturally have the better chance to pass informed decisions and judgments in cogently defining their destinies. In principle, such a democratic political system, with all its contemporary challenges, does not therefore impose up on individual citizens’ mind public media over private media, domestic media over international as well as social media, and development oriented news over diversity of ideas. Though there are varieties of literatures as well as research works conducted in this regard, little has done in critically justifying why such a system authorizes individual human agents to be indispensable and autonomous vetoes to determine the sources and the contents of information. Besides, this work tries to critically explore some of the positive developments and existential challenges posing significant threat to such a democratic value for the autonomy of individual human actors. To this effect, critical evaluation and reflection of the main philosophical assumptions on freedom of information, which in turn enable us to critically assess contemporary problems and opportunities, have been parts of this article. In this regard, however, this work has not been an attempt for generalization on topic raised based on existential situations of individual countries.

Keywords: Agenda Setting, Democracy, Freedom of Expression

Introduction

Freedom of expression, according to western liberal democracy, is one of those fundamental human right principles so that individual human beings are naturally and universally entitled with such this value. According to the mainstream philosophical discourse, in a democracy, removing structural and institutional impediments hindering the independent operation of media will play an indispensable role to build and develop democratic culture in a state. In other words, a political system that legitimizes the existence of free, independent, and diverse operations of media with individuals' freedom of expression is an indispensable precondition for a democratic culture. And, this is ultimately meant to enable individual human beings to: search for the truth for its own sake, pass informed decision on fundamental questions of their lives, and actualize their diverse individual potentials and to effect informed communications with those who are in power. In light of this argument, this research work has tried to philosophically analyze and examine the following questions as: who is entitled to judge the content and source of information in a democracy, what are the existential challenges and opportunities to this universal human right value with deep philosophical foundation and finally with some conclusive remarks.

Defining Freedom of Expression

The question of freedom of expression is inherent to human nature so that it has been central to ancient, medieval, and modern literatures as well as political traditions of different societies. Human beings are born with the faculty of thinking so that they could rationalize, doubt, investigate, examine, analyze and finally pass informed rational judgments and self-control on fundamental questions of their lives. In other words, they are naturally curious so that they desire to know and search for the truth (Hansen,2010). Besides, they employ language so that they can communicate and understand each other which will ultimately lead them to effectively explore to the foundation of truth. To this effect, at any rate, there must be enabling social, cultural and political environments which could institutionalize and implement freedom of thought, opinion and expression of every individual human subject as an autonomous and rational actor who is capable of independent and informed decisions. Accordingly, many scholars as well as international human right instruments have tried to define the concept of freedom of expression in various ways in the following manner.

The concept of freedom of expression, for Plato, could be understood as an inherent human entitlement of all rational human beings which enables them to search for the truth and true knowledge of things through free, open, rational and critical exchanges of ideas, investigations, analysis and

dialogues between and among human beings (Hansen,2010). Therefore, according to him, human beings could effectively face their ignorance for truth only through their active and independent engagements in series of critical and rational reflections, investigations, dialogues and analysis in an enabling environment for free and diverse flows of ideas.

John Locke also attributed the concept of freedom of expression as the basic right of human beings which enables them to find out the truth. He argued that the idea of freedom of expression implies that individual human beings are entitled with liberty and equality to express, receive, and transfer ideas, thoughts, feelings, and positions of their own and that of others to reach out informed decisions and choices of their lives and ultimately develop democratic culture as well as society. For him, however, this natural entitlement could be limited if it is contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society (Locke,1823). Besides, John Stuart Mill defined and justified freedom of expression as indispensable value of human beings which enables them to honor truth against falsehood through free and open flows or exchanges of diversity of ideas among human beings. However, he has also argued that freedom of expression should be permitted on condition that the manner be temperate, and do not pass the bounds of fair discussion (Mill,1956).

In addition to the above scholarly definitions, in December of 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was drafted as the foundation and standard of international human rights law concerning the fundamental right of human being to freedom of expression. Accordingly, everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (UDHR,1948). Besides, in 1966, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stipulated that everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Moreover, the covenant underlines that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regard less of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice. However, it also justifies that these rights and freedom are subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary: for respect of the rights or reputations of others; for the protection of national security or of public order , or of public health or morals (ICCPR,1966). Finally, the above definition about the idea of individuals' freedom of expression with its legitimate limits formulated by ICCPR has been adopted and formulated as integral parts of respective constitutions of most individual democratic states.

To sum up, the cumulative reading of the preceding scholarly works as well as international institutions about the concept of freedom of expression reveals that it is individuals' freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice. And, it is a fundamental human value which enables individual human beings to achieve truth for its own sake and to actualize their potentials through open as well as free flows of ideas with diverse sources and contents among human beings.

Historical Dynamic of Freedom of Expression in the West

After the lapse of ancient Greek civilization of the west for its deteriorating medieval European political tradition, citizens' quest for those natural entitlements had been overshadowed by the existing dogmatic political tradition of the continent. It was a time when the overall spiritual supremacy of the Catholicism over all spheres of human life had been to the fundamental. After the end of such a spiritual medieval political tradition of the continent, Europe had been experiencing shifts in scientific paradigms, secular as well as enlightenment thinking and different revolutionary movements claiming for the basic rights, liberty, and dignity of human beings including freedom of expression. Particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the legitimate concerns of citizenries as well as members of the academia for freedom of expression had been getting momentum in the western world. Since then, in principle, western democracy has made freedom of expression one of those universal human rights' principles.

In the international context; however, efforts to achieve a global codification of freedom of press and opinion had been only after the establishment of the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR,1948). Besides, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulates that everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference (ICCPR,1966). Till then member states of the UN and signatory states of international human right conventions have been recognizing and implementing the right to freedom of expression within their domestic human right policy frameworks.

Recently, from the well developed western democracies of the global north up to the more fragile and infant ones of the global south, the quest for freedom of expression has predominantly been receiving domestic constitutional legitimacy from individual states. This does not mean that mere constitutional recognition of this right has resulted in equal degree of application across all states. Besides, it does not logically imply that the application of the right to freedom of expression in a well developed

American or western democracies is all an ideal model with no existential challenges and in an infant Ethiopian democracy is all null and void. Therefore, the practical application of freedom of expression as a fundamental human right has been facing diverse problems even in matured western democracy with better realization of the ultimate autonomy and entitlement to individual citizens. However, obviously the gravity of the challenges and problems for the realization this universal value is more serious in developing countries with infant democratic culture.

Philosophical and Ideological Orientations of Freedom of Expression

The concept of freedom of expression as inalienable human rights has its own philosophical as well as ideological stipulations. The etymological narrative of philosophy shows us that philosophy is a discipline which enables human beings to be devoted and curious for wisdom and truth. More practically, the discipline could also be understood as a rational, critical and analytical enterprise which is basically dealing with fundamental questions of our lives with the instrumentality of reason, critical thinking and analysis (Thiroux,1989). And, to let philosophy humanly possible as an inherent curiosity and natural aspiration of individual human beings for the true essence of things, there must be enabling socio-cultural and political environment allowing for free flows or exchanges of ideas of various sorts among human beings from all possible sources. Thus, without the realization of individuals' freedom of opinion, expression and thought, human beings' basic philosophical endeavors to identify; truth from falsehood, opinion from knowledge, moral from immoral, and just from unjust could not logically be possible. This in turn implies that there is an inherent, logical and practical nexus between individual's freedom of expression and accomplishing his philosophical task (to search for truth) so that the former is both a sufficient and necessary condition for the latter.

Based on the above argument about the essence of philosophy, freedom of expression shall be guaranteed to every individual human being who is naturally endowed with the faculty of thinking. Thus, in a democratic society, it should be up to the individual to choose the content as well as source of information for his reasoned judgment on his ultimate claim for the true knowledge of things. At any rate, the inherent nexus between our natural motive for philosophical enquiries and the unconditional need for our freedom of thought as well as expression had been the basic conceptual derive for the recognition and institutionalization of this value in western democracy. In principle, in an established democratic culture, individual human beings are therefore autonomous decision makers as to the validity of the contents as well as sources of information in a "market place of ideas".

Finally, in more specialized areas of philosophy, particularly of moral and political ones, there have been two basic schools of thought as to why a given political system constitutionally formulates and implements individuals' freedom of expression. The first predominant perspective, deontological ethics, usually puts intrinsic justification which triggers a given political system to recognize this natural entitlement. In this regard, according to Immanuel Kant, the legitimate quest of an autonomous rational individual human agent for the universal truth should be considered as an end in itself which must not be associated with any other extra or material end. Therefore, institutionalization of freedom of expression of individual human beings by individual state has been attached to such a deontological orientation which has nothing at all to do with some material or external motives i.e. respecting individuals' freedom of information is an end in itself.

It is the predominant discourse of political philosophy that western liberal democratic ideology emphasizes civil and political rights of individuals where as eastern Marxist ideology for socio-economic and group rights over those individual liberties. In this regard, deontological school of thought, though not always, is predominately reflected in western liberal democracy rather than Marxist ideology. This is basically attributed to the fact that the ultimate foundation of western liberal democracy lies on individuals' liberty and freedom to exercise their civil and political rights among which freedom of press is one of them where as the moral foundation of socialist democracy lies on group rights.

The second school of thought has been referred to as teleological moral as well as political argument, which had been initiated by Aristotle and further developed by Jermy Bantam and John Stuart Mill. According to Aristotle, each and every individual acts as well as human associations have their own respective purposes. For him, the highest purpose of the state and its apparatus is to achieve good life and happiness. Individuals' freedom of expression is meant to lead a true and a happy life of citizens according to Aristotle though he is not an advocate of democracy for monarchy (Connole,2014). Besides, institutionalizing freedom of expression enables individual human beings: to make truth the champion over its fight against falsehood, to safe guard the well being of the society as well as the state (Milton,1918). Thus, according to such a teleological drive, individuals' curiosity to destroy falsehood and to survive truth could only be possible in a political system that allows individuals' freedom of expression.

As an extension of the above argument, the measure of liberty became progress not truth for John Stuart Mill. If an opinion is not open to discussion then one has assumed infallibility deciding the question for others, thereby denying the very impetus for progress (Mills,1956). Besides, he came up with his utilitarian prescription concerning individuals' freedom

of expression which could be limited if such freedom affects the freedom of others i.e. there could be possibilities that individuals' freedom of information could be limited considering public interest and the liberty of others. John Locke also argued for individuals' freedom of expression to attain truth; however, such a natural entitlement may be limited if it is contrary to human society or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society and realization of secular and representative government (Locke,1823).

All the above teleological moral arguments formulated by John Stuart Mill and John Lock propound the basic idea that individuals' freedom of expression shall be recognized to secure truth, to safe guard public interest, to effect secular and representative government. Besides, all these writers; however, put some justifiable limits to individuals' freedom of expression because of some utilitarian grounds so that individual liberty and freedom of such kind is logical to the extent not contrary to the interest of the majority of the society and that of other individuals. Therefore, such an argument to strike a rescannable balance by recognizing individual autonomy without negotiating the interest of the majority of the public is the foundation of western liberal ideology.

Finally, there are also morally teleological and ideologically socialist critics towards individuals' freedom of expression which could jeopardize the ultimate aspiration of the proletariat class to overthrow the capitalist class. In this regard, Marxist writing put their argument for the final triumph of human reason to effect stateless society with true history, morality and humanity. This is achieved through world-transforming phenomenon, the proletarian revolution which is attributed by class struggle between the working or proletariat class on one hand and that of the capitalist bourgeoisie. In light of this argument, group rights of the working class override over individual liberty and freedom of expression according to Marxist moral as well as political argument (Werke,1983).

Who to Decide the Contents as well as Sources of Information in a Democracy

As it has been underlined before, in a democratic system, the quest for freedom of thought and expression may simply be attributed to our innate curiosity for truth for its own sake or with some teleological motives. Thus, according to John Stuart Mill, it has been underlined that our freedom of expression is crucial to reach informed or reasoned decisions on fundamental quarries of our lives (Mills,1956). Besides, human beings who have the faculty of thinking, needs to freely access and communicate information of various sorts from various sources of their choices so that they could actualize their potentials. Moreover, in a democracy, a political system that

adheres freedom of thought and expression, citizens will have the chance to access and evaluate the policies, decisions and actions of their governments so that accountability and rule of law will be maintained. Thus, recognizing individuals' freedom of expression is an indispensable instrument to ensure transparency and accountability of governments through effective public participation, which could in turn be taken as a foundation for popular legitimacy of a particular regime.

Though international human right instruments as well as democratic constitutions of individual states propound for the wider institutionalization of freedom of expression, they do not disregard legitimate limits to this universal value. Accordingly, the right to freedom of expression may be limited for the respect of the rights or reputations of others; for the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals (ICCPR,1966). Besides, under the First Amendment of the American constitution, an individual's speech may be restricted if; it is intended to incite or produce lawless action, it is likely to incite such action, and such action is likely to occur imminently (United States Department of State,2013).

According to the Swedish constitution, freedom of expression may also be restricted by statutes enacted by the Riksdag (parliament). Accordingly, the Freedom of the Press Act and the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression contain exceptions to this right regarding the following three cases: it is not permitted to communicate or publish information if the person providing the information thereby commits certain serious crimes against national security, it is not permitted to intentionally provide an official document that is secret for publication; it is not permitted to intentionally breach duties of confidentiality (Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act,2009). Finally, according to the current federal constitution of Ethiopia, legal limitations to freedom of expression can be laid down in order to protect the well-being of the youth, and the honor and reputation of individuals. Besides, any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited by law (FDRE Constitution,1995). Thus, the above jurisprudential and constitutional rationales as well as international human right instrument have validated the argument that individual freedom of expression is fundamental human right to be respected, however with some legitimate limits for some utilitarian policy justifications and better protection of this human entitlement.

Taking those justifiable limits to individuals' freedom of expression even in countries with constitutional democracies, therefore the next legitimate question would be who should be entitled to choose the content and source of information in such democracies. In principle, in a democratic

system, freedom of expression cannot usually be limited taking the content of expression since such a content based limitation may usually be feared to promote strict security and content based discrimination (Kermit,2005). One point to be clear in a democracy is that there is not any fundamental difference between a democratic government and its citizens as the former is claimed to be the legitimate agent of the latter. This logically implies that all the deeds of a democratic government including its acts to put legitimate content based restrictions to individuals' freedom of expression are implied consent of its citizens. Thus, except for the above justifiable limitations, individuals are autonomous actors to freely express their idea, transmit, and receive information of their individual choices from whatever sources. Accordingly, in a democratic discourse, it is up to the individual rather than the state as the ultimate source of information and the one who is entitled to choose the content of information. However, it has become a clear and present danger that the contemporary mainstream media establishment of the west (printed, electronic and digital media) which has been dominated and sponsored by private companies has been hijacking individual freedom of information through agenda setting and gate keeping strategies.

It is plainly clear that individuals' freedom of expression and free flow of idea or information among the public could be realistic when there are diverse media of communication. In other words, it is a white fact that full enjoyment of individuals' freedom of information and their right to communicate is contingent upon information availability and diversity. And, it is the inherent nature of a particular media (printed, electronic and digital) that it embodies the sender of the information, the message or the information and the receivers of that particular information. In this relationship, the senders of information are usually media companies owned by individuals or share holders who are involved in profit making activities and it may be public media run by governments where as the receivers are the individual public. Accordingly, gate keeping, agenda-setting and content homogenization strategies designed by those who own and run western media to maximize their monetary interest have been aggravating the threat of information deprivation which is critical to democracy.

Contemporary Challenges and Opportunities

It has been plainly clear that, according to the fundamental political philosophy of western liberal democracy, freedom of information is the natural entitlement of individual human beings so that they can autonomously seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds through oral, written, digital and any other possible media of their choice. It has also been underlined that this natural entitlement of individuals has its own intrinsic and instrumental justifications. Though, in principle, it is the

individual who is the one which could choose the source and content of information, there have been contemporary opportunities and challenges posing significant threats to this fundamental human right value.

As an opportunity, the growing influence of democratic values in the domestic as well as international politics has been making significant progress in the enactment and enforcement of international human right instruments to protect and respect fundamental rights of human beings among which freedom of expression is one of them. Accordingly, as a contemporary public policy issue, efforts to achieve a global codification of freedom of expression can be traced to the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which has been followed by the realization of the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights in 1966. Besides, the United Nations Education Science Culture Organization (UNESCO) Resolution (1983) asserted that protection and exercise of fundamental human rights is contingent upon access to communication resources. To this effect, the Tash Resolution in 1992, and the Katmandu Declaration in 2003 have been formulated by this organization (UNESCO, 2003). Therefore, such international efforts could be taken as existential opportunities propounding the idea that individuals' right to communication is a fundamental human right to be adopted by domestic constitutions of individual states. Besides such international human right policy frame works could be taken as collective international responses largely to oppressive political regimes suppressing the natural entitlement of individuals to know, communicate, and understand each other, freedom of expression.

Besides, the intensification of new forms of digital social media during the first decade of the twenty-first century has eased the ways in which many people communicate and share information. And this implies that such digital technologies and social media are making the domestic as well as international political practices relatively more accessible, open, transparent and ultimately democratic. Thus, mobile technologies and social media have offered for people the following existing opportunities: communicating and widespread sharing of ideas among themselves from any part of the world, changing the traditional 'top-down' dissemination of information by the mainstream media corporations, and reducing the cost of information creation and communication to make it much more accessible to poorer people (Unwin, 2013).

However, as a growing contemporary challenge, there has been an increasing tendency for the internet to be controlled and monopolized by a small number of companies, governments and individuals, which may counter to the aspirations of those seeking more democratic processes. In other words, governments and large private corporations may exploit social media and the internet as a means of surveillance and maintaining ever-

greater control over citizens. Historically, technologies have most frequently been shaped and used by those who are in power by imposing their social, economic, political and ideological orientations to maintain their positions (ibid). Thus, the above communication devices and technologies which have initially been considered as growing opportunities to better effect individuals' freedom of expression could however be turned as challenges to this human right value as they could be served as instruments to sustain and strengthen the economic, political and socio-cultural ideologies of those who own such technologies.

Additional contemporary threat is that governments and global corporations have very often been able to use these technologies to gain considerable additional knowledge about, and power over, citizens and consumers. Some government and global corporations such as Google, yahoo and facebook now have vastly more information about individuals than was ever before, and many people are concerned about its implications, particularly with respect to individual right to personal privacy of individuals (ibid). Besides, it is also important to note that information communication technologies may actually be used to counter democratic culture. In other words, individuals or groups may employ such technologies; to express hate speeches, to promote violence and terror, and to communicate information contrary to public interest, international peace and security. In this regard, the growing threat posed by terrorist groups against the international community has been aggravated by the exploitation of those social media by such groups.

More importantly, enactment of the right to communicate has been suppressed in democracies as a consequence of gate keeping and agenda setting processes controlled by political, social, and economic elites (Mills,1956). The ownership classes that, in many cases control media directly through ownership or as members of boards of directors. Here, the cumulative effect of such arrangement in the mainstream news media is homogenization of content, justifying the status quo, and marginalizing minorities, curtailing expression of dissident viewpoints, naturalizing a distorted reality, and restricting dialectical possibilities available for public discourse. Though, in democratic political systems, ensuring individuals' access to communication technologies and media is among the top public policy priorities, information deprivation attributed to contentment homogenization and agenda setting activities by those elites who are in the economic and political power structures have been therefore becoming clear and present dangers to this universal human right establishment.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The idea of freedom of expression as an inalienable human right value has its own philosophical as well as ideological stipulations. Accordingly, in the context of liberal democracy, individuals are autonomous rational actors who are capable of independent choices and judgments on fundamental questions of their lives. And it is this philosophical assumption that ultimately justifies freedom of expression as a natural entitlement of all human beings which demand minimal or negative intervention from governments in a democracy. Individuals are free to express, receive and impart their ideas through oral, written or any other possible media of communication so that they can realize their potentials in all terms; controlling their state power, realizing transparent and accountable government, achieving academic pursuits, developing open and democratic culture as well as effecting non-instrumental values as democratic societies. Thus, individuals are the central actor in deciding the content as well as source of information in a democratic society so that external imposition in this regard is contrary to the foundation of democratic politics.

There have been diverse contemporary opportunities and threats to this fundamental norm of democracy. The dramatic influence of democracy over authoritarianism in domestic public policy frameworks with growing pressures of the international human rights organizations over different concerned actors to honor the values of fundamental human rights could be taken as positive developments for the implementation of principles concerning freedom of expression in individual states. Besides, the expansion of emerging and alternative media of communication technologies have made significant contribution to realize the free flow of ideas across different sections of societies with minimal spatial and temporal limits.

Contrary to the above contemporary opportunities, there are also significant challenges posing direct as well as indirect challenges to individuals' freedom of expression in the mainstream media establishment of the west. First of all, gate keeping activities by those owning and running the media usually choice the contents of information transmitted through their media based on their private interest so that they could easily and intentionally control or dictate public agenda; what gets published or broadcast and what does not so that people's communication will only be limited only in light of the underlined agenda. By deliberately implementing such strategies, gate keepers produce an information-deficient public discourse, delimiting topics and perspectives available for public debates and ultimately control individuals mind on what to speak argue, receive, and communicate with each other. This is therefore a significant threat to individuals' right to communicate through information deprivation.

In light of the above argument, homogenization of the news product is usually dictated primarily by the ideological mandates of a market economy. In other words, profit, rather than truth and diversity of ideas, has become the driving ideological force in the private news production. Accordingly, such an impoverished free marketplace of ideas constrains the ability of individual human beings to make informed decisions required in democratic governance. In other words, where information parameters are defined by private motives of those few economic and political elites, there can be no reasonable expectation of a healthy discourse informed by the mass media's contribution to a free marketplace of ideas. Thus, the individuals' ability to fully exercise their right to communicate has been becoming affected by information shortages, limited access to communication technologies and purposeful exclusion of alternative perspectives consciously designed and implemented by those mainstream media corporations.

To capitalize more on the above opportunities by confronting the underlined existential challenges under discussion, individual citizens, policy makers, international human right organizations and the academia should discharge their respective tasks so that our national entitlement to freedom of expression will be maintained. First of all, individual citizens are not only entitled with but also they are duty bound to honor and practically commuted in influencing their governments to formulate and enforce the principles of freedom of expression. Besides, while they are exercising their natural entitlement to express themselves, they are expected to responsibly exploit the opportunity to some utilitarian as well as intrinsic values by not abusing their right contrary to the legitimate limits. Here such responsible engagement of individuals in exchanging of their ideas and information through different media will take long term capacity building and awareness creating tasks. In this regard, the academia are expected to open series of academic discourses, research, teaching and community service activities as to fundamental knowledge, skills and virtues inherent to individuals' freedom of expression. This would also have a huge public policy implication towards a tolerant, developed and democratic culture in individual states.

On the side of governments, there must be clear with foundation of democratic politics that restriction and censorship could not be viable options for popular legitimacy so that they need to grant and implement the fundamentals of freedom of expression with minimal legitimate interventions or limitations. Accordingly, they must not censor information and not to spy on their citizens; they must work to make their decisions and actions to be more transparent to the public; they need to educate their people on how could they responsibly use digital technologies and social media. Finally, to

ensure democracy, ownership system of the printed, electronic, and other digital technologies including the internet itself needs to be much more democratic, bottom up, and easily accessible with affordable price so that diversity of voices and alternative ideas will be entertained. This will therefore minimize the threats of content homogenizations and information deprivation posed by the existing mainstream media establishment sponsored by few political and economic elites with their own economic, political and socio-cultural ideologies.

Finally, international human right originations need to do more in influencing individual states to enforce existing legal regimes with better supervision mechanisms. Besides, they need to validate and adopt existing legal regimes considering immersing opportunities and threats; the development of digital technologies and social medias with respective concerns on information security, individual privacy, international peace and security.

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