1. Global connections

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We live in an overheated world (Eriksen, 2016), where global processes, such as climate change, financial flows, human flight and migration influence our lives and our prospects for the future. Simultaneously, there is an increasing understanding among many people that the largest challenges of our world must be solved through transnational cooperation. The traditional divide between the "developed" and "developing" world, with the Global North allegedly representing the best conditions for media development and freedom of expression, is also challenged. According to the Reporters without Borders' World Press Freedom Index (RSF, 2018), Ghana gets a better score than France, Costa Rica better than Austria and Burkina Faso better than the USA.

Furthermore, the huge expansion of alternatives to mainstream media (MSM) in terms of both new social media platforms, fabricated news and disinformation represents an additional challenge to journalism. At the core of journalism globally is the freedom to report, which is threatened in many parts of the world (Carlsson & Pöyhtari, 2017), including countries represented in this book. Today, Turkey is at the top of the list when it comes to the number of imprisoned journalists; in fact, most independent news media have been shut down.

Anybody from the Turkish media, the academic world, or civil society who oppose the president, risks being labeled as "terrorist". Beyond this, in a country such as Afghanistan, which in 2018 was declared the state with the largest number of killed journalists (RSF, 2018), report-

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ers have had to walk a tightrope between deadly extremist attacks and threats on one hand, and sanctions and threats from the government on the other. A universal feature of today's situation is more anti-intellectualism, polarized societies where extremists thrive on social media. The very name "social media" triggers discussions about freedom of expression, since internet communications, or social media, are used, on one hand, as a means for recruiting violent extremists, and on the other, as a way of attempting the silencing of other points of view.

The various shades of extremism

A recent example is how the terrorist, who attacked two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, and killed 50 people in February 2019, filmed the attack himself and transmitted it to social media platforms. In the aftermath, some people were charged with sharing the video on social media. New Zealand has a law banning dissemination or possession of material depicting extreme violence and terrorism. A human rights law forbidding incitement of racial disharmony works in the same direction. These "parameters are more restrictive than the First Amendment guarantees in the United States." (Graham-McLay, 2019). Thus, the New Zealand terror and its aftermath may perhaps be seen as a first example of a "western" country, which has taken strict measures to curb the activities of extremists, including those who target religious minorities.

Facebook eventually took down the terrorist's page and Twitter deleted his profile, However, before that happened, the video had spread virally across social media (Marsh & Mulholland, 2019). On March 31, 2019, Mark Zuckerberg suggested more regulation and intervention in such cases: "I believe we need a more active role for governments and regulators" (Zuckerberg, 2019).

As the New Zealand terror clearly demonstrated, the right-wing extremist at the center of the incident targeted *the minority other,* in this case resident Muslims, consisting mainly of refugees who had considered the country a safe haven. The Christchurch attack has some similarities to the experiences from the 22 July 2011 attack on the Norwegian government and the Labour Party youth camp, killing 77, as well as leaving several hundreds wounded and traumatized. The Norwegian "homegrown" terrorist also left a manifesto online

before he went on his killing spree; he too admitted hating Muslims and networked with right-wing extremists. Furthermore, the terrorist in New Zealand claimed to have been inspired by the Norwegian one.

In November 2015, in a coordinated series of attacks in Paris, extremists from an Islamist background killed 130 people and wounded many more. Earlier that same year, also in Paris, terrorists killed 12 cartoonists and wounded 11 others at the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo,* and later killed four persons at a kosher grocery shop. The most salient signs of polarization in Europe – as well as in other parts of the world – seem to be the following: hostility to alleged blasphemers viewed as enemies of Islam; hostility towards Muslims and others with migrant backgrounds; hostility towards Jews and hostility towards progressives and migrant-friendly people. Both right wing and Islamist extremism seem to share negative attitudes towards women, not least feminists.

As we write this, massive terrorist attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka have caused the deaths of more than 350 people, and IS has claimed responsibility. This further underlines the importance and timeliness of this volume, since it takes the role of media, extremism and terrorism seriously and discusses how to counter threats from extreme groups.

It is easy for media, though, to gravitate towards the poles and relegate the much larger middle ground, initiatives towards unity or attempts at dialogue, to the background. After the 2015 Paris attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and the kosher center, young Muslims in Norway initiated an action where they made a human circle around the synagogue in Oslo, "meeting hatred with love". Reciprocity was shown a couple of weeks later, when a "ring of peace" encircled one of the mosques in the city.

Coverage of centrifugal, polarizing forces of society and the centripetal, solidarity-oriented forces may be associated with the dualism inherent in thinking that a glass is half-empty or half-full; i.e., editorial choices associated with building bridges or with peace efforts. Good reporters look for solutions, one of the IPCC scientists said when interviewed about the media and climate change (Eide, 2017). At the same time, there is a growing concern among the younger generation that there is no room for optimism when discussing climate change. "Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people, to give them hope.

[…] But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic" (WITW, 2019), says the young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. She creates a sense of urgency, which resonates with young people worldwide.

The globalization era with its accelerated changes is full of conflicts, and leaves millions of people marginalized. As Eriksen writes, "The very idea that human beings everywhere are endowed with rights and dignity is a recent and comparatively unusual one" (Eriksen, 2016: 115). Connecting people, however limited the attempt may be, can at best make a small contribution to strengthen this idea.

War as a backcloth

The terrorist attacks in Europe have also contributed to a sense of urgency. However, most terrorist attacks happen outside of Europe, with IS/Daesh, Al Qaeda, Taliban and other extremist groups as the culprits. State terrorism, albeit a disputed concept, is another area of exploration (Galtung, 2002; Schmid, 2011), and has been exemplified by the merciless destructive bombing conducted by the Assad regime in Syria, helped by their Russian allies, as well as US bombing of areas in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Pakistan. A government-initiated report (Godal et al., 2016) concluded that the real achievement by Norwegian military forces after twelve years in Afghanistan was reinforcing Norway's role as a solid ally for the U.S. and NATO.

This anthology is not primarily about climate change or war coverage, which has been a feature in other recent volumes (Eide & Kunelius, 2012; Kunelius et al. 2017; Lippe & Ottosen, 2016; Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2015; Orgeret & Tayyebwa, 2016). Nevertheless, the ecological and military situations represent part of the global "overheating" and an important part of the backcloth for the polarization we have seen in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The transnational character of extremist recruitment is clear to see. IS/Daesh has received recruits from Indonesia and Norway, Tunisia and France, Pakistan and Turkey, Chechnya and Japan – and many more countries. In a prisoner camp with thousands of IS widows and their offspring, a reporter contributing to this volume registered people from more than 50 nations.[1]

The enormous outreach offered to extremists and their recruiters by social media platforms (Facebook, Telegram, etc.) demonstrates the rapid transnational processes through which hatred and dehumanization spread instantly.

The laws as well as the practices of free expression vary greatly across the world, and in some countries, oppositional, critical investigative journalists' risk being accused of extremist/terrorist activity. A special dilemma occurs in countries, with newly won democratic rights, including the right to freedom of expression, after decades of dictatorship. Here, extremists may use these newly gained freedoms to spread hate speech and incitement to violence, and recruit extremists to the "Islamic state" or other related organizations, as experienced in Indonesia and Tunisia (Chapters 4 and 7).

Controversies and "clashes"

This volume emerges from a series of conferences, through which freedom of expression, religious and other extremism, and inequalities of this planet have been raised. The origins of this volume can be traced back to three global conferences in the aftermath of the cartoon crisis, which emerged after the publication, in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* (2005), of 12 cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed. The conferences were initiated by the governments of Indonesia and Norway, but were planned by a committee of journalists/editors from the two countries. Through these, and ensuing transnational studies (Eide et al., 2008; Kunelius et al., 2007), differing interpretations of freedom of expression were articulated. To simplify, one stream would argue for unlimited freedom of expression (a "free marketplace of ideas"), while another would argue that such freedom should be combined with responsibility, including sensitivity towards religion/religious people (the "balance of harms" principle).

The anthology draws from later conferences, between academics and journalists from countries where Islam is the dominant faith as well as from Norway. These conferences questioned Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis (1996), which suggested that the most dominant clash was/is the one between Western (Christian) civilization and the Muslim one. We realized that this polarized model is unable to explain the current global conflicts. Throughout

the current volume, we present chapters, which discuss the roots of conflict in more nuanced ways and from several positions, moving beyond simplified, mono-causal explanations. As readers will notice, in addition to authors residing in Norway, other contributors live in countries with Muslim majorities, demonstrating, and providing ample illustrations of the diversity across this "Muslim civilization", which according to Huntington, is the main counterpart of what he terms "Western civilization".

Discussions on free expression, journalism, minorities and diversity, as well as the extremist threat intensified through social media, have been at the core of these conferences. The themes central to this book are connected in a number of ways. Extremists exploit their media access to target minorities, to recruit and increase their own influence; minorities struggle to have their voices heard and their dignity acknowledged; and freedom-loving citizens struggle against clampdowns on press freedom and free expression. Such clampdowns enable authoritarian states to take extreme measures against those fighting for press freedom and free expression.

The efforts have been partly normative and certainly explorative. An explicit aim has been to build bridges between academics and journalists across borders and across such putative "civilizational" divides. However, our guiding principle has been to achieve progress concerning these aims by engaging in a non-biased exploration of the variety of contexts in which we work, and the different shapes our work has taken by the struggle for human values and freedoms.

The anthology includes contributions by 21 writers from nine countries. Seven are journalists, the rest are academics, while some of the latter consider themselves both. Thus, this volume is also an effort to build bridges between these two groups, who oftentimes view each other with skepticism, and this is frequently fueled by professional separation. What follows is an introduction to the various contributions.

1. Extremism and the media – shifting sands

The first part starts with a personal account from correspondent *Kristin Solberg*, who presents her experiences befriending an extremist, who later blew himself up in an action supportive of the IS, killing a group of militias in Mosul, Iraq. Her account demonstrates how a person seeking

a sense of belonging, ultimately finds it among terrorists, and adds to current discourses on the (individual) roots of extremism and terror.

Having experienced the loss of her colleagues, killed by a jihadi terrorist group, war correspondent *Abeer Saady* started research for what was to become a Ph.D. about ISIS media strategies. In her chapter, she discusses research findings from a case study of hostage campaigns and the discourse expressed by ISIS in their Youtube videos. Saady finds that propaganda is the base for all ISIS discourses, and although the discourses of ISIS are contradictory, the group is well managed in terms of its media strategies.

Indonesia hosts the world's largest Muslim population. Academic and journalist *Ade Armando* presents parts of his country's recent developments, including how the transition from dictatorship to democracy offered new precious freedoms, but also how extremists may use these freedoms to their own benefit. Whether government intervention against hateful utterances may lead back toward authoritarian oppression, is a tough dilemma deserving more analysis.

Examples of how IS, today's most threatening terrorist network, recruits and communicates, provides the content of the chapter following that of Ade Armando. War reporter *Afshin Ismaeli* has studied the deeds and the victims of the so-called "caliphate" at close range, through extensive reporting from Iraq and Syria. Despite the fact that their communication is currently on the decline, he emphasizes their relative professionalism, combining images of sensational brutality and others of an enticing good life in ISIS areas.

Jana Syeda Gulshan Ferdous describes how millions of people in Bangladesh started to use internet without knowing much about fact-checking content or sources, making them easy targets for extremist Islamists. Some of these organizations mastered the art of manipulating content and spreading it to the masses through Facebook groups and pages with hateful agendas. The chapter describes how instead of increasing freedom of expression through new media channels, the opposite is happening. The new digital communication channels allow for a rapid radicalization of people, and a quick erosion of moderate, knowledge-based, secular mentality.

After the "Arab spring" and the fall of the Ben Ali dictatorship in Tunisia in 2011, reporters faced new dilemmas as terrorist acts began

to break out. Based on his own substantial experiences, journalist *Mohamed Balti* discusses professional dilemmas he himself and his colleagues faced, not least the conundrum of how to cover such actions without playing into the hands of the extremists.

In his chapter about how to counter the present violent Islamic extremism in Bangladesh, experienced journalist *Julfikar Ali Manik* argues that a cultural struggle is unavoidable. Such a struggle has to start from every household as well as in schools, with its place in the curriculum and lectures. Sadly, the Islamic extremists are ahead of the game, as Manik states, showing the reader that they have strategized where to start, and began to do so much earlier than those few who are now thinking of countering the damages that have already been done.

2. Freedom of expression and new challenges

Since the nation was born in 1947, Pakistan has experienced shifts between military dictatorship and democracy. *Altaf Ullah Khan* takes stock of the current situation, which he calls alarming. People's right both to hold an opinion, and not least, to express it, is stifled by strict blasphemy laws and several government regulations, as well as by extremist attacks on minorities and freethinkers.

In another chapter about Bangladesh, *Mubashar Hasan* presents a typology of actors to discuss who suppresses free speech across that country. Hasan argues that alongside the government, a section of journalists, academics, businesspersons, political parties, secular and Islamist activists all act against the spirit of freedom of speech. The chapter shows how a pervasive, clientelist political process explains these actors' active engagement in suppressing free speech in Bangladesh.

As pointed out above, Turkey currently holds the global number one position when it comes to journalists and writers in prison. Most oppositional or critical media have been closed down. *Bora Ataman* and *Baris Coban* show how the earlier media situation in the country was smashed after the 2016 coup attempt. They go on to emphasize how alternative media to a large extent replace the mainstream media in the Turkish public sphere, something which represents a ray of hope for at least some free journalistic expression in that country.

In "Media in Turkey: A Reporter's Tale", reporter *Ayla Albayrak* shares her own experiences as a convicted journalist. She does so by

way of providing an example of how the Turkish government's determination to silence the media grew increasingly apparent after the coup attempt against President Erdogan in July 2016. To illustrate the current, almost impossible situation for journalists, the chapter provides examples of what news reporting in Erdogan's "New Turkey" look like.

Twenty years after the end of the Suharto regime and the start of a democratic era, journalists and writers who want to enjoy their full rights to freedom of expression still face a multitude of challenges. Writer and journalist *Andina Dwifatma* writes of how extremist groups threaten and at times silence the progressive, modern voices, labelled as *blasphemists* or *kafirs* (infidels). She places her hopes on the new young generation of writers.

Afghanistan, a country still at war, may provide a clear-cut example of how journalists and writers have to walk a tightrope between Taliban and other extremist threats, including killings; and authorities' efforts to curb their rights. *Abdul Mujeeb Khalvatgar* writes that despite Afghanistan's modern laws guaranteeing freedom of expression, the on-the-ground practice does not correspond. In 2018, more journalists were killed in Afghanistan than in any other country.

Reporter *Atta Ansari* looks back at the confusing period after the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad was published and the different reactions to them emerged. He reflects upon how he experienced being a journalist of Muslim faith in Norway at the time, and the huge pressure he and other minority journalists felt both from those who defended the cartoons, and from those who did not.

The road towards freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Tunisia has been long, but optimism spread across the country after dictator Ben Ali was forced to resign and travel into exile in early 2011. Since then, Tunisian journalists have enjoyed more freedom, as shown in *Rym Benarous'* chapter. Although the situation is still challenging, the leap forward from no 164 (2010) to 97 (2018) on World Press Freedom Index tells a story of progress.

Cultural expressions suffer much of the same oppression as media outlets under dictatorship. Writer *Andina Dwifatma* from Indonesia demonstrates how, even twenty years after the fall of the Suharto dictatorship, there are areas deemed as not suitable for cultural debates and arenas. Whether it has to do with left-wing politics or with sexual

minorities, this author recognizes resistance both from Islamist groups and government circles.

3. The changing shades of global diversities

Gender, and especially the female gender, is a very effective tool to transform sensitive messages that set the boundaries of both political and everyday life. *Nil Mutluer* shows how the government-led media have framed the gendered and ethnicized issues according to the needs of the prevailing hegemony. In her chapter, she describes how the female headscarf dilemma has been employed by both Kemalist governments and the current AKP government as a tool polarizing the Turkish society, and how Kurdish guerrilla bodies and neighborhoods are stigmatized in a sexualized way in social media.

Recent improvements in the freedom of expression situation in Indonesia have unleashed extremist groups and subsequent threats to the people whom these groups usually target, such as women and religious and sexual minorities; in short, they threaten society's diversity. *Lestari Nurajati* demonstrates how the spread of negative and discriminatory attitudes towards diversity are also reflected in mainstream media, albeit in less extreme ways.

Through a personal narrative of growing up in a Norwegian town where there were no immigrants, reporter *Olga Stokke* describes that even before the era of immigrants, the *other* was always present in her town, "in the shadows, in the dark corners of our playgrounds". She narrates the feeling of being a "passenger on a globalisation train" – transcending borders and facing the potential of important change, something implicit in meeting the *other*.

What does it take for refugees with a journalistic background to return to their profession in a new country and a new context? *Kristin Skare Orgeret* explores this topic through illustrations from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Her chapter provides some insights into the "borderland existence", where such journalists find themselves located somewhere between a refugee and a journalist. She discusses what alternative points of view, such newcomer journalists may have to offer and enrich the so-called "receiving" countries.

The roots of threats against free expression and hatred towards diversity are manifold, but negative *othering* processes, which entail

seeing the *other* as of lesser (or no) value, are important. *Elisabeth Eide*'s chapter looks at the connections between globalization, citizenship and diversity, drawing on research as well as travel experiences, including the challenges of ongoing wars and today's refugee situation.

It is our hope that the contributions will inspire discussions and further research in institutions of higher learning, as well as among journalists, scholars and people who engage in preserving hard-won freedoms and rights, and those who have to fight hard to attain them.

Note

1. Personal communication with Afshin Ismaeli, 2019, March 28.

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