

## DOCUMENT A

## As the Press Weakens, So Does Democracy

*The New York Times*, July 18, 2021



By **Charles M. Blow**

Opinion Columnist

I came to The New York Times in 1992, 29 years ago this summer, as the first intern in its graphics department. I arrived in Manhattan, a little Black boy from a hick town in Louisiana, and it blew my mind. In those first months I saw how one of the best newsrooms in the country covered some of the biggest stories of the era, and it shaped me as a journalist and in my reverence for the invaluable role journalists play in society.

I arrived weeks after the Los Angeles riots following the acquittal of police officers in the Rodney King beating, and just before the Supreme Court reaffirmed *Roe v. Wade*. The city was under the control of the first Black mayor in its history, David Dinkins.

I would soon watch in person as Bill Clinton was nominated for president at the Democratic National Convention in Madison Square Garden, just about 10 blocks south of The Times's offices, and I would watch a massive — and very political — gay pride parade march through Times Square as the community reeled from the scourge of AIDS. In 1992, a staggering 33,590 Americans died of the disease as it became “the number one cause of death among men aged 25-44 years,” according to the C.D.C.

This, in many ways, was an extraordinary time to be a journalist.

Newsroom employment was at a high, and throughout the 1990s, and even into the early 2000s, a slight majority of Americans still had a great deal or fair amount of trust in the news media to report the news “fully, accurately and fairly,” according to Gallup.

In 1992, there was no MSNBC or Fox News, no Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok. Also, there weren't many, if any, mainstream news organizations online. The Times didn't start online publication until 1996, and then it was not the truly transformative force it would become.

Since the 1990s, newsrooms have seen tremendous, truly terrifying, contraction. On Tuesday, Pew Research Center issued a report that found “newsroom employment in the United States has dropped by 26 percent since 2008.”

Last month, Poynter reported on a survey that found that “the United States ranks last in media trust — at 29 percent — among 92,000 news consumers surveyed in 46 countries.”

Furthermore, a report last year by the Knight Foundation and the University of North Carolina found:

- Since 2004, the United States has lost one-fourth — 2,100 — of its newspapers. This includes 70 dailies and more than 2,000 weeklies or nondailies.
- At the end of 2019, the United States had 6,700 newspapers, down from almost 9,000 in 2004.
- Today, more than 200 of the nation's 3,143 counties and equivalents have no newspaper and no alternative source of credible and comprehensive information on critical issues. Half of the counties have only one newspaper, and two-thirds do not have a daily newspaper.
- Many communities that lost newspapers were the most vulnerable — struggling economically and isolated.

The news industry is truly struggling, but the public is oblivious to this. A Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2018 found that “most Americans think their local news media are doing just fine financially.”

The report explains, “About seven-in-ten say their local news media are doing either somewhat or very well financially (71 percent).”

I guess I can understand the illusion in some ways. We have celebrity journalists — writers, radio personalities and anchors — in a way that didn’t exist before.

There were popular and trusted news figures, to be sure, but the proliferation of sensational, personality journalists is a newer and growing sector of journalism.

Also, we are now able to access and share more news than ever before. This all leads to a feeling that we are drowning in news, when in fact pond after pond is drying up and the lakes are getting smaller.

I share all that to say this: Democracies cannot survive without a common set of facts and a vibrant press to ferret them out and present them. Our democracy is in terrible danger. The only way that lies can flourish as they now do is because the press has been diminished in both scale and stature. Lies advance when truth is in retreat.

The founders understood the supreme value of the press, and that’s why they protected it in the Constitution. No other industry can claim the same.

But protection from abridgment is not protection from shrinkage or obsolescence.

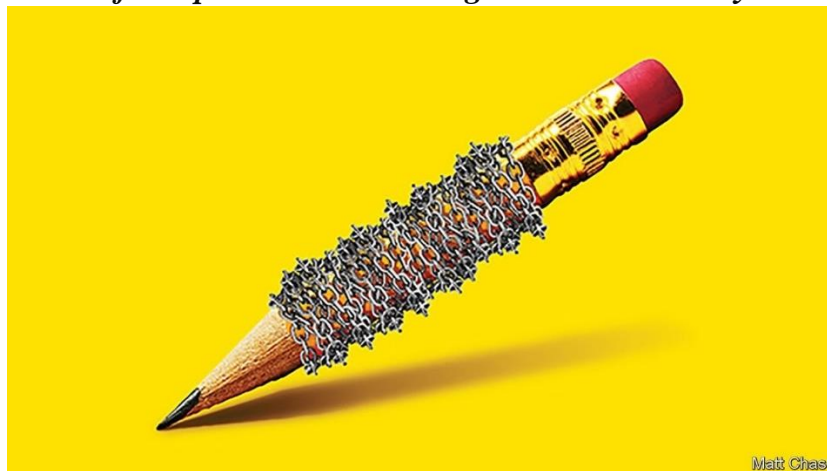
We are moving ever closer to a country where the corrupt can deal in the darkness with no fear of being exposed by the light. (761 words)

## DOCUMENT 1

[Leaders](#) | The gag tightens

### Press freedom is under attack. It needs defenders

*Autocrats pay lip service to free speech while eroding it in insidious ways*



*The Economist*, May 7th 2022

Here’s a thought experiment. If Russia had a free press, how many Russians would support Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine? Here’s another: how might the early days of covid-19 have unfolded if the virus had first emerged in a country with a free press, rather than China? Could the government of such a country have hushed it up\* for those crucial early weeks?

As news junkies celebrated World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd, it was worth remembering why it matters. A free press can scrutinise the mighty, expose corruption and deter abuses\*. For a tyrant, as Napoleon Bonaparte once lamented, “Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than 1,000 bayonets.” The free flow of information is the lifeblood of democracy. Without it, voters cannot make informed choices. Governments struggle to notice or correct their mistakes. And free media make it easier for good ideas and useful information to spread, thereby accelerating progress.

Yet around the world, press freedom is in decline. Around 85% of people live in countries where it has been constricted in the past five years. It is now as hamstrung\* as it was in 1984, during the cold war. The nature of censorship has evolved since then, however. Hundreds of reporters are still jailed, and dozens are killed each year. But most modern autocrats at least pay lip service\* to the idea of a free press, and choose more subtle weapons with which to attack it.

State advertising budgets are lavished on fawning outlets\*. Critical ones get tax audits and fines for defamation. Such harassment can tip struggling media firms into the red. Some may then be bought by ruling-party cronies\*, who may not mind if their television stations lose money, so long as they please the people who dole out\* public-works contracts. Mr Putin pioneered this approach; it has been widely imitated.

Technology is being used to make life hell for uppity hacks\*. New tools make it easier to spy on them. Investigations last year found **Pegasus** eavesdropping software had been slipped into the mobile phones of almost 200 journalists, to read their messages, track them and identify their sources. Social media can be used to harass reporters. A survey found almost three-quarters of female journalists have endured online abuse. This is scariest when it is organised, and has the tacit backing of the ruling party. In India, for example, critics of the prime minister, Narendra Modi, face torrents of death and rape threats from Hindu nationalist trolls, who sometimes publish their addresses and incite vigilantes to visit them.

Even in liberal democracies, laws against libel\* and invasion of privacy are often abused. Oligarchs from elsewhere sue muckraking\* reporters in London, hoping to impose on them ruinous legal costs and endless hassle. In Poland one popular newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, has been hit with more than 60 cases in recent years, many brought by leaders of the ruling party. A Maltese journalist who exposed state corruption was dealing with over 40 cases when she was assassinated in 2017.

How can defenders of press freedom fight back? An easy place to start would be for **liberal** governments to scrap archaic laws that criminalise defamation, which are still surprisingly common. They should also curb bogus\* lawsuits, as the European Commission is currently contemplating. Next, independent media need to find new sources of funding. Charities can chip in, as can crowdfunding and rich proprietors who care about free speech. Public broadcasters can play a useful role, but only if they have enough safeguards to be truly independent.

In more repressive places the task is harder, but technology can help. Where reporting on the ground is too risky, satellite imagery and big data sets allow journalists to pull together stories from afar. Free countries should offer them asylum, and a safe place to keep working. Where censorship is tight, citizens can use virtual private networks to access blocked content and online tools to capture web pages before they are censored.

Journalists in free countries can help those in autocracies. Cross-border collaborations have exposed scandals such as Pegasus and the **Panama papers**. The *Washington Post*'s cloud-based publishing system allowed *Apple Daily*, a beleaguered pro-democracy tabloid in Hong Kong, to keep publishing for longer than it otherwise could have.

The struggle will be uphill\*. The pandemic has given governments a plausible excuse to curb\* press freedom: nearly 100 have done so in the name of public safety. Donald Trump has shown how a demagogue can undermine trust in the media, and others are copying him. In a survey last year, almost 60% of respondents in 28 countries said journalists deliberately mislead the public. Some do, of course, and World Press Freedom Day is a moment for journalists who enjoy protection to ask themselves if they are making the best use of their freedom. (802 words)

## Media freedom is 'in danger', survey in four central European countries finds

*Respondents in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia want measures to protect press freedom*

**Robert Tait** in Prague *The Guardian*, Tue 26 Apr 2022

More than half of people in four former communist central European countries fear media freedom is in danger, with significant majorities wanting government or EU measures to protect it, according to a survey\*.

The findings\*, from respondents in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, are revealed in what is purportedly\* the biggest opinion study on the issue conducted in the "Visegrád countries". They will form part of the consultation process for a press freedom bill under preparation by the European Commission.

The bill, spearheaded\* by the commission's vice-president for values and transparency, Věra Jourová, is being designed to safeguard media pluralism and independence amid rising concerns about ownership and potential government interference.

In what organisers hope will provide a spur to action, 52% voiced concern about media freedom – with the highest figure, 63%, recorded in Poland, whose rightwing nationalist Law and Justice party (PiS) government stands accused of aggressively targeting independent media with expensive lawsuits while meddling in public broadcasting.

Seventy-one per cent throughout the four countries backed government safeguarding legislation while 59% supported granting the EU more powers to protect media liberties.

Misha Glenny, a British broadcaster and chair of the Committee for Editorial Independence – which commissioned the study along with the Czech committee of the International Press Institute – warned the EU against overlooking Poland's transgressions as a reward for its role in enacting western policy in Russia's war against Ukraine, particularly when compared with Hungary, which has refused to send weapons or cut energy supplies from Russia.

"What you've seen since Ukraine is that the European Commission and some European Union governments have decided that they are targeting [prime minister Viktor] Orbán and Hungary because of their recalcitrant position and they are giving Poland a free pass on some of the rule of law issues," he said.

The study of 4,069 people was conducted\* over a 16-day period in February, before Russia's invasion.

Hungary, where Orbán's far-right Fidesz government this month won a fourth consecutive term, revealed the highest number of respondents – 47% – who think their country's media is not free. Only 30% assessed it as free, compared with 47% in the Czech Republic, where support for media independence is highest.

Orbán's government has come under scrutiny over opaque ownership acquisitions that have seen about 500 separate media outlets placed under an umbrella foundation, Késma, and interference in public broadcasting that critics say has reduced television and radio stations to propaganda channels, often voicing pro-Russian war narratives.

Support for media freedom among Fidesz backers is significantly lower than among other groups, said Václav Štětka, a media specialist at Loughborough university. "Fidesz voters are a completely different tribe," he said. "Thirty per cent of them support media owners being in charge of content. That figure isn't replicated anywhere else."

Veronika Munk, the director of content at Telex, an independent Hungarian news site established after a pro-government businessman took over the outlet where she previously worked, said the decline of media freedom in Hungary served as a warning to others.

“Hungary shows how quickly things can change,” she said. “In the Reporters Without Borders index for 2006, Hungary was 10th out of about 160 countries. We are now 92nd.”

Asked if she feared things deteriorating further, she said: “That possibility is always there. Our website is funded by readers’ donations. One of my concerns is if the government decides to cut this economic link, which they could with a new law because they have two-thirds of the seats in parliament.” ( 595 words)

## DOCUMENT 3

Opinion

### Ukraine shows the press is the enemy of tyrants, not the people

By Jennifer Rubin, Columnist

*The Washington Post*, March 16, 2022

Global press freedom has been under assault from authoritarians\* and right-wing populist movements for years, as Freedom House has documented. Rarely has this been as clear as it is in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Russian President Vladimir Putin felt so threatened by independent reporting that he cut off his country’s access to Twitter and Facebook and imposed a 15-year prison sentence for anyone who spreads information that runs counter to the government’s narrative of the war. *The New York Times* reports that, according to data from Amnesty International, “150 journalists had fled the country to avoid the new law, which Marie Struthers, the group’s director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, called ‘a scorched-earth\* strategy that has turned Russia’s media landscape into a wasteland.’ ”

Michael Abramowitz, the president of Freedom House, tells me, “Putin’s extraordinary effort to block ordinary Russians from receiving accurate information about the invasion of Ukraine, including lengthy prison sentences\* for those who describe a war as a war, illustrates how freedom of the media is a foundational element of democracy.” He adds: “Right now in Ukraine, and in other repressive regimes, journalists, from household names\* to freelancers, are risking their lives to share stories that make the world understand and care, not just about Ukrainians, but about the danger we all face when authoritarianism goes unchecked.”

In the past few days, three journalists have been killed in Ukraine. American freelance journalist Brent Renaud was shot on Sunday, and Fox News’s Pierre Zakrzewski and his Ukrainian colleague, Oleksandra Kuvshynova, were killed outside Kiev on Monday. White House press secretary Jen Psaki could not confirm whether the journalists were specifically targeted, but their deaths are consistent with Russia’s deliberate targeting of civilians and its effort to control what information reaches Russians and the rest of the world.

Dissidents understand all too well the necessity of breaking through autocrats’ chokehold\* on the media. Marina Ovsyannikova, a producer at a Russian state-controlled TV station, courageously burst onto the set of Channel One during a live news telecast on Monday chanting “stop the war” and denouncing government “propaganda.” She also recorded a video message: “What is going on in Ukraine is a crime,” she declared. “Unfortunately, I have been working at Channel One over the past recent years, working on Kremlin propaganda. And now I am very ashamed.” She reiterated, “I am ashamed that I’ve allowed the lies to be said on the TV screens. I am ashamed that I let the Russian people be zombified.”

Human rights groups feared the worst after Ovsyannikova disappeared for hours. She reappeared, having been fined. Russian authorities may well take more severe action to reassert their domination of information. Breaking through state-sponsored lies in such a dramatic way makes her as powerful a threat to Putin as Western sanctions or Ukrainian antitank weapons.

The vivid images and on-the-scene reporting from Western journalists have galvanized public opinion to an extent few expected. The coverage has resulted in radical changes in German energy and national security policy, a new solidarity among NATO allies, waves of economic sanctions and a 180-degree shift in attitudes toward Russia among many Republican politicians and pundits. Without direct reports from Ukrainian cities and towns, it is conceivable that Western leaders would not have reacted as rapidly and vehemently as they have.

This provides stark lessons about freedom, right-wing populism and democracy. Above all, we see how the media has become the enemy of authoritarians who seek to control the truth or make it unknowable.

40 As Jonathan Rauch, the author of “The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth,” explained: “There are forces out there — there always have been since day one, since Galileo was in prison — that have said it’s inconvenient to have to follow all these rules to decide what’s true. ‘I know what’s true. I should be able to impose that. I should be able to censor or silence the people who disagree with me.’” As Rauch explains, a demagogue’s mind-set is: “I want to say I won the election. It’s inconvenient that other people say I lost it.”

45 Democracies cannot survive if truth and independent sources of information are strangled. They depend on the free interchange of ideas, voters’ ability to hold leaders accountable (which necessitates knowing what they are up to) and consensus about election outcomes. (...)

When news outlet\*s become merely propaganda outlets for the powerful and truth becomes whatever a leader says it is, democracy is in peril. There should be no doubt: When a politician attacks a free press, *he* is the enemy of democracy, not the voice of the “people.” (766 words)

#### DOCUMENT 4 - VIDEO

**Edited extracts from the video from *The Economist* “Press freedom: Why Should we be Worried?”**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojsUv\\_08Zk&t=2s&ab\\_channel=TheEconomist](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojsUv_08Zk&t=2s&ab_channel=TheEconomist)

#### DOCUMENT 5

### **Why the press will never have another Watergate moment**

Perspective by [Margaret Sullivan](#), Columnist

*The Washington Post*, May 29, 2022 (abridged)

You’ll be hearing a lot about Watergate in the next several weeks, as the 50th anniversary of the infamous June 17, 1972, burglary at the Democratic National Committee headquarters approaches. There will be documentaries, cable-news debates, the finale of that Julia Roberts miniseries (“Gaslit”) based on the popular Watergate podcast (“Slow Burn”). (...)

5 The scandal has great resonance at *The Washington Post*, which won a Pulitzer Prize for public service in 1973 for its intrepid reporting and the courage it took to publish it. And it has particular meaning for me, because, like many others of my generation, I was first drawn into journalism by the televised Senate hearings in 1973, and I was enthralled by the 1976 movie “All the President’s Men,” based on the book by Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein.

10 Yet thinking about Watergate saddens me these days. The nation that came together to force a corrupt president from office and send many of his co-conspirator aides to prison is a nation that no longer exists.

It’s not just our politics that have changed. It’s also our radically transformed media environment.

15 “The national newspapers mattered in a way that is unimaginable to us today, and even the regional newspapers were incredibly strong,” Garrett Graff, author of “Watergate: A New History,” told me last week. (...)

Woodward and Bernstein were almost alone on the story for months. But eventually, the leading newspapers of the nation started to cover the hell out of the burgeoning scandal and the percolating questions of what — and when — the president knew about the burglary plot. Americans read this coverage in their local papers; many cities still had two or more dailies at that point. Later, they were riveted by the proceedings of the Senate Watergate Committee, whose hearings were aired live on the three big television networks during the summer of 1973. Graff reports that the average American household watched 30 hours of the hearings, which were also rebroadcast at night by PBS. (...)

Still, “we forget how close Nixon came to surviving Watergate,” Graff told me. “Even at the end of the hearings, there was no guarantee that Nixon was out of office.”

What changed that? The increasing public awareness of the president’s wrongdoing and the coverup. “The sheer accumulation of the lies,” he said, “at a time when the idea that a president could lie to America was unthinkable.”

Fast-forward to today. The House select committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection will hold hearings beginning early next month, some of which will be televised during prime-time hours. Rep. Jamie B. Raskin (D-Md.), a prominent member, predicts that the revelations will “blow the roof off the House” — offering evidence, he promises, of an organized coup attempt involving Donald Trump, his closest allies and the supporters who attacked the Capitol as they tried to overturn the 2020 presidential election results.

I’m willing to believe that the hearings will be dramatic. They might even change some people’s minds. But the amount of public attention they get will be minuscule compared with what happened when the folksy Sen. Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) presided over the Senate Watergate Committee.

Our media environment is far more fractured, and news organizations are far less trusted.

And, in part, we can blame the rise of a right-wing media system. At its heart is Fox News, which was founded in 1996, nearly a quarter-century after the break-in, with a purported mission to provide a “fair and balanced” counterpoint to the mainstream media. Of course, that message often manifested in relentless and damaging criticism of its news rivals. Meanwhile, Fox News and company have served as a highly effective laundry service for Trump’s lies. With that network’s help, his tens of thousands of false or misleading claims have found fertile ground among his fervent supporters.

As Graff sees it, the growth of right-wing media has enabled many Republican members of Congress to turn a blind eye to\* the malfeasance of Team Trump. Not so during the Watergate investigation; after all, it was Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) who posed the immortal question: “What did the president know, and when did he know it?” Even the stalwart\* conservative Sen. Barry Goldwater (Ariz.) was among those who, at the end, managed to convince Nixon that he must resign. “Republican members of Congress understood that they had a unique and important role as the legislative branch to hold the abuses of the executive branch in check,” Graff said. “That freedom of action was made possible because there was no right-wing media ecosystem.”

Not everything was good about the media world of the 1970s. It was almost entirely White and male, barely open to other views or voices. This was long before the democratizing effect of the Internet, which has elevated the ideas of people of color, women and other marginalized groups.

But it was a time when we had a news media that commanded the trust of the general public, a necessity in helping bring Nixon to justice. That, at least during his presidency, was never possible with Trump.

As we remember Watergate, we ought to remember how very unlikely its righteous conclusion would be today.

Richard M. Nixon’s presidency would have survived. (870 words°

## DOCUMENT 6

### Reversing decline of newspapers is essential

Doug HENSLEY, *Amarillo Globe-News*, July 10, 2022

The Amarillo Globe-News is a daily newspaper in Amarillo, Texas. *Doug Hensley is associate regional editor and director of commentary for the Globe-News.*



5 We thought it was bad, but turns out it was really bad.

Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism has recently released its state of Local News 2022 report, and among its sobering findings is Texas is third nationally (behind California and New Jersey) in the number of lost newspaper journalists per capita since 2005.

10 What that means is about a third of the state's newspapers have closed in the past 17 years. According to figures from the Texas Tribune, the state now has 423 papers and 27 Texas **counties** are without a local newspaper. The numbers reflect national trends as about 2,500 papers across the country have closed during the span. More than two newspapers continue to vanish each week.

15 Personally, I worry about this, not just from the livelihood perspective, but what it means to the country. I've written about the importance of local newspapers before, primarily because they are an integral part of our democracy. When they start disappearing, people should be worried because studies show at least three adverse effects follow:

Voter participation declines. We already have challenges here with not enough people taking part in elections. They believe their vote doesn't matter, and a small percentage of the population winds up dictating what will happen. Newspapers help inform citizens about issues, candidates and associated controversies as appropriate.

20 Corruption in government and business increases. When no one's paying attention, it's easier to take advantage of situations. That's not pointing the finger at anyone, only acknowledging this thing called human nature, especially when power is involved. Government entities may not care for the media, but they know they're watching what they do. The public has no better friend than open meetings and open records laws.

25 Local residents pay more in taxes. All three of these are related. If we don't pay attention to the process and engage in the process, well, we will get what we deserve. Journalists are on the front lines making sure readers and viewers know what's going on.

30 While the COVID-19 pandemic wasn't the widespread newspaper death knell many expected it to be, it certainly didn't help as approximately 300 weekly papers shuttered their operations. The irony here is that during the pandemic's grimmest days, when people were socially distancing and stocking up on toilet paper, local papers were the preferred destination for people seeking reliable information about the pandemic.

35 It's a reminder that when a major story takes place with local implications, people typically turn to their local newspaper, which provides objective accounts with depth and context. That's not to take away from other media outlets. They perform important community work as well and can communicate important stories quickly, but there is no substitute for scope and impact. People want to know why something matters and what it means to them.

Making matters worse, especially in the past five to 10 years, has been the rise of misinformation and disinformation. Some of this is influenced by political persuasion, and some of is due to the impact of social media. So-called "news" feeds deliver slanted, incomplete, agenda-driven reports. Rather than verify the salacious story, they instead share it.

40 The media hasn't helped itself here, either. Objectivity, which once was the gold standard of journalism, has been pushed to the sidelines in favor of blending reporter opinion with selected details. On some occasions, it appears reporters know the story they will write before they begin gathering information. Discerning readers see this and call it out. The level of trust they have for the media declines, and rightfully so.

45 Having fewer journalists means difficult decisions are made every day as far as what can (and can't) be covered. If you only have so many people to dedicate to what's going on in a community of any size, it stands to reason more than a few stories are going to slip through the cracks.

According to the report, about 70 million Americans, roughly one-fifth of the nation's population, live in 210 counties without a paper or in 1,560 counties with only one paper, typically a weekly. The term for these areas is "news deserts," where residents reportedly are poorer, older and lacking high-speed broadband access. (...)

50 My hope is more people will continue to trust their local newspaper and invest in it. No doubt, a lot has changed over the years, but they still have much to offer, including content you can't find anywhere else. My thanks to subscribers and all who read what we produce day in and day out. (742 words)



## The Guardian view on public interest: democracy rests on a free press

### Editorial

*Chris Mullin's high court victory is a reminder that journalism must be protected from the baleful gaze of power*

*The Guardian, Sun 27 Mar 2022*

Last week saw a good day for press freedom. An Old Bailey judge ruled that Chris Mullin, the former Labour minister and journalist, would not have to hand over the notes that he made while looking a decade later into the 1974 IRA Birmingham pub bombings. The West Midlands police had applied for an order under terror laws to force Mr Mullin to reveal the sources for his 1986 book, *Error of Judgement*, and the television documentaries he later worked on. He declined to do so, and the court backed him. This was the right decision. Protection of journalists' sources is a cornerstone of the free press in a democracy.

Mr Mullin had, through years of patient digging, exposed significant and important failures by the police that resulted in the wrongful conviction and imprisonment of six innocent men. To prove the guilty men were free, Mr Mullin had to find out who they were. To discover this, he had to give assurances that he would not reveal his sources. The court heard that one bomber had confessed to Mr Mullin and that he had notes from speaking to another alleged bomber. Without giving his word to former members of the IRA, it is hard to see how this miscarriage of justice would have been overturned.

The relatives of the victims of the attack deserve sympathy and understanding. The bombs planted by the IRA in two Birmingham pubs killed 21 people. More than 200 were injured, some of whose lives would never be the same again. None of those responsible have been brought to justice. Mr Mullin did voluntarily give the police some redacted notes, but drew a line when officers demanded more.

While the judge, Mark Lucraft QC, said he had "reasonable grounds for believing" Mr Mullin's notebooks were "likely to be of substantial value" to police, he found in Mr Mullin's favour. This judgment reaffirms the role of the media as a public watchdog in a democratic society. If journalists were compelled to reveal their sources, it would be much more difficult for them to obtain information and to inform the public of serious matters. A not dissimilar judgment was reached by Northern Ireland's lord chief justice in 2020 when he quashed police warrants used to search journalists' homes and workplaces.

Mr Mullin's work had profound effects on the police. Not only was the notorious West Midlands serious crime squad disbanded, but at least 30 other convictions were quashed. His victory last week is a reminder that journalism must be protected from the baleful gaze of power. Journalists are, as a profession, not always held in the highest of regard. But the best among them take huge risks to expose corruption, hypocrisy or deception in high places. Reporters' work, prior to the recognition of such wrongdoing, is not always appreciated – especially by those who have an interest in letting sleeping dogs lie.

Our present media landscape has no shortage of critical opinions. Rarer is it to find pursuers of inconvenient facts. When one comes along, as was the case with Mr Mullin, journalism must be suffered by those in authority so that freedom of expression and the right of the public to know are preserved.

## Democracy is at stake in the midterms. The media must convey that.

*We journalists have to try harder and find new ways to convey to voters how badly things could turn out*

Perspective by Margaret Sullivan

*The Washington Post*, May 15, 2022

I was mesmerized this past week by two astonishing videos, watching them both multiple times.

One showed the stunning Kentucky Derby, where the little-known chestnut colt Rich Strike came out of nowhere to blast past the favorites and win the race by less than a length. The other showed an entire North Carolina beach house tumbling into the ocean, yet another indication of Outer Banks shoreline erosion and, more generally, the world's catastrophic climate crisis.

And I couldn't help but see both as metaphors for the precarious state of democracy in America and the news media's role in helping to save the day or in succumbing to disaster.

Here's what I mean. Since Jan. 6 of last year, a growing chorus of activists, historians and political commentators have spoken of "democracy on the brink" or "democracy in peril." What they mean is that, thanks to a paranoid, delusional and potentially violent new strain in our nation's politics, Americans may not be able to count on future elections being conducted fairly — or the results of fair elections being accepted. And at least some news organizations are taking heed.

*The Washington Post* established a "democracy team" to expand reporting on the nationwide battles over voting rules, access to polls, and efforts to create unfounded doubt about the outcome of elections. At *the New York Times*, soon-to-be executive editor Joe Kahn is talking frankly about the need to investigate efforts to undermine the institutions that uphold democracy. (If they don't, he told the Columbia Journalism Review, "we're not doing our job as a leading news organization.") A number of regional journalists are beginning to push against industry norms to speak more clearly about the threat: *The Philadelphia Inquirer* boldly declined to use the euphemism word "audit" to dignify state Republicans' endless probes for nonexistent voter fraud — essentially the GOP's attempt to cast unwarranted doubt on the results of the 2020 election in Pennsylvania.

But the clearest recognition I've heard so far came last week from a managing editor for CNN. Alex Koppelman is not the editor overseeing the network's political coverage; instead, he supervises business and media news. But CNN gave him a voice to lay out the harsh reality of what the nation is up against, and what we in the media need to do about it.

Koppelman underscored what we should all be clear about by now: that most of the Republican Party publicly touts the lie that Donald Trump won the 2020 election but that the vote was rigged and victory stolen from him. The Republican elected officials who won't back Trump are being driven out of office by his faithful. "Those true believers think there is no way Trump could lose a presidential election," he wrote, "and maybe that no Republican nominee could."

That makes the outcome of this year's midterm elections extraordinarily consequential. If Republicans take one or both houses of Congress, and if Trump or another Trump-inspired Republican runs for president in 2024, Koppelman added, "there may be no stopping the tide." These true believers will see to it that the Republican nominee is declared the winner — even if it takes a coup to do so. (Let's face it: We saw that very thing attempted on Jan. 6 last year when a violent mob stormed the Capitol and demanded the election results be reversed.)

Nor is it just about elections to Congress. Secretary of state elections across the country may prove even more consequential because those officials oversee elections, control the machinery and vastly influence public opinion with their pronouncements about the integrity of the vote. University of Michigan law professor Barbara McQuade pointed out in a Times opinion piece that 27 states will choose a secretary of state this fall, and in 17 of those states — including some key electoral battlegrounds — at least one of the Republican candidates denies that President Biden is the legitimate president.

But do American citizens get it? Do they fully recognize that our precious democracy may soon fall into history's sea? If they think about it at all, have they resigned themselves to what they consider the inevitable and not recognize that preserving that democracy is every bit possible — if unlikely?

45 My sense is that the news media has to try harder — and differently — to get this message across to voters, who are the only ones who can truly protect democracy.

How can news organizations do that? Is it just more of the tried-and-true: good, solid, aggressive reporting? Or is another approach necessary, and if so, what might that be? (...)

50 I've written before about my own ideas: to make the threats to democracy a central part of media coverage, not a sidelight; to stop treating campaigns like so many horse races; to have coverage reflect a sharp focus on government rather than politics; to label this coverage in a defining and memorable way, as news organizations have done with "Spotlight" or "Watchdog" teams in the past; to make it accessible to all by placing at least some of the coverage in front of the paywall; to communicate with audiences plainly and transparently about what this coverage is about and why it's important.

55 The midterm elections may be the most consequential ones in American history. They are less than six months away, and many Americans don't understand how high the stakes really are. There's not much time to fix that.

It will require a come-from-behind sprint like the one Rich Strike pulled off. If we fail, we may see American democracy tumble into oblivion like that North Carolina beach house, never to be seen whole again.

## DOCUMENT 9 - COMPLEMENT

### A la télévision russe, la propagande fait de moins en moins recette

Depuis le début de l'invasion en Ukraine, l'audience des principales chaînes contrôlées par l'Etat s'est effondrée de 25 %. Le nombre d'utilisateurs de la messagerie cryptée Telegram, lui, augmente.

5 Par Emma Collet, Le Monde, 26 août 2022

« OK, nous enverrons des troupes pour protéger les populations russophones. Les pays de l'OTAN vont s'inquiéter ! Berlin ! Paris ! Londres ! Bruxelles ! Sont-ils prêts à brûler sous les frappes de nos missiles ? », s'échauffe Vladimir Soloviev, présentateur vedette de la chaîne Rossiya 1, ce 18 août, en évoquant la proposition de plusieurs pays d'interdire les visas touristiques pour les Russes dans l'Union européenne.

15 La télévision, coutumière de ce genre de provocations dans « une atmosphère propagandiste et patriote », comme le rappelle Françoise Daucé, directrice du Centre d'études des mondes russe, caucasien et centre-européen, est pourtant en perte de vitesse.

20 « Le tapis roulant de la propagande d'Etat russe, qui coûte au budget 100 milliards de roubles par an [1,7 milliard d'euros] a commencé à dysfonctionner, cinglait, lundi 22 août, le journal *The Moscow Times*. Les chaînes de télévision fédérales, qui  
25 parlent de la défaite des "nazis" le matin, de la force de

*l'économie l'après-midi et suggèrent des frappes nucléaires contre l'Europe le soir, perdent rapidement de l'audience au profit d'Internet et des messageries [pour les Russes] à la recherche d'informations alternatives. »*

30 Depuis l'invasion de l'Ukraine le 24 février, l'audience a diminué de 25 % sur les trois principales chaînes fédérales dépendantes du Kremlin, Perviy Kanal, Rossiya 1, et NTV, d'après une étude publiée à Moscou le 19 août par l'institut indépendant Romir. Respectivement créditées de 33,7 %, 25,5 % et 21,1 % des parts d'audience, ces trois chaînes ont régressé à 25,5 %, 23 %, et 16,6 % au mois de juillet – bien que la télévision reste le principal moyen de s'informer pour la population et celui qui inspire encore le plus de confiance, analysait quant à lui le centre Levada, le 16 août.

« Ignorer » la guerre

40 Pour expliquer cette baisse d'audience, Françoise Daucé met en avant le facteur générationnel, les personnes âgées constituant la majeure partie des téléspectateurs. Mais elle souligne aussi l'émergence d'une lassitude pour les programmes officiels quasi exclusivement consacrés aujourd'hui à la guerre en  
50 Ukraine.

	Alors qu'au début du conflit, les Russes cherchaient massivement à s'informer sur « l'opération spéciale » en cours, la chercheuse pointe le fait que l'intérêt pour les émissions de divertissement augmente depuis cet été	
55	tandis que l'audience pour les émissions d'actualité décline. « <i>C'est comme si la population faisait semblant d'ignorer cette guerre, pour prendre ses distances</i> », observe-t-elle.	105
	Cet effondrement profite en premier lieu à Telegram, la messagerie cryptée déjà très populaire en Russie depuis	
60	plusieurs années et qui ne cesse de progresser – en une semaine, du 25 au 31 juillet, le nombre d'utilisateurs russes a grimpé de 23 % à 28 %, selon Romir.	110
	Les informations qui circulent sur la plate-forme, créée	
65	en 2013 par le Russe Pavel Dourov, également fondateur de VKontakte (le Facebook russe), ne sont pas régulées par les autorités. « <i>Telegram n'a jamais donné ses clés de chiffrement au gouvernement russe, ce qui la place de fait dans l'illégalité au vu de la</i>	115
70	<i>législation de 2016</i> [qui oblige les opérateurs de télécommunications à stocker les données des utilisateurs sur le territoire russe] », explique Kevin Limonier, maître de conférences à l'université Paris-VIII et spécialiste du cyberspace russophone.	120
75	L'Etat, aussi, a investi la plate-forme Telegram	125
	Telegram est ainsi devenue une plate-forme de liberté pour les Russes, sans censure, « <i>dans un espace médiatique où peu de canaux d'information alternatifs subsistent à cause de la réglementation</i>	
80	<i>contraignante</i> », relève Kevin Limonier.	130
	La messagerie cryptée n'est cependant pas vierge de désinformation. « <i>Faute de pouvoir l'interdire, l'Etat l'a investie et y déverse aussi sa propagande. Par exemple, les chaînes de [l'ex-président] Dmitri</i>	
85	<i>Medvedev, très actif, et de Ramzan Kadyrov</i> [l'homme fort de la Tchétchénie, impliqué dans la guerre en Ukraine] <i>figurent parmi les plus suivies par la population</i> », rapporte Françoise Daucé.	135
	Difficile de savoir, en effet, quel type de contenu consomment les Russes sur Telegram, car l'application	
90	n'a pas mis à disposition d'outil permettant de mesurer leur audience. Si beaucoup des « chaînes Telegram » concernent le divertissement, nombreuses aussi sont celles consacrées à l'actualité	140
95		145

## More Links and resources

- **Interactive briefing *The Economist***

<https://www.economist.com/interactive/briefing/2022/05/03/press-freedom>

- **Video by *The Economist* on Press Freedom endangered**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojvsUv\\_08Zk&t=2s&ab\\_channel=TheEconomist](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojvsUv_08Zk&t=2s&ab_channel=TheEconomist)

- **The Reporter Without Borders' Index**

<https://rsf.org/en/index>

Their report on the UK <https://rsf.org/en/country/united-kingdom>

Their report on the U.S. <https://rsf.org/en/country/united-states>

- **The State of Local News Report 2022**

<https://localnewsinitiative.northwestern.edu/projects/state-of-local-news/>

- **The Freedom House Report**

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-and-media/2019/media-freedom-downward-spiral>

- **Ipsos (Canada) on falling trust in the media**

<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2022-06/RTDNA%20Report%202022.pdf>

- **Press gazette Trust in the media in the UK**

<https://pressgazette.co.uk/trust-in-news-uk/>

- **2022 Digital News Report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism**

<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/dnr-executive-summary>

- **NPR radio programmes on China cracking down on press freedom**

<https://www.npr.org/2021/12/30/1069027436/china-escalated-its-crackdown-on-press-freedoms-this-year>

<https://www.npr.org/2022/08/18/1118274550/a-small-handful-of-journalists-are-trying-to-keep-press-freedom-alive-in-hong-ko>

- **A look at Press Freedom and Regulation in the U.K.**

<https://www.npr.org/2017/08/06/541877762/a-look-at-press-freedom-and-regulation-in-the-u-k>

<https://www.politics.co.uk/reference/press-regulation/>

## European Media Freedom Act

On 15 September 2021, on the occasion of her [State of the Union Address](#), President Ursula von der Leyen said: *“Information is a public good. We must protect those who create transparency – the journalists. That is why today we have put forward a recommendation to give journalists better protection.”*

As announced by President Ursula von der Leyen in her State of the Union address, the Commission presents today its first-ever Recommendation to strengthen the safety of journalists and other media professionals.

Journalists have been facing an increasing number of attacks over the past years, including assassinations in the most tragic cases. The COVID-19 crisis has made their work even more difficult, with lower incomes, especially for freelancers, and limited access to venues.

To reverse this trend, the Commission lays down actions for Member States to improve the safety of journalists – offline and online. Among others, the Recommendation calls for the creation of independent national support services, including helplines, legal advice, psychological support and shelters for journalists and media professionals facing threats. It also calls for an increased protection of journalists during demonstrations, greater online safety and particular support to female journalists.

Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová, said: *“No journalist should die or be harmed because of their job. We need to support and protect journalists; they are essential for democracy. The pandemic has showed more than ever the key role of journalists to inform us. And the urgent need for public authorities to do more to protect them. Today we ask Member States to take decisive action to make the EU a safer place for journalists.”*

Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, added: *“Media freedom and pluralism lie at the very core of our EU values and we must actively defend them. As the media industry continues to adapt and evolve, so do the threats faced by media professionals when exercising their profession. Online threats are a new reality. Today, we are presenting a Recommendation which is placing the core of our efforts where they are needed most: ensuring the safety of journalists, both online and offline.”*

### Recommendation on the safety of journalists

The Recommendation sets out recommendations, including ones focused on protests and demonstrations; online safety and digital empowerment; female journalists and journalists belonging to minority groups.

More here: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_4632](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_4632)

## Liberté de la presse en France : quel cadre légal ?

### Les fondements de la liberté de la presse en France - Vie Publique, Sept 2020

<https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/19351-liberte-de-la-presse-en-france-quel-cadre-legal>

Principe fondamental des systèmes démocratiques, la liberté de presse est inscrite dans :

- l'article 11 de la [Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen\(nouvelle fenêtre\)](#) du 26 août 1789
- l'article 19 de la [Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme\(nouvelle fenêtre\)](#) du 10 décembre 1948
- l'article 10 de la [Convention européenne des droits de l'Homme\(nouvelle fenêtre\)](#) du 4 novembre 1950.

Avec la [loi du 29 juillet 1881](#), la liberté de la presse en France fait l'objet d'une consécration particulière, au-delà de la reconnaissance générale de la liberté d'expression.

L'article 11 de la Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen dispose que *"tout citoyen peut parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la Loi"*.

La **loi du 29 juillet 1881 sur la liberté de la presse** définit les libertés et responsabilités de la presse française. Elle impose un cadre légal à toute publication, ainsi qu'à l'affichage public, au colportage et à la vente sur la voie publique. Son article 1 dispose que *"l'imprimerie et la librairie sont libres"*.

La loi de 1881 a été modifiée plusieurs fois pour encadrer cette liberté au-delà des règles liées au respect de la personne, la protection des mineurs, la répression de l'injure, la diffamation ou l'atteinte à la vie privée.

Ainsi la **loi Pleven du 1er juillet 1972** relative à la lutte contre le racisme crée un nouveau délit et punit la discrimination, l'injure ou la diffamation à l'égard d'une personne ou d'un groupe de personnes à raison de leur origine ou de leur appartenance ou de leur non-appartenance à une ethnie, une nation, une race ou une religion déterminée. La **loi Gayssot du 13 juillet 1990** sanctionne, en outre, la négation des crimes contre l'humanité perpétrés par le régime nazi.

La lutte contre la diffusion des fausses informations (fake news) s'est traduite par deux lois (**loi organique(nouvelle fenêtre)** et **loi ordinaire** relatives à la manipulation de l'information pendant les périodes de campagne électorale). Promulguées en décembre 2018, ces lois *"anti-fake news"* autorisent un candidat ou un parti à saisir le juge des référés pour faire cesser la diffusion de fausses informations durant les trois mois précédant un scrutin national. Les principales plateformes numériques ont l'obligation de signaler les contenus politiques sponsorisés, en publiant le nom de leur auteur et la somme payée.

Par ailleurs, le Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel obtient le pouvoir de suspendre ou d'interrompre le temps de la période électorale la diffusion d'une chaîne de télévision contrôlée ou placée sous influence d'un État étranger, et portant atteinte aux intérêts fondamentaux de la nation.

En parallèle aux dispositions relatives à la liberté de la presse, la nécessité de lever les soupçons pesant sur **l'indépendance des titres de presse et des journalistes vis-à-vis du pouvoir politique et du secteur économique** a également conduit le législateur à intervenir afin de réguler la concentration de la presse quotidienne française.

**L'ordonnance du 26 août 1944** interdit les concentrations d'organes de presse.

Rendue le 11 octobre 1984, préalablement à la promulgation de **la loi du 23 octobre 1984, dite loi "anti-Hersant"**, une décision du Conseil constitutionnel reconnaît le pluralisme des quotidiens d'information politique et générale comme étant "en lui-même un objectif de valeur constitutionnelle".

La **loi du 1er août 1986** portant réforme du régime juridique de la presse interdit *"à peine de nullité, l'acquisition d'une publication quotidienne d'information politique et générale ou la majorité du capital social ou des droits de vote d'une entreprise éditant une publication de cette nature, lorsque cette acquisition aurait pour effet de permettre à l'acquéreur de détenir plus de 30% de la diffusion totale sur l'ensemble du territoire national des quotidiens d'information politique et générale"*.

La presse sur internet doit-elle faire l'objet d'une régulation spécifique ? Une **étude du Conseil d'État, intitulée "Internet et les réseaux numériques"** et publiée en décembre 1998, confirme que *"l'ensemble de la législation existante s'applique aux acteurs d'internet"*.