

# African Countries in the Epoch of Information Globalization: New Challenges in the New Age

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The article is devoted to the problem of ensuring security of North and Central African countries in the age of informational globalization. Today there is a new up-and-coming social and economic order based on telecommunications. The central place in this new system of public relations belongs to information and communication technologies. One can observe the situation when the creation of the knowledge-based economy is turning into the main strategic priority of the policy of every country, which considers ICT as an effective tool, which can ensure a sustainable social and economic growth. But at the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind that information technologies, when used effectively, are able to destroy existing orders, to overthrow political regimes that used to be rather stable and influential. Based on case studies of North African countries, authors show key instruments that have been used in those countries in order to manage public opinion. Among those instruments authors highlight: 1) aiming for bad expectations which entails the notion of an impending disaster and mass depression; 2) substitution of definitions which supposes that in order to create positive images of the opposition that resist the governmental forces, Western mass media calls militants and terrorists “rebels”; 3) implementation of mass dissatisfaction which means the situation when popular bloggers or representatives of opposition movements begin to promote the dissatisfaction of legal power; 4) use of biased materials. In this way, authors conclude that the effective resistance in the information warfare strictly depends on the presence of a national idea on the one hand and on the level of the informational culture of the society on the other. The last point seems to be the key element that can guarantee the survival of the State, especially if it pretends to pursue self-reliant political line based on its national interests and cultural values.

*Keywords:* information policy, information security, information society, African countries, information technologies.

## Introduction

It becomes evident that today there is a new, up-and-coming social and economic order based on telecommunications, and networking and data processing have become key features of this new way of life. The central place in this new system of public relations belongs to mod-

ern information and communication technologies (ICT). For this reason today almost every nation considers ICT as an effective instrument that is able to ensure sustainable social and economic growth and to solve a great amount of challenges. African countries do the same thing and they begin to pay increased attention to the problem of the proliferation of ICT in their national policy. But at the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind that ICT, when used effectively, are able to destroy existing orders, to overthrow political regimes that used to be rather stable and influential. That is why it seems very important not only to create favorable conditions for the development of the ICT sector in a country but also to think about how to defend national interests in the field of information. In fact, our “dependence on digital systems means that increasingly we face the question of how we can trust them... How do we know that the computer is behaving as we expect it to or that an e-mail from our colleague is actually from that colleague?” [1, p. 46].

Thus, it becomes clear why, in the annual report published by the International Telecommunication Union in 2015, a new indicator appeared for the measurement of ICT readiness of different countries, which measures the level of cybersecurity by region.

According to the data provided by experts of the International Telecommunication Union, North America has the highest level of cybersecurity, followed by Australia, India, Brazil, Scandinavian countries, the rest of Europe, China and Russia. The vast majority of African countries are located in the last positions of the ranking, which bear witness to the very low level of cybersecurity in Africa [2]. But even well-developed states — despite the well-thought-out national policies aimed at the increased level of their cybersecurity — from time to time fall victim to different cyberattacks. This last point gives us an opportunity to conclude that “today, it is commonplace to say that effective cybersecurity is more of a dream than a reality” [3, p. 25].

### **States of Sub-Saharan Africa in the Age of the Information Globalization: the Possibility of the Breakthrough**

Information and communication technologies are rapidly changing the social and political landscape in the world. African countries have undertaken a number of attempts aimed at the creation of the ICT-sector and well-developed ICT-infrastructure during the past 15 years. But on their way to the information society, those countries faced a number of serious difficulties, most important of which being a huge digital gap between developed nations and African ones.

Global dominance of Western countries in the world information and communication space gives us an opportunity to conclude that nowadays huge information arrays spread very unequally. Thus, we can see all signs of the *information disbalance*, which should be defined as the unequal distribution of information and ICT around the world. Finally, one can observe the following situation: information, big data and ICT are mostly located in the most developed countries of the world, which accumulate information and new knowledge and then distribute it to the rest of the world. After the advent of the Internet, this disbalance has become much more significant. Therefore, there appears a special term — the “digital divide”, which “refers to the gap between individuals, households, business and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regards both to their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and

to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities. The digital divide reflects various differences among and within countries” [4].

In Russian historiography there are very few works on the topic of Information Globalization in Africa, however, African researchers are increasingly turning to this topic. Among them: Aguiton Ch. et Cardon D., *Militants et TIC*, Verschave F.-X., *Les télécommunications entre bien public et marchandise*; Bessette G., *Communication et participation communautaire*; Ouédraogo S., *Dynamiques et rôles économiques du secteur informel des TIC en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre: cas du Burkina Faso, du Cameroun et du Sénégal*.

This term is closely related to the so-called “knowledge gap hypothesis” — a theory that appeared in the 1970s due to the further strengthening of disparity between those people who have access to the information and those who don't have a possibility to use global information resources. This theory “draws attention to the fact that the information society and each new medium that is developed have the tendency to increase differences in society: on one hand, the part of the population with high income and with more education, who can more easily not only gain access to the new technology, but also use it and understand the available information; and, on the other hand, the part of the population with lower socio-economic status and lower levels of education, usually the majority, who have little or no knowledge at all about current issues and do not demonstrate a particular concern in overcoming this lack of information and knowledge. This means that it is not only the financial capability to obtain the new technology that determines access and use, being able to use it is equally important in gaining access to information and knowledge. So the gap in knowledge tends to increase rather than decrease with the development of new technologies in society” [5, p. 29].

One can try to explain the nature of the information disbalance in general and the digital divide in particular by the fact that the Internet and other technological innovations have their origins in the West, mostly in the United States. Moreover, global transnational media corporations with headquarters in the United States and other Western countries are still dominating modern information space. They have at their disposal a great number of mass media that circulate among different countries in a number of languages. As such, the mass media, which can be characterized as global but which mainly belong to Western owners, become very effective instruments in the expansion of Western views to other parts of the world.

Herewith, it is necessary to point out that this challenge is not a new one. In 1973, in Tampere (Finland), there was an International conference on the problems of the international exchange of TV programmes. Participants of that conference underlined the necessity of doing as much as possible in the way of making world communication flows the double-sided ones. In the meantime, a one-sided information flow from Western countries to the rest of the world took place. Unfortunately, the situation has not been improved nowadays. On the contrary, after the appearance of the Internet, the information disbalance became even more significant.

Afterwards, this problem was described in researches of some scholars. For example, Tapio Varis, the professor of the University of Tampere, wrote an article in 1986 entitled “The International Flow of Television Programmes”. In this article, he compares the current situation in the field of the exchange of Television Programmes to the one-way road where the United States and other Western countries remain the only major distributors of information [6].

Charles Ess, a specialist in the field of computer and media communications, expresses the same point of view. In 2004, in his report entitled “Can the Local Reshape the Global? Ethical Imperatives for Humane Intercultural Communication Online — Views from the Centers and the Margins”, he points out that “contrary to the common hypothesis that ICT is culturally neutral, a large number of studies have shown that ICTs originating from Western cultures, especially North American, carry, and in a certain way promote, their cultural values and preferences in terms of communication. According to Charles Ess, this is apparent in the many ways these values and preferences enter into conflict with the cultures that receive the technologies, especially indigenous Asian, Latin and Arab. The resulting conflicts translate into sometimes-spectacular failures in well-intentioned efforts to overcome poverty and marginalization. Ess goes even further by pointing out the danger of “computer-assisted colonization” that may be the product of a naïve plan to “connect the world” but does not acknowledge the risks proven to have a negative impact on domestic cultures and values by the careless introduction of ICTs” [7, p.26, 27].

Thereby, one can observe very curious situations. Information technologies initially were aimed at the simplification of the access to the information and knowledge from any part of the Earth. But indeed, only well-developed countries really benefit from the use of those technologies.

African countries did not establish an appropriate financial and technological base sufficient for the creation of well-developed and self-reliant African information and communication space. In order to reach the current level of the development of the well-developed states, African countries were forced to seek financial and technological aid from more-developed Western partners for developing their ICT-sector, which forced them to undertake appropriate economic and political reforms aimed at preserving their influence in the region. Such reforms aimed, first of all, at the creation of favourable conditions for the activity of foreign investors. This process, that was called a “*structural reconstruction of the economy*” of African countries, initially emerged as controlled liberalization, but very soon it transformed into the uncontrolled spontaneous process that caused the mass privatization of almost the entire African ICT industry. And Western telecommunication corporations, such as French Telecom, Vodafone and some others, have become the majority shareholders of African telecommunication companies.

Nowadays only South Africa, Mauritius, the Seychelles and partly some countries of North Africa are ready for integration into the global information and communication space. But nevertheless all African countries pay increased attention to the problem of the development of the ICT sector, despite of the unstable political situation, permanent armed conflicts, poverty and other economic and social problems.

So does the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), second largest country in Africa with the population of about 80 million people. World Bank is the main supporter of the progress in DRC. Since 2014, the country has been implementing the fifth stage of the Backbone Centrafricain program (CAB5) which involves the expansion of the geographical area of Internet users, the introduction of digital technologies and the creation of the necessary infrastructure.

There is no specific law on the use of ICT in the DRC. This fact creates certain problems in the field of communications, although they are indirectly mentioned in the law of 16 October 2002 on Telecommunications [8]. It mainly contains regulations on the private use of ICT. In the DRC there is also an “emasculatation of information”. Censorship allows

information in a docked form when we speak about events of a large scale, such as protests of opposition, spontaneous demonstrations and etc. So on 19 January 2015 the country's authorities ordered to interrupt the Internet connection of all provider-companies, as well as the SMS service because of the protests caused by the new electoral law. Soon after that the connection was restored, but only for government officials and bankers. All the rest could use the restored connection only in 20 days. The Speaker of the DRC government Lambert Mende stated that the Internet and the signal "Radio France International" were blocked "because of the good motives, which are connected with controlling of the protests that caused victims and robbery" [9, p. 10]. At the same time, providers and their customers expressed their dissatisfaction about blocking of communications and threatened to sue the infringers of human rights.

The media repressions are often the focus of attention of international non-governmental organizations that defend human rights. Because of the fact that journalists are being persecuted for their publications, they refrain from frank comments on delicate topics or they wait until the international agencies voice a particular political plot. To share their opinion about events, the Congolese journalists choose social networks Facebook, Twitter or an application WhatsApp. At the same time, the initiators of distribution prefer to remain anonymous.

The interests of journalists are represented by the trade union organization "National Union of Congolese Press" and the human rights NGO "Journalists in Danger". However, they have little influence on the solution of the problem of freedom of speech in the DRC.

The media sector of the DRC, as well as the independent Supreme Council for Media under the chairmanship is supervised by the Ministry of Mass Media and communications. Both agencies pursue a policy of strict control over the activities of the mass media, and if they do not comply with the established norms, they resort to an administrative resource, closing down newspapers, radio and TV programs. Such infringements as inciting ethnic strife and ethnic hatred, insulting public and political figures, provoking and inciting to armed conflicts, violence, etc. can serve as a pretext for such actions. Therefore in November 2016, under the pretext of a "technical glitch", the broadcasting of "Radio France International" was stopped and was not resumed.

The "Media war" of the authorities can be identified as a measure aimed at creating a safe climate in the country, because of the fact that the common feature of the Congolese press is the non-compliance with moral principles and political ethics. The DRC authorities have repeatedly urged the mass media to restrain emotions, smooth and not incite ethnic hatred and conflicts, but not all of this has been really complied. Journalists were often inclined to "inflate" conflicts that flared up between separate factional groups and certain parties. This led to scandalous publications, which were generally ordered, confusing a Congolese reader. The politically educated Congolese were skeptical about this, and the bulk of the nearly 80 million populations took for granted what they were told in the mass media.

The information environment of the DRC plays a great role in Congolese society and is specific enough [10]. The country authorities actively use mass media for further their own approaches to internal and external problems. The media sphere of the DRC has quite large-scale, in relation to Africa, array of information sources. There are about 200 newspapers, more than 350 radio stations, 100 TV channels. The DRC has sunk of the rating "Press freedom" for 2016, which was composed by the nongovernmental organization "Reporters Without Borders", from 150 place to 152 one.

Because of the desperate poverty not every Congolese has an access to the mass media. That is why, the population uses so-called “people’s radio” bandying sensational messages leaving behind an enormous stream of data. Each of 26 provinces of the DRC has a radio station and a TV channel. Some provinces, for example Manyema, count 8 TV channel, 22 radio stations. The biggest number of mass media concentrates in the capital of the country in Kinshasa: 45 TV channels, 40 radio stations and 14 newspapers [11].

The radio is the most available for Congolese population. It broadcasts in French and 4 national languages: Lingala, Swahili, Tshiluba and Kikongo. In efficiency and quality of broadcasting information leads the radio station “Okapi” supported by the UN Mission in the DRC and financed by the USA, Switzerland and European Union. According to public-opinion poll, this radio is on the top in the DRC at audience confidence level. Another popular radio station is French “Radio France Internationale” (RFI) which covers 69 % of the DRC territory.

The state TV channel RTNC that has correspondent offices throughout the country outstands among other TV channels. Another popular television broadcasting company is “Digital Congo” and “Antenne-A”. Although there are about 50 TV companies in Kinshasa, they are not qualitative and they do not have a thematic variety mostly because of the lack of information and because of the air time that is full of musical entertainment programs and religious ones. The advertising, low-budget TV series of back-yard production or programmes of religious content are also popular. No more than 2 hours are devoted to news. In provinces the volume of broadcasting is lower than in Kinshasa. For example, there are in total 8–10 TV channels in economic capital of the DRC (Lubumbashi, Katanga Province).

Print media is presented by great spectrum of newspapers. But only 4 % of the population read the press. It can be explained by the fact that a newspaper costs one US dollar, and this is a living wage of more than the half of the country population. Taking into account low purchasing capacity of the population, editors carry out a gratis latest edition for those who wish to read which passes up to 50 times from hand to hand. A good source of information is daily bulletins of small circulation of Congolese news agencies: governmental “Agence Congolaise de Presse” (ACP), and private “Agence Presse Associee” (APA).

The Internet is used by only 3,8 % of citizens. It is 7 million users [12]. In general, these users are prosperous Congolese of big cities. The main users of Congolese segment of the Internet are representatives of national Diasporas in other countries. Not every Congolese can afford to use “international net”, as the small pack of the Internet costs 10 dollars per month. Furthermore, the Internet speed in the DRC is one of the slowest in Africa; some provinces don’t have the Internet at all.

Thus, regardless of the fact that African countries have dependent on the West since colonial times, economic stagnation, and also in the view of unstable military-political situation, the process of implementation of ICT on the continent will be inevitably developed. Speaking about African countries it should be mentioned that they are unlikely to solve their problems of creation of new technologic information systems independently, without help of western countries.

From this perspective, both ICT and mass media play the role of the “Trojan Horse” when, together with a nice external shell, non-Western societies get Western standards, values and way of life. But if political leaders of various states refuse to follow the main



stream of Western foreign politics, information technologies are used to create negative images of the leaders, both inside and outside the country, and protest movements standing for their immediate resignation get organized as it has been demonstrated on the example of North African countries.

### **“Tweeter Revolutions” in the Northern African Countries: the Opposite Side of the Information Globalization**

The active use of information technologies in the organization of protests during “The Arab Spring” became a widely recognized fact. Internet, satellite TV, local radio and printed media have stimulated the revolutions in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and protests in other Arabic countries which caused the significant enlargement of Afro-Asian instability zone. Those movements are known as the Arab Spring, but they are also known as ‘Tweeter revolutions,’ which witnessed the role of social media in the escalation of social tension. Twitter and Facebook, which are rather popular in Africa, served as a platform where one could find the call for organizing mass protests.

Wael Ghonim, a Google marketing executive, confirmed this point. In one interview with CNN, when he was speaking about the Egyptian revolution, he pointed out: “this revolution started online. This revolution started on Facebook. This revolution started in June 2010 when hundreds of thousands of Egyptians started collaborating content. We would post a video on Facebook. It would be shared by 50,000 people on their walls within a few hours. I always said that if you want to liberate a society just give them the Internet. If you want to have a free society, just give them the Internet” [13, p. 39].

The publication of information, either on different websites or on Twitter and Facebook, make it possible to involve a huge audience all over the world. As such, we can see that social media can be used as effective instruments for managing public opinion. They pursue three main goals: involvement, communication and mobilization. Simple information of the population is not a mission of social media, so posts and tweets become very effective weapons in information warfare.

Furthermore, it is necessary to remember that the owners and headquarters of Twitter and Facebook are located in the United States, so they organize their work according to American rules and regulations, and they do not obey the legislature of a country where they act and do not filter the content. Additionally, there is a possibility that representatives of Western special services can use the opportunities of social media in order to rouse mass dissatisfaction and call for mass protests. By using different nicks, it is completely impossible for ordinary Internet users to identify a true owner of a Facebook or Twitter account.

So one can conclude that ICT should be considered the “part of many recent democratic transitions, whether these transitions take the form of sudden surges in social protest and rapid political turnover, or incremental improvements in the effectiveness of democratic institutions and practices. The leaders of social movements have used ICTs such as mobile phones and the Internet to mobilize public opinion, organize mass protests, project their demands onto national and international agendas, and challenge authoritarian regimes” [14, p. 39].

Political leaders of North African countries realized the threat that came from social media. For example, in March 2011, access to the Internet was blocked in Egypt for three days, but it was completely impossible to improve the situation.

However, social media and the Internet are not the only instruments of information warfare. The second tool is represented by Western mass media and the information warfare against Libya represents the most demonstrative example of its role in the crash of a regime that used to be rather stable and influential in Africa. One should remember that Muammar Gaddafi had welcomed the delegates of the EU-Africa summit to Tripoli in November 2010, but very soon (within two months), he's completely lost his positive image in Africa.

Western countries supported the adoption of the resolution of the Security Council, which gave them an opportunity to help opposition in Libya. But in order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to create a negative image of Muammar Gaddafi as a bloody tyrant who cruelly punished peaceful demonstrators. The opposition in Libya, on the contrary, was represented as the only force which it would be possible to negotiate with. This was the main task of Western mass media. At the same time, Western mass media had to convince the public opinion that the only chance to solve the Libyan crisis was a military confrontation with Gaddafi's regime. This is why the bombing of Libyan territory by the aviation of NATO was considered the only solution to quickly settle the conflict and end the civil war.

They tried either to conceal the death of innocent civilians due to the bombing of the Libyan territory by the aviation of NATO or to blame Gaddafi's regime for these military crimes. Moreover, publications of Western mass media influenced governmental forces as well, which were misinformed about the real potential of the opposition in order to spread panic among Gaddafi's supporters.

It is not possible to say that all tasks of informational warfare against Libya have been solved, but the negative image of Muammar Gaddafi was created, and he found himself completely alone in the face of military rebellion.

The current analysis of the informational flow gives an opportunity to point out the most common methods used both by Western mass media and by social media in order to manage public opinion:

1. Aiming for bad expectations entails the notion of an impending disaster, approaching economic collapse, different fears and mass depression so that the circumstances in the country are viewed negatively. Bad expectations accumulate and can cause mass protest, panic, disarray and distemper.
2. The substitution of definitions: in order to create positive images of the opposition that resist the governmental forces, Western mass media calls militants and terrorists "rebels" or "fighters for freedom". Thus, an artificial phantom of the so-called moderate opposition that fights for freedom in different countries and is exposed to bombing by governmental forces is created. The substitution of definitions represents a programming tool. First, the recipient just hears a false definition or explanation of any situation; then he or she gets used to it; and finally, it causes the demolition of his or her own understanding of reality. He or she begins to believe in what they talk about on television, even if initially he or she had a completely different point of view.



3. Both in mass media and social media there is a mass dissatisfaction being implemented. The wide range of think tanks represented by popular bloggers, politicians or representatives of opposition movements begin to promote the dissatisfaction of legal power and highlight different negative themes. Such television programmes and talk shows make one think that everybody criticizes the government — that there is a growing mass dissatisfaction that may cause a protest movement and coup d'états. After such preparation, it becomes very simple to manage minds of ordinary people. Initially, they create an artificial reality — a phantom of mass protest. Then, when people begin to believe it, they provoke a protest movement itself.
4. The use of biased materials is another point. Western propaganda is mostly based on the suffering of ordinary people, deaths of women and children. Thus, Western mass media broadcasts the materials where somebody bombs civil targets. But at the same time, Western mass media usually do not provide any argument that governmental forces are involved in such grave war crimes.

Taking into account that these materials are distributed by very influential Western mass media, which are well known all over the world, people begin to believe what they talk about on American CNN, British BBC or German ARD.

As the result one can come to conclusion that the greatest challenge of the up-to-date informational age is the point that even honest and well-educated persons are kept in a state of misunderstanding by the global media, which follows the principle: if you cannot convince somebody, misinform him or her.

### **Evolution of the Arabian Mass Media After the Crisis of “The Arab Spring”**

Revolutionary changes in Egypt and Tunisia, protests in other Arabic countries have affected the media landscape directly, contributed to the emergence of dozens of new independent television stations, newspapers and websites on a wave of revolution. The Egyptian media scene underwent reform in 2017. Before the beginning of “The Arab Spring” Egypt had no regulatory framework for private media. The society expected that the transition from authoritarian rule should lead to the emergence of a more open national public sphere capable of controlling domestic politics and bringing politicians to justice, paying constant attention to local issues and becoming a place for the formation of public opinion.

But as the revolutions and protest movements had been subsiding, giving way to transitional political processes, it became obvious that these hopes weren't justified. The role of the new mass media had been also changing.

Al-Jazeera and other transnational Arabic-language broadcast stations have played the key role in spreading protest from one country to another in the late 2010 and in the 2011. Their broadcasts triggered massive shift involving in local conflicts the whole population of the Arab world promoting solidarity and Arab unity. At the beginning, Al-Jazeera was perceived as a virtual Arab public domain. The TV company had a great clout and it was taking on great importance in the Arab world. But as the revolution processes developed Al-Jazeera switched from reflecting real events to influencing directly the view-

ers' attitudes. Reflection of the Arab spring events by this broadcasting company allowed determining the level of its objectiveness and political bias. For example, the revolution in Egypt was covered in details. It was characterized by sympathy with the rebels and support of that revolution. Sometimes it is considered by the Egyptian population to be a substantial contribution to the Mubarak's regime fall. At the same time Al-Jazeera is accused of prejudicial treatment to Gaddafi's regime during the coup d'état in Libya. Critics of this company more active put the blame on it for scarce coverage of the events in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Oman. Rendering of the Arab spring events showed biased attitude of Al-Jazeera which defended interests of its state patrons. It has become evident that this company is controlled by Qatar's government political stances. Head of this network is a member of the Qatar royal family and acts in its interests.

The role which Al-Jazeera played in the Arab crisis showed the world how the mass media influence increased. Skillful use of this instrument increased its position in the world society and other states had to reckon with foreign policy of this "small state". Other countries faced the question whether classical partnership schemes between news media and policy within the national frameworks were out of date.

Seven years after the beginning of the Arab spring in spite of the announced region shift towards democratization there were a lot of obstacles on the way to development of traditional mass media. In most of Arab countries such obstacles include a lot of social and political taboos, propaganda of the political power and journalists self-censorship. However, emergence of new means of communication and information complicated the situation.

In Tunisia the country-prophet of the Arab spring and in country on which the West stake on most of all in the matter of building modern democracy traditional mass media still don't manage to get rid of past vices. Independent research shows that most of the time is devoted to the government and main political parties. Government officials receive 32 % of the time and parliamentary parties get 56 %. A ruling party "Nidaa Tounes" has 21,52 % of the broadcasting time. Time which is allocated for other political forces and representatives of the civil society doesn't exceed 10 % [15].

Authorities of post-revolutionary Tunisia take steps to liberalize and promote personal initiative in the mass media domain. Particularly a new policy framework has been established for improving the quality of information and its diversity. Tunisia's new Constitution, adopted in January 2014 and considered the most liberal in the Arab world, contains numerous guarantees of media independence.

During the Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution in 2011 the Internet, particularly the social network Facebook, has played a special role. This country was deprived of political opposition and media criticizing the authorities during the reign of President Ben Ali, so for quite a long time social networks were the only possible sources to reveal the regime and atrocities of his police system. Such active usage of the social media all over the national territory during the time preceding the Arab Spring was caused by the diffusion of information technology and a literacy, which had been successfully carried out for a few decades [16, p. 24].

The online activity in Tunisia has changed right after Ben Ali was overthrown. New political configuration caused the replacement of anarchy followers by organized collective actors who were able to influence the country's fate. The society polarized rapidly as the revolutionary enthusiasm had been replaced by tight political struggle for the large-

scale reforms, distribution of power, and country's identity. The online activity became a second priority as if social networks had carried out their historical mission and were changing the situation. Henceforward, they became a "battlefield" where "public information" was accompanied by disinformation, rumors, insults and slander [17, p. 197].

Nowadays only several independent new media sources can be characterized as free ones. These are Nawaat and Inkyfada websites, several small radio stations which present beyond a national capital. Such mass media manage to disseminate information including sensitive subjects and pressing problems, e. g., — water scarcity in some regions of Tunisia. They also are not afraid of talking about corruption in authority.

Algeria has been spared by the Arab Spring largely because it had suffered a civil war in their recent history (1991–1999). Algerian military guards, experienced in the armed struggle against Islamic terrorism, manage to keep the situation under control. However, the counterpart of such control has been political authority hegemony over the mass media: censorship, pressure exerted on bloggers and journalists, cases of arrest and even murder of the latter.

These conditions are not the best ones for the development of free press and new technologies. Algeria is considered having lack of media penetration and belatedly development of ICT. Only a small number of the population can get access to the modern sources of the media: at least 18% of Algerians have a regular access to the Internet [18, p. 5].

That is the reason why social networks in Algeria, as in other Arab countries, haven't been used as instruments for free expression and a call for collective action. Mobile network 3G was widespread only in 2013, therefore, social networks most likely will play a very prominent role in the future media landscape of Algeria. The Radio Algérienne, the state radio broadcasting organization, controls all the radio stations except the ones which broadcast exclusively via the Internet.

Algerian authorities are trying to liberalize the mass media despite the difficult situation in the region. In 2011 the government let broadcasting private TV channels and in 2014 let them authorize in the country. It strengthened the competition for the internal audience in spite of the fact that international satellite channels remain the most popular. According to a new law of 2012 jail terms for pressing crimes were abolished but still authorities often use fines. If such a penalty charge is not paid, this may provoke even imprisonment.

In addition to the principal printed editions, each of whom has its own website, such media as *Algerie Focus* in French and *Algeria Times* have appeared recently. Nevertheless, a cybercrime law of 2009 allows blocking websites if they encroach "national security" and violate "public order requirements" and also impose state supervision obligations on service providers and internet-cafes. Therefore, online media environment is in a similar situation with the press and television in Algeria, so the government strictly controls it. In 2016 the government temporarily blocked the access to Facebook, Twitter and other social networks during national exams in secondary schools in order to prevent cheating.

Royal authority of Morocco overcame the "turbulent" Arab spring, using reforms and abatements which, however, did not reduce powers of the king. Although this very demand, which is the limitation of the authoritarian king's power, was one of the principal demands during the protests in 2011. The protest movement which is known as a movement of the 20 of February, began on Facebook and was organized, to a large extent, by digital media.

Before the Arab spring started authorities of Morocco had treated Internet quiet indifferently, taking into account a high level of illiteracy in the country and a range of obstacles on the way of the access of this technology to remote parts of the country. The government considered that the mass media are not popular and do not have enough influence. Government censorship controlled the most demanded and available television and radio. The traditional mass media work under the strict control of the state. Despite the low level of literacy and problems with the access to the printed and online media, they are controlled through governmental systems or with the help of private owners who are close to the government. As for the printed media the government uses the financial pressure and tough legal system in order to push the opposition printed editions to closure or bankruptcy.

The government of Morocco has taken some positive steps in recent years, such as the adoption of a new press Code in June 2016. But a number of problematic provisions in the Penal code continue to pose a clear threat to Internet freedom in the country.

Access to the Internet in Morocco has been steadily expanding in recent years. The coverage of the Internet grew from 21 % in 2007 to 56.8 % in 2014, in 2017 this figure rose to 58.3 % of the population [19].

Currently, the access to the Internet is available to educated and urban segments of the population of Morocco, there is a serious gap between urban and rural areas in coverage of the network. In the country where the illiteracy rate exceeds 40 %, cyber activists are exclusively young, educated middle-class people. Since 2007, Moroccan public activists have been vigorously using the Internet to inform the public, expose the authorities, coordinate and mobilize supporters.

The laws of Morocco provide with serious penalties for infringements in the sphere of information, for everything that will be considered disrespecting for religion and the king or harmful for the country from the point of view of its ruling elite.

Threats of persecution, arrest, fines and suspension of activities, as well as economic pressure from advertisers, who are close to the monarchy, enforce journalists to practice self-censorship. In the country, where the traditional media operate under the strict control of the government, the Internet remains the only place for people to create a public domain where they could communicate and form public opinion.

The situation with the freedom of the Internet in Morocco began to change after the “Arab Spring”. The state witnessed the danger emanating from it and undertook measures. The authorities learned to use the Internet potential for their own purposes and keep it under control. The blocking of unwanted sites has been initiated (which was not from 2009), and some bloggers received prison sentences. Many Internet users and cyber activists have found it best to resort to self-censorship, taking into consideration media repressions in Morocco.

The history of the Internet in Morocco shows that the exclusiveness of the Internet has ended and more traditional institutions has not only won the battle for power in cyberspace, but seem to have managed to secure their control over it. Existing authoritarian regime in Morocco and the Arab world are now committed to limiting the democratic potential of the Internet so that it control network and prevent the Internet from serving as an instrument for self-organization and social mobilization.

Today governments of several Arab countries control the Internet. Blocking and filtering, cyber-attacks against critics of the regime, strict laws and arrests of online activists,

using pro-government manipulators of online discussions, prosecution of mediators — Internet providers, webmasters, moderators, are the most commonly used types of Internet control.

Nevertheless, during the “Arab spring” in the three Maghreb countries, Internet activists gave impetus to new civic journalism. They began by documenting the undignified living conditions of the population and calling for change. Moroccan and Algerian cyber activists are in more severe conditions, under the control of the authorities, which sometimes turns into a prison, and even murder. Unlike Morocco and Algeria cyber activists in Tunisia enjoy relative freedom.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, one can raise the question: how is it possible to overcome the challenge that has been mentioned above? Of course, a State can: “interfere with digital networks using many tactics, with various levels of severity: online, by shutting down political websites or portals; offline, by arresting journalists, bloggers, activists, and citizens; by proxy, through controlling Internet service providers, forcing companies to shut down specific websites or denying access to disagreeable content; and, in the most extreme cases, shutting down access to entire online and mobile networks” [20, p. 8].

Nevertheless it is clear such severe measures are not able to solve the problem. In place of the website that has been shut down, a new one can appear, and the arrest of an oppositional leader may cause a surge in mass protests. Thus, it seems much more important to work with audiences, both foreign and local, in order to inform the people about policies of the country and to ensure the support of its citizenry. Furthermore, it is mass media that should help the State in the creation of a positive image, especially in the eyes of foreign audiences.

From another perspective, it is necessary to continue strengthening national informational potential by involving talented journalists and presenters who show impartial facts concerning state policy to the citizenry and bring to light false materials produced by Western “mind managers” aimed at the further marginalization and weakening of society in any country and the creation of the contradiction between the nation and the government.

Finally, success in information warfare can be achieved only in case of ordinary people going on the Web and expressing their points of view and their confidence in governmental policy. But the problem is that those people who support the State power usually behave rather passively and very seldom take up an active civic stand. Besides, usually they belong to different strata and have nothing in common between each other. So initially it is necessary to try to consolidate those people around some common interests and values that can be entitled the “National Idea”.

The National Idea can be reflected in the Concept of the Ideological Policy of the State, where basic ideological principal, culture values and historical traditions of every nation, which reside in this or that country, are determined. Interests of minorities should be determined in such a concept as well. Finally, mutual trust between the State and the vast majority of its citizenry should be established. At the same time, the State should think how to improve informational culture of the population. In other words, people should learn how to polarize in different informational flows and not submit to the influ-

ence of mind managers who widely use the possibilities of information and communication technologies.

It is necessary to mention that only the comprehensive support of a policy of a country by its population can guarantee the survival of the State in the modern world, especially if the State pretends to pursue an independent, self-reliant foreign policy based on its national priorities, interests and cultural values. If there were no support from the citizenry, the informational flow coming from the West might entail fatal consequences. Unfortunately, there are a lot of examples in history of how information broadcasted by the Western mass media affected the downfall of the political leaders of different countries, and it is necessary to think about such threats very seriously. We should learn how to withstand these challenges, because it is the only way to reduce the influence of informational flow coming from the most powerful and influential Western media, which one should consider the guarantee of successful resistance in information warfare.

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### Африканские страны в эпоху информационной глобализации: новые вызовы в новом веке

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Статья посвящена проблеме обеспечения безопасности стран Северной и Центральной Африки в эпоху информационной глобализации. Сегодня формируется новый социально-экономический порядок, основанный на телекоммуникациях. Центральное место в новой системе общественных отношений принадлежит информационно-телекоммуникационным технологиям (ИКТ). Наблюдается ситуация, когда создание экономики, основанной на знании, становится стратегическим приоритетом политики любого государства, которое рассматривает ИКТ в качестве эффективного инструмента, способного обеспечить устойчивый социально-экономический рост. Но в то же самое время следует иметь в виду, что информационные технологии в случае своего эффективного использования способны разрушить устоявшийся порядок и свергнуть политические режимы, которые считались достаточно стабильными и влиятельными. Опираясь на сравнительный анализ стран Северной Африки, авторы демонстрируют ключевые инструменты, которые были использованы в этих странах с целью управления общественным мнением. К таким инструментам авторы относят: 1) таргетирование плохих ожиданий, которое означает нагнетание в СМИ скорого экономического коллапса и массовой депрессии; 2) подмену понятий, выражающуюся в том, что для

создания позитивного имиджа борющихся с правящим режимом вооруженных формирований западные СМИ зачастую именуют боевиков повстанцами и т. п.; 3) культивацию массового недовольства, которая выражается в том, что популярные блогеры или представители оппозиционных движений начинают популяризировать массовое недовольство правящим режимом, что создает впечатление, что все критикуют правительство; 4) использование тенденциозно подобранных материалов. В конечном итоге авторы приходят к выводу о том, что эффективное противостояние в информационной войне зависит от наличия национальной идеи, с одной стороны, и от уровня информационной культуры общества — с другой. Только в этом случае возможно выживание государства в современном мире, особенно если оно пытается проводить независимую внешнюю политику, основанную на своих национальных интересах и культурных ценностях.

*Ключевые слова:* информационная политика, информационная безопасность, информационное общество, африканские страны, информационные технологии.

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