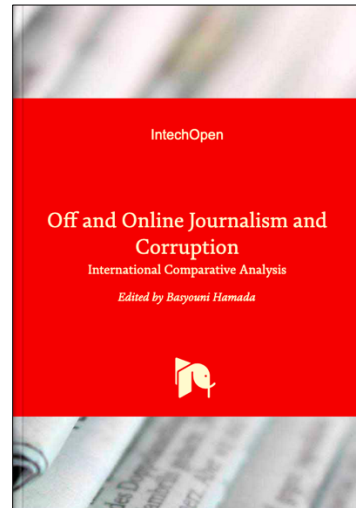


Basyouni Hamada and Saodah Wok (Eds.), **Off and Online Journalism and Corruption: International Comparative Analysis**, London, UK: IntechOpen, 2020, 188 pp., online book.

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Recently, Hanitzsch (2019) suggested that a fundamental problem of studies on journalism is that the internationalization of this field of study is practically confined to the contexts of the Western world. By extending the analysis of the investigative role of journalism in the Arab world (Sudan, Maghreb, and the Middle East) and sub-Saharan Africa (Malawi, Burkina Faso, and Mali), with an incursion in Cuba, **Off and Online Journalism and Corruption: International Comparative Analysis** comprises a differentiated study that seeks to contribute value to one of the most consolidated fields within journalism studies—the field that encompasses the triadic relations between corruption journalism and democracy.



This book, which was edited by Basyouni Hamada and Saodah Wok, who at the time of publication taught at Qatar University and University of Malaysia, respectively, embraces the relevance of active and functional journalism (Deuze, 2017; Patterson, 2007). These types of journalism are linked to the democratic cause, which refers to the functions of accountability and moral framework of society in the relationship of media and democracy. Here, the theme of corruption and its denunciation should be established as guiding principles of the thesis of this work, which is divided into 12 chapters. However, chapter 9 was later removed, as it was published following a production error.

The work begins with a chapter authored by editor Basyouni Hamada, which seeks to develop a hierarchization of journalism–corruption determinants on five levels (journalistic, economic, political, cultural, and transnational), which branch out into sublevels that interact and compete with each other, assuming a positive or negative effect on corruption—a term that the author recalls is usually defined as criminal misuse of power.

Thus, as a starting point, the author assumes the idea that journalism does not exist in a vacuum, and that it is also determined by the multitude of variables that characterize the systems (national and transnational) where it is included. This first chapter converges to an excellent introduction, in which a kind of eternization in the academic field of the monolithic corruption–journalism–democracy triadic system is carefully relativized. In this introduction, the author often contemplates the limits of this same relationship, because, as Schudson (2003) points out, journalism is not democracy per se and does not build democracy by itself, since journalism and freedom of the press may be nothing more than an extension of the democratic system instead of one of its causes. Per the author of this first chapter, the forms of journalism in its relationship with corruption face significant variations and juxtapositions according to different geographical contexts.

The second chapter, authored by Abdullah K. Al-Kindi, seeks to position six Arab countries under the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), in terms of its press freedom and corruption scores. The premise of this chapter is based on a critical analysis that focuses on the relationship between press freedom and corruption while seeking to contribute to the future of these GCC member states in relation to press freedom in the fight against corruption. The chapter is also based on the idea that low levels of freedom of press tend to correlate with high levels of corruption in the most targeted countries, especially Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Oman.

The third chapter, written by Abdulrahman Al-Shami, investigates the types of corruption and their impacts on the social sphere, legislative sphere, and other spheres, and takes advantage of reports published by journalists from the Maghreb, Middle East, and Sudan regions. The author concludes that large pockets of corruption are situated not only at the administrative, financial, legislative, judicial, and political levels but also at the level of the health sector, while detailing the problems encountered by these journalists in the denunciation work that they develop.

The fourth chapter, authored by Oluremi Davies Ogun, is a theoretical construct on corruption with a long-term analysis that establishes that the basis for this corruption was the capitalist system and that this corruption is generally pernicious to economic growth and exists within the context of endogenous growth.

The fifth chapter, authored by Chipo Kanjo, seems to dissociate from the basic theme of the work and abandons the wider field of journalism (even if journalistic material is collected) by exploring how digital literacies and asymmetries act in worsening poverty. Taking advantage of the analysis of the context in Malawi, the author shows us how this correlation between worsening poverty and digital asymmetries is deeply influenced by the diversion and waste of public funds in the personal expenses of people who are most influential in society (e.g., cashgate scandal). As these practices of corruption become institutionalized, the volume of public funds that are wasted and captured by agents of corruption will increase.

In the sixth chapter, Abdelkader Abdelali chooses Algeria as a case study to demonstrate how supposed investigative and scrutinizing journalism has contributed to a kind of renarration of stories about corruption, while becoming submissive to an autocratic regime, and thus, diminishing its substance in the interpretive world of corruption in Algeria. This chapter has particular importance because it warns of a widely discussed thesis on the need to reflect on the power in communication, who holds power, and how this power is wielded to determine the relationship among journalism, corruption, and democracy (Hornmoen & Orgeret, 2014).

The seventh chapter, written by Hesham Mesbah and Nasser Almujaibel, returns to Saudi Arabia as an object of study and discusses how YouTube empowers professional amateurs to independently build the agenda of their channels in a work option that seems to derive strongly from fields other than corruption analysis (no mention of corruption), such as the decentralization of content production and consolidation of networked public spheres. It is concluded that the main YouTube channels in Saudi Arabia will attract millions of views per month and this horizontal, decentralized, and semiprofessional production of content tends

toward a business model that favors the elective affinities of audiences and advertisers and contributes to an evident partisanization by accommodating the agendas of the regime. It is thus assumed that the main link of this text to the remainder of the work may be precisely in this theme that is linked to resonance boxes and vehicles of transmission of the ideas of antidemocratic regimes, with a negative influence on the consolidation and institutionalization of corruption. This chapter chooses to validate the idea that the Internet and the empowerment of its users are not enough to keep pace with the techno-deterministic thinking of digital infrastructure as a panacea for a more scrutinized world.

The next work, authored by Akmel Meless Siméon, introduces us to the corruption of political power in Burkina Faso and Malawi, and the correlation of this corruption with the democratic deficit. The term "journalism" is not mentioned anywhere in the chapter, and, therefore, this author diverges once again from the central theme of the work. The same is true for the next chapter, written by Kazuyuki Matsumoto, Minoru Yoshida and Kenji Kita, which is totally detuned to the remainder of the content, when visiting the themes of the use of social networks, produced posts, and consequent recognition and emotions that are generated, as well as the last chapter, authored by Mohammed H. Al Aqad, which excludes its relevance in this work by contextualizing the implications of social media and new technological devices in audiences.

The penultimate chapter, written by Martín Oller Alonso and José Raúl Concepción Llanes, brings us a breath of fresh air, which aims to contribute to the discipline of cultural studies in Latin America. This chapter inquires about the relationship of the media ecosystem in Cuba with the revolutionary ideals of the Cuban regime and its appropriation of cultural industries. The author concludes that the journalistic and communication spheres in Cuba are even more dependent on the post-Castro political landscape than the postrevolutionary period and that the main challengers to the ideology of the regime exist in the alternative and decentralized markets of content production, such as *El Paquete Semanal*.

This work partially complies with its intentions by adding knowledge to a very consolidated field of study, based on analyses that tend to escape the geographical boundaries that delimit most studies of journalism, and focusing on the problems experienced in Western countries (Hanitzsch, 2019).

Nevertheless, this book presents a significant incoherence regarding the themes of the different texts, which render it similar to the regular issue of any journal in social sciences, where we sometimes feel an evident derivation in relation to the expected central theme. Moreover, the very title of the work seems sometimes inappropriate due to the differentiation produced in some chapters that do not discuss journalism and corruption and do not propose any model of relationship between these two figures.

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