
**DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM IN NIGERIA: INTERNET CONTROL
TECHNIQUES AND CENSORSHIP**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper focused on the suppression of online journalism in the country. Specifically, it examined the measures used by the State to muzzle or censor online journalism and their implications on press freedom, enshrined in Section 39 of the 1999 Constitution as Amended. The study established that digital authoritarianism is an offshoot of the authoritarian theory of Mass Communication, whereby the State uses the instruments of power at its disposal to seek to control or curb information dissemination in the digital space, usually with the excuse of protecting national interests, security or sovereignty. Qualitative data from reviewed literature and in-depth interview with 37 media professionals, some of whom are members of the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers, GOCOP, provided the bases for the conclusions drawn. These conclusions support the views of other researchers that restriction of online digital rights has worsened globally, and in the case of Nigeria, since the advent of Cybercrime Act of 2015. The study examined how digital authoritarianism affected online journalism in Nigeria and concludes that some online journalists do not understand what digital authoritarianism is all about - the legislation and other means through which Nigerian government breaches digital rights in the country. The study

therefore recommended capacity building and awareness creation to sensitize online journalists about media regulations, including the Cybercrime Act, which restrict or suppress media freedom and how they can be protected.

Keywords: *Digital Authoritarianism, Control Techniques, Internet, Media Censorship, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Digital authoritarianism, based on the authoritarian theory of mass communication, is where the media is influenced and overpowered by power and authority in the nations (Bajracharya 2018). The authoritarian concept is anchored on the belief that the media must respect and work in accordance with the wishes of authorities. Although, not under direct control of the State or ruling classes and cannot work independently and their work are subjected to censorship (Bajrachaya 2018).

In the evolution of mass media in Nigeria from the colonial era through the long years of military rule, which ended in 1999 and the commencement of the civilian administration till date, there has always been an attempt by successive governments to muzzle or control the press. Under various governments the instruments of control have largely been through legislation, physical surveillance, banning or closure and other security measures including destruction of property (printed copies of Newspapers and magazine).

However, with the advent of digital technology, especially in the last decade, it has been observed that the legacy of military rule - authoritarianism - still persists in Nigeria, including in media control. The Government in Nigeria has not fully matured into a true democracy with respect for freedom of speech and expression enshrined in Section 39 of the 1999 Constitution as amended in 2011. In addition, Section 22 of the same Constitution stresses that the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government of the people.

Despite these provisions, Nigerian governments have over the years infringed on press freedom and media rights. The stricture is more in the digital journalism era. Orunbon (2021) noted that of recent, there have been as guided and concerted attempts by the Nigerian government to stamp its control on what is churned out as information within the Nigerian media space. This is because it has become obvious that the administration is not at home with the kind of access Nigerians, both within the already regulated and the unregulated media platforms such as the electronic and print media, and micro-blogging sites – a favourite of the mostly youth population of the country, seem to have. “The manner of news reportage in public space is apparently not in tandem with the policy drive of the government of the day, hence the need to reign in such perceived excesses, which have been allowed under the right to freedom of

expression, being a fundamentally- guaranteed constitutional right of citizens of all true democratic states the world over”, according to Orunbon.

Also, Akinwale (2010) posits that a theoretical recognition of the press as the “fourth estate” connotes the capacity of the press to monitor the tiers of government (the legislature, the executive and the judiciary) but that the state monitors the press in Nigeria in a manner that negates the principle of the fourth estate. Thus, this paper looked into digital authoritarianism in Nigeria as a carryover from the past by various administrations to maintain a hold on the media. This happened especially in the dissemination of information through electronic technology, especially in the era of internet when 40.91 percent Nigerians have access, according to the Nigerian Communications Commission (2022). With internet penetration in Nigeria blossoming in the last decades, the country has witnessed a proliferation of websites owned by bloggers, who disseminate raw information about happenings in the society including government activities.

This work outlined measures adopted by Nigerian governments over the last decade to control or muzzle digital media and space in the country. It also provided information on how digital media have thrived in the country despite attempts to muzzle it.

The study reviewed literature on digital authoritarianism and analyzed data obtained through in-depth interviews of 37 media professionals. It made a startling finding that a good number of the media personnel have no inkling of what digital authoritarianism is about.

Literature Review

The increasing trend in digital authoritarianism across the world with media personnel bearing the brunt is largely due to the state’s determination to control information dissemination in the digital age. This proclivity to maintain an iron fist on the media has been on from the authoritarian days of colonialism and military dictatorships and has transcended to the present age of the ubiquitous internet. As stated earlier, this is based on the authoritarian theory of mass media. Consequently, digital authoritarianism which has been spreading globally cuts across different regime types and implicates companies developing cutting-edge technologies, a common element across these efforts is surveillance and control (Miller 2020).

The international sale and government contracting of these new and powerful tools drive us toward an uncertain, potentially less democratic future (Miller). With the aid of newer technologies states can now easily shutdown the internet in their various spheres of influence. Internet shutdowns dominate in developing and/or non-democratic countries, where relevant protective legal provisions are non-existent or limited and rarely acted upon (Glowacka et al 2021). Glowacka et al documented about 213 shutdowns in 33 countries in 2019. India led with 385 shutdowns since 2012, followed by Venezuela, Yemen and Iraq. Also, Bangladesh, Belarus, Ethiopia, Indonesia India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe were listed among those that imposed or continued with Internet shutdowns. The fact that Nigeria was not included does not mean this is not a serious problem in Nigeria as can be see below with its ban in 2020.

Other examples of digital shutdowns recorded by Glowacka et al (2021) during the pandemic included the blackout and phone restrictions state authorities imposed on the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, which hindered humanitarian groups from addressing threats posed by COVID-19. They concluded that Internet shutdown, which vary in scale, scope, location, and frequency, have detrimental effects on society, limits access to reliable, open, secure and affordable internet and therefore prevents the dissemination of critical for development of the society.

In Nigeria, the internet space was partially shut down when Twitter was banned in June 2021 by Nigerian Government after the tweet of the President was deleted by the platform and his account suspended temporarily. The offensive tweet: “those who misbehave today” will be treated in “the language they will understand,” inferred to the wanton killings of people from the South East during the Nigerian-Biafran civil war 1967-1970. The tweet infringed on Twitter user rules prohibiting content that threatens or incites violence.

The authors said deletion of the tweet was part of a larger conversation around the role of social media in politics and the national conversation as the world has seen social media platforms like Twitter impact democracy and politics, social movements, foreign relations, businesses, and economies around the world in recent years (Blamkeship and Golubski 2021).

Corroborating, Lamensch (2021) argued that while digital technologies have given governments around the globe a tool to communicate with their people, understand popular sentiment, evaluate the potential political costs and adapt government policies, these same tools have given autocratic and illiberal governments unprecedented capabilities to remain in power.

Also, Lamensch posited that while surveillance, propaganda and disinformation have always been part of an autocrat's playbook, several technologies make this repression and control much more pervasive, efficient and subtle.

Momentum in Digital Authoritarianism Globally

A perspective into how digital authoritarianism is gaining momentum across the globe has been linked to a combination of retreating US leadership and the COVID-19 pandemic which emboldened China to expand and promote its tech enabled authoritarianism as world's best practice (Khalil 2020). He documented how Chinese engineered digital surveillance and tracking systems are now exported around the globe in line with China's Cyber Superpower Strategy.

This is also setting standards and new norms on digital rights, privacy and data collection, suppression of dissent at home and promoting the CCP's geostrategic goals. The danger for other countries importing Chinese technology, Khalil argued, is that it will result in a growing acceptance of mass surveillance, habituation to restrictions on liberties, and fewer checks on the collation and use of personal data by the state, even after the public health crisis subsides. Thus, she warned democratic governments to be vigilant in setting standards and preserving citizens' rights and liberties.

The warning resonated in the study on 10 digital rights landscape countries – Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, Sudan, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Cameroun - detailing how opening and closing of online civic space affects citizens' digital rights (Roberts and Ali 2021). The argument of Khalil, and Robert and Ali justified the 2021 online campaign in Nigeria for #EndSARS nationwide protest against police brutality, which the state promptly described as an attempt to overthrow the government. This authoritarian bent to governance culminated in the clampdown on the protesters at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos, which was streamed online. The Nigerian youth went online to begin their campaign to get the government to scrap the draconian security apparatus, which was supposed to crackdown on criminals but instead turned its angst on youths and citizens who were mostly innocent. Aggrieved youths who could not find space offline in the society began their mobilization online.

Consequently, the protests and the subsequent crackdown on the famous Lekki toll gate protesters. In milieu that ensued, both the traditional and digital media which covered the event

were targeted for harassment, violence, extortion, and in some cases elimination by security agents. For instance, according to National Endowment for Democracy (2020), After livestreaming the Nigerian army's violent repression of peaceful protesters at Lekki Toll Gate in October 2020, Catherine Obianuju Ude (DJ Switch) has faced death threats, accusations of manufacturing the video content, and calls for arrest. Ude subsequently sought asylum abroad in Canada (Kunle 2020).

The crackdown on Lekki protesters elicited global outrage. Consequently, Nigeria deployed the five tactics often used by the state to close online civic space in Africa. They include digital surveillance, disinformation, internal shutdowns, legislation and arrest for online speech (Roberts and Ali 2021).

Also, StearsData (2021) report commissioned by Luminate stated that the Nigerian government has been building its surveillance capacity, with allocated budgets exceeding NGN15 billion since 2017. Although the government claims that these capabilities are being built to fight domestic terrorism, StearsData (2021) stated they can be used to spy on citizens.

According to the scholars, any comprehensive analysis of digital rights requires consideration of the wider political, civic space and technological contexts. They argue that countering the threats to democracy and digital rights required new evidence, awareness, and capacity and proposed applied research to build new capacity in each country to effectively monitor, analyze, and counter the insidious impact of surveillance and disinformation; and a programme to raise awareness and mobilize opinion to open civic space and improve citizens' ability to exercise, defend and expand their digital rights.

Even so, authoritarian states tend to sustain their hold on the digital space by being pragmatic, resourceful, and connected to a global network of governments and companies that mutually benefit from sharing data and funding research projects; this next innovation in authoritarianism will increasingly encourage self-censorship and cyber sovereignty to reduce the influence of democracy activists and free press, both at home and abroad (Miller 2020).

Corroborating, Dorota Glowacka et al (2021) added that the challenge related to the use of digital technologies by authoritarian regimes has continued to deepen as liberal democracies

like EU undertook many valuable and well-designed policy initiatives in this field, but still have to decide whether tackling digital repression is a core geopolitical interest at the highest political level.

Instruments for Digital Authoritarianism in Nigeria

As the threat to digital rights in Nigeria increases, one of the laws enacted to control digital media is the Cybercrimes (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015 which comprises wide-ranging legal, regulatory, and institutional framework that prohibits, prevents, detects, prosecutes, and punishes cybercrimes (Uba 2021).

There are also sections of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2011 that prohibits unauthorized transmission, obtaining, reproduction, or retention of any classified matter. Although the FOIA is to provide the media access to information, Akarika and Ukpe (2022) noted that FOIA contains more exemption sections and clauses than sections that grant access to information. He alerted “that some mischievous public officers can use these sections for unjust and mischievous purposes. Only Sections 1 and 3 for instance, grant access to information; but as many as ten sections (Sections 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 26) are meant to deny the public access to information.”

Other legislation and regulations which can be used broadly to restrict digital space in Nigeria include the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act 2007 section 26; the National Health Act 2014; Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2019 and the Consumer Protection Framework of 2016.

Research Methodology

The research used purposive sampling method to select media stakeholders who were interviewed through structured questionnaire. In addition to the information generated through literature review. Those interviewed include media professionals, who are mostly members of the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP), an 82-member umbrella peer review group of professional journalists. Thirty-seven media practitioners were interviewed based on the three research questions stated to ascertain the veracity of the authoritarian theory as the basis for the study and also examined whether professionalism by the media can check digital authoritarianism.

Data Analysis

The respondents who were marked A1 to A37, are all based in Nigeria. 77.8% of them are within the age range of between 51-60; 11.1 percent (31-50) while above 60 (11.1 percent). Their educational qualifications ranged from 55.6 percent (Master Degree); 11.1 percent (PhD) while 33.3 percent had other educational qualifications which were not specified. Surprisingly despite their educational qualifications not all of them responded to all the questions asked but those who did elucidate on digital authoritarian practice, control and techniques.

Q1: Knowledge of digital authoritarianism

Responses from 16 interviewees showed knowledge of digital authoritarianism. Summarily, the responses captured salient aspects of digital authoritarianism to include censorship of the digital media/population by the state through the use of technology. The three responses that stood out are:

Digital authoritarianism “Is the way that many leaders around the world wield the power of the internet and technology to gain or solidify control over their people.” - (A-1)

“This refers to the use of IT, social media to control populations usually by government. – (A-2)

“Censorship of the social media/online media” - (A-5)

Q2: Beginning of digital authoritarianism in Nigeria

Responses from 17 participants showed different dates for the commencement of digital authoritarianism in the country although state control of the media in Nigeria began during the colonial rule in the 19th century and transcended to military dictatorship of the 1980s and the hybrid authoritarian/democratic practice now. Striking responses tracing its origin are thus:

“As soon as Nigeria joined the information superhighway during Obasanjo's first tenure as civilian President in 1999/2000. Internet explorer came with Facebook, etc.” (A-11)

“Digital authoritarianism began at the dawn of the millennium and blossomed with the growth and advancement of democracy and technology which gave the people the impetus to increasingly question how their lives are being run by their leadership. (A-12)

“With Cybercrimes Act of 2015” (A-14)

Q3: How digital authoritarianism play out in Nigeria

Seventeen respondents are of the view that digital authoritarianism manifests in the form of June 4, 2021, shutdown of micro-blogging platform (Twitter); regulation of the use of technological devices; state labelling every news not authored by them as fake, censorship, digital surveillance, data collection, propaganda, patronage; clampdown on opposing online media/social media practitioners, legislation and policy framework; and surveillance by security agencies, tapping of phone lines, emails.

Companies also collect data on sites visited by people and flood their mails and social media platforms with adverts along their perceived preferences. Also, it occurs through state quest to control information mechanism, subversion of civil liberties and open society institutions; deliberate shutdown of internet using security agencies' equipment, targeting online owners. One of the striking responses states: “The Cybercrimes Act specifies limits and areas that people must not cross. It makes defamation a criminal rather than civil offence.” (A-15)

Q4: Targets of digital authoritarianism and why

Interviewees listed targets of digital authoritarianism as the Nigerian press, civil society groups, entire population largely youths; critics of government, Online publishers, editors; activists, and whistleblowers.

Q5: Causes of digital authoritarianism

Interviewees cited inciting statement, fake news; desire to control the heart and minds of the people, deception, intolerance, fear of public opinion and adverse criticism; desires by companies to advertise products; abuse of power, misinformation, dissemination of false information as the cause for stricture of media. Statement by two interviewees captured the causes thus:

“Digital authoritarianism is caused by “The crave by autocratic governments to maintain firm control and ensure that the people of the society don’t challenge their corrupt conduct and abuse of office. (A-11)

“With the advent of citizen journalism, obviously, the scope of journalism has widened. Through this, 'top secrets' are being revealed. This is clearly not in the best interest of the government. (A-12)

Q6: Nigerians' reaction to digital authoritarianism

Data from interviewees show that Nigerians react negatively, passively and cautiously to digital authoritarianism. They also condemn, create awareness about its implications and resort to lawsuits. Some use alternative IT channels to circumvent restrictions like switching to VPN to bypass the recent Twitter ban.

In the case of phone tapping, they use encrypted platforms like WhatsApp; advocacy. For instance, Interviewee (A-16) said:

“Digital authoritarianism is a development that is not welcomed by most Nigerians. And so, whenever there is whip of authoritarianism creeping in, such as the Cybercrimes Act, ban of twitter etc, Nigerians collectively rise against such development.”

Q7: Instruments of digital authoritarianism in Nigeria

Interviewees listed the instruments state use to muzzle the media as mass surveillance, internet fire-walls and censorship, internet blackout, coercion, pronouncements by government agencies; regulations, use of online digital platforms, social media, radio and television for disinformation, spy gadgets; cyber stalking law; veiled threats and refusal of support/patronage/adverts to practitioners.

Others are propaganda; intimidation by security agents - the DSS and intelligence agencies, police, Armed Forces and EFCC and ICPC; restriction of the internet and social media systems which has enhanced public freedom and right of speech; Anti-social media bill; executive orders; and use of artificial intelligence, high-tech surveillance and repression.

Q8: Instances of digital authoritarianism in Nigeria

Sixteen interviewees variously cited ban of Twitter and the directive to prosecute users of the microblogging and social networking service who defied the order; police arrest of youths indiscriminately, which resulted in the ENDSARS protests; arrest/detention of some of practitioners; threat of enactment of social media bill to censor social media/online practitioners; compulsory NIN registration, BVN et al; and jailing of government critics.

Q9: Techniques the government uses to control digital media in Nigeria

Only eight interviewees were able to state the techniques government uses to muzzle the digital media. They include shut down of media houses; ban on the use of social media (Twitter); use of social media influencers. legal arm twisting, intimidation; introduction of new broadcasting rules and heavy fines on broadcast stations just to gag the media; deploying existing and new legislation; clampdown on critics and media owners; regulations, undue monitoring, denial of patronage/advertisement, cyber bullying and licensing of digital space.

Q10: Operators of digital media contribute to digital authoritarianism

Seventeen interviewees stated that digital media operators contribute to digital authoritarianism by being blackmailers; publication of falsehood which places the government on a moral pedestal to act; unprofessional conducts and deliberately misinforming the public at times.

For instance, interviewee - A7 said:

“Some unscrupulous operators deliberately publish fake and damaging reports which could threaten the safety and territorial integrity of the Nation.”

Q11. How not to be victim of digital authoritarianism

Seventeen interviewees opined that media practitioners can avoid digital authoritarianism by being professional, sticking to ethics; upgrading knowledge, IT skills; propagating truth, fairness and objectivity; fact checking and having zero tolerance for fake stories; having a strong legal department etc. The views of interviewee A-2 captures it thus:

“Media need to adhere strictly to the ethics of their trade. 2. They need to be more professional whether as traditional or new media practitioners. 3. They need to constantly engage in order review to remind themselves of their responsibilities and what they needed to do to come back to the sanity lane. 4. Always remind themselves of the sacred role of the media and the need to defend the people against dictatorship”

Q12: Future of digital media

Majority of the interviewees predicted a bright but challenging future. Of the 17 responses only five predicted a tough and bleak future field with landmines. The positive views were captured interviewee A-5, who stated:

“Despite threats of authoritarianism. Digital media is the future of media practice. People can no longer wait to be served news any more. New media has come to fill that space and it is doing so creditably despite the gaps and challenges besetting the industry presently.”

Discussion of Findings

Qualitative data from the literature reviewed and opinion from interviews with media practitioners fulfilled the objectives of the study. They were used to establish that Nigeria has been influencing the digital media through regulations and censorship, undue monitoring, denial of patronage/advertisement, arrests and detention of practitioners; cyber bullying and licensing of digital space among others. All these measures were corroborated by scholars such as Miller, Glowacka et al (2021) and backed by the authoritarian theory of the mass media propounded by Siebert, Shepherd, Machiavelli, who advocated state stricture of the media to protect sovereignty.

In large part, many of the responses supported the assumption of this paper that digital authoritarianism is borne out of the state’s determination to control, suppress and influence the online media. They also agreed that such a move by government infringed on the rights of freedom of speech and also contrary to the obligation of the media to hold government accountable.

The study identified techniques of digital authoritarianism in Nigeria to include legislation, crackdowns; spy gadgets; cyber stalking law; veiled threats; refusal of support or give patronage/adverts to practitioners; and intimidation of citizens/journalists by security agents. It was also found that state deploy information technology, artificial intelligence; propaganda to foil public freedom and right of speech. Also identified are mass surveillance, internet fire-walls and censorship, and internet blackout. These findings are in line with the opinions of scholars on authoritarian theory of mass communication which was used for his research, although such acts by the state breached constitutional provisions on obligations of the press and freedom of speech.

An important finding is that media practitioners own up that some online journalists and social users are partly to blame for digital authoritarianism because of fake news, hate speech and dissemination of false information, which government seeks to curtail through

regulations such as the Cybercrime Act; propaganda and disinformation among others. The study found that digital authoritarianism is based on the principle of authoritarian theory of mass communication whereby the state seeks to control the mass media to ensure it disseminates only the information that is in its interest. Respondents agreed that digital authoritarianism exists in Nigeria through “Clampdown on opposing online media/social media professionals//mediums”.

According to respondents, the reason for digital authoritarianism is because state authorities want to establish sovereign control over online information space. This explains why multiple states have adopted measures to control the flow of data in and out of their national borders and isolate ‘domestic’ internet from the global network. Hence imposing new cross-border data transfer and storage restrictions, as well as centralizing technical infrastructure as a necessary protection for user privacy, to improve cyber-security threats against threats posed globally (Glowacka et al, 2021).

Summarily, 17 respondents believe that digital authoritarianism began in Nigeria “Since the early 2000s from the advent of the internet in Nigeria but became more vicious since the current government and in particular with the enacting of the Cybercrimes Act of 2015. It escalated in 2021 when government suspended Twitter. For disseminators of information, who ought to be well informed on issues pertaining to their profession, some responses from respondents reinforce the notion that some online media professionals do not adequately know/understand digital authoritarianism or when it started in Nigeria as can be seen in the following responses: “Not quite sure but can't be recent;” “Digital authoritarianism began at the dawn of the millennium and blossomed with the growth and advancement of democracy and technology which gave the people the impetus to increasingly question how their lives are being run by their leadership;” One interviewee said “March 29, 1984, “Buhari’s administration,” while another said: “Around 2015 shortly after the onset of the Bihari administration”; and “It is safe to declare that it started with the advent of social media.” These responses support the need to build the capacity and increase awareness and knowledge of media professionals on the control and regulation digital authoritarianism in the country.

Another important finding is that some journalists who are transiting to digital journalism from the traditional media do not understand the concept of digital authoritarianism and are therefore not in a position to protect or defend their rights. One of the journalists interviewed actually asked for an explanation of what digital authoritarianism was about? This is probably why Roberts and Ali stated that countering new threats to democracy and digital rights requires new evidence, awareness and capacity. The data is not available, but some journalists in Nigeria are not even aware of the media laws and the contents of Cybersecurity law of 2015 or the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act of 2011 relating to guidelines for their operation.

The study showed that journalists in Nigeria are resilient in doing their job despite digital authoritarianism. Some of them have survived the strong-arm tactics of the State including Agba Jalingo, an online journalist, who was charged with treason in Cross River State, South-South Nigeria, for criticizing State governor Ben Ayade. There was the case of Jonathan Ugbal and Jeremiah Archibong, news editor and managing editor, respectively, for the CrossRiverWatch, an online newspaper owned by Jalingo. The pair was charged with “unlawful assembly” for covering a protest and prosecuted by the police. Ugbal and Archibong were arrested by the police in Calabar on August 5, 2019, alongside Nicholas Kalu, the Calabar Correspondent of *The Nation* newspaper, while covering the #RevolutionNow protest called by Nigerian activist Omoyele Sowore. Janlingo was recently released and freed from all charges of defamation and treason.

Nonetheless, there is the need for improved citizen sensitization and mobilization, awareness creation as well as building and strengthening the capacity of journalists to protect the rights of citizens and for effectively check of digital authoritarianism.

Conclusion

The research buttressed the need for safeguard and protection of fundamental human rights, press freedom and improvement of the digital media space. It agrees with (Roberts and Ali) on the need for a programme to raise awareness and mobilize opinion to open civic space and improve citizens’ ability to exercise, defend and expand their digital rights.

There is also need to strengthen the capacity of both the citizens and media professionals, in particular online journalist for increased knowledge of existing and emerging legislation related to digital authoritarianism to ensure that the state remains steadfast to uphold Constitutional provision for a free digital media with obligations to hold government accountable. If this is done, the future is bright for digital media practitioners, who will be empowered to know not to exceed the bounds of their freedom.

Recommendations

1. As part of efforts to counter the threats to democracy and digital rights, this work recommends deliberate development of a body of evidence, awareness creation as well as capacity building and strengthening of citizens and media professionals.
2. There should also be effective analysis and monitoring of various digital authoritarian measures, increased stakeholder knowledge and constructive engagements by various arms and agencies of government, civil society groups, the media and other non-state actors towards addressing the concerns of state authorities, the media and citizens at large.
3. While state authorities should be persuaded to eschew the tendency towards abridgement of the fundamental human rights and press freedom, through digital authoritarianism, the media must also undertake through self-regulatory mechanism, measures to curtail fake news, hate speech and violation of individual or corporate freedoms under the guise of exercising press freedom.

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