

The importance of WikiLeaks worldwide

Nozomi Hayase, PhD, is a US-based liberation psychologist and widely published journalist. She has authored the book Wikileaks, the Global Fourth Estate: History Is Happening. In an exclusive (electronic) interview with John Kendall Hawkins, Hayase talks about the significance of WikiLeaks and why its editor-in-chief and publisher needs public support, as the US extradition hearing of Julian Assange unfolds in the UK.

How are the extradition proceedings going?

First of all, Julian Assange’s US extradition case is a direct attack on the First Amendment by the US government. This is the first time the (US) Espionage Act is being used to prosecute a publisher. If it’s successful, it would threaten media freedom everywhere. What has been unfolding this month at the London court is a Kafkaesque show-trial.

There have been problems with the abuse of process. Julian has not been allowed to sit with his lawyers and has been placed behind a glass cage, as was the case during the hearing in February. NGOs and international political observers were denied remote access to the court on the first day of the hearing. This includes Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders.

With that said, I think Julian’s defence team has been doing extremely well. From an offer of a pardon for Assange by the US President Donald Trump to his administration’s high-level plan to revoke Assange’s political asylum granted by Ecuador, the defence team’s witness testimonies have revealed the highly political nature of this case.

In your preface to *WikiLeaks, the Global Fourth Estate*, you reference “illegitimate governance,” by which you seem to mean any “democracy” that hides from the people what they need to know in order to pressure their representatives in Congress (or Parliament) to make corrective changes. Can you say more about such “illegitimate governance” and how it relates to Assange’s work?

Governments in modern democratic states theoretically require the consent of the governed. For people to give their consent to those who govern, they need to be informed about what their governments are doing. Illegitimate forms of governance are ones that violate this principle. We can see it in oppressive regimes like

Saudi Arabia and Turkey, where the governments can act dictatorially with draconian top down laws, coercing people’s will.

In western societies, where there is a notion of free press, governments don’t engage in outright violence. Instead, they engage in secrecy and manipulation of public perception, as Noam Chomsky documents in his seminal book *The Engineering of Consent*, which fits into this category. Assange, through his work with WikiLeaks, defended the public’s right to know. By publishing material that is verified to be authentic and is of public interest, WikiLeaks helped to keep the government honest.

How does what you call “revolutionary journalism” compare to good old adversarial journalism?

The role of journalism from the very beginning was to perform vital checks and balances of government power. The founding fathers of the US had an inherent distrust of government. Thomas Jefferson once noted that if he had to choose between the government and the newspaper, he would choose the latter. So the press was meant to be a watchdog. Sadly, the media has now been infiltrated with commercial interests, and is failing to fulfil its role. Corporate media has become a stenographer of power. Instead of seeking the truth and challenging power, they lie and deceive the public.

When I say WikiLeaks is revolutionary, I am echoing the sentiment described by Orwell’s phrase: “in a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act”. When western governments criticise WikiLeaks and create controversy, it is actually deflecting people from recognising the failure of the established media and their lack of commitment to the duty of a free press. What WikiLeaks does is not radical. It is in line with the tradition of a free press.

In the 60s, we had alternative media



A supporter of Assange at a protest in London on May 2, 2019.

PHOTO: AP/FRANK AUGSTEIN

streams—the birth of FM radio, which activists listened to, as well as magazines like *Ramparts*, which gave long-read exposes of what “The Man” was up to. Can you compare *Ramparts* to WikiLeaks?

I don’t compare WikiLeaks to *Ramparts*. WikiLeaks invented scientific journalism, which was unprecedented. Just like scientists writing scientific papers are required to provide all the data that they used to form their conclusions, WikiLeaks publishes full archives (after going through rigorous harm minimisation process, to redact information that brings imminent harm). They provide a means for ordinary people to independently check the claims of journalists and this enables a mechanism of accountability for journalists. So, with WikiLeaks, the source of legitimacy that used to be placed in the “objectivity” of journalists (that determine their editorial decisions) is now placed in the actual source documents. People don’t have to believe journalists, they

can independently check the validity of the reporting on their own.

WikiLeaks provided a means for common people to claim their own history. By opening their archives, WikiLeaks freed people from a stolen history that repeats the abuses of the past. Leaked documents allow us to look at past events anew and restore perspectives that were oppressed and pushed to the margins.

Different cultures have different ideas of what freedom of expression should look like—China, India, Japan, the US, France—but for Americans, their right to free expression came out of a revolutionary rejection of Britain. Their initial expression to the British was their freedom.

I think the US First Amendment was truly a major milestone in securing individual liberty, but it has shown to be not sufficiently fascist-proof. It has been compromised through economic censorship, now increasingly carried on by giant tech companies, such

as Google, Facebook and Twitter, censoring and de-platforming anyone who challenges the status quo.

American people believe that they live in a democracy and a free society. In fact, they often compare their right to free speech with oppressive regimes like in China and Russia that don’t have that protection. But what we have here in the US is a facade of a democracy and the illusion of freedom. While Americans live under this illusion, people in China know that their government engages in propaganda, and they are not getting accurate information. So at the end of the day, what we have is the same. None of us have the right to free speech and we are all controlled. The difference is just whether it is done overtly or done subversively. It is a choice between Orwell’s *1984* or Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*.

How would you describe the benefit of what Assange has done for people around the world?

Even though WikiLeaks is a transnational journalistic organisation, I see their work as being very much tied to the impulse that came through the US during its Revolutionary War against Great Britain. This impulse was people’s aspiration toward individual liberty. I think what happened at the time in the US was historically significant and its impact is not only important for the US but also for the entire world. US independence from King George III set a new trajectory in history. It opened up the possibility to move away from monarchy and into creating a society based on the rule of law.

Thomas Jefferson, as a principal author of the Declaration of Independence said, “All men are created equal” and are endowed with certain unalienable rights, such as “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness”. Those words inspired people around the world—even to this day.


Of course, as history has shown,

our founding fathers were not perfect. They had their own hypocrisy and contradictions manifested in the genocide of natives, enslavement of blacks and suppression of women. But I would like to think that the signers of this document, 56 people who put their lives and livelihood on the line to achieve America’s independence, believed in the ideals spelled out in the document. I would like to think those words were not lies. I see them as promises and believe that Jefferson had aspired to create a society that lives up to those words.

WikiLeaks released documents that helped us see the unaccounted power inside the US and its history. The publication of the collateral murder video, the US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the illegal torture at Guantanamo Bay showed us how America had become a global empire, repeating its dark past of killing natives and destroying their culture, now under the name of fighting terrorism abroad in the oil-rich Middle East. We were able to see America’s betrayal of its own ideals.

So what WikiLeaks did was help ordinary people around the world to engage in history, and make society more democratic and free. When we truly recognise the significance of WikiLeaks, we can see why Julian has been put in prison, tortured and politically persecuted. We can understand why the former CIA director and Trump’s Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo called WikiLeaks “a non-state hostile intelligence service” and declared war against the whistleblowing site. We can understand why the CIA, via a Spanish security firm, spied on Julian and his privileged communication with his lawyers while he was inside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, and as Julian’s defence revealed, why the CIA plotted to poison him. I hope people then realise what is truly at stake with Julian’s extradition case and how we need to do whatever it takes to stop it.

The pandemic of incivility: Can we stop it from afflicting our country?


ATIQUIR RAHMAN

BENGAL of the past was often eulogised for its culture, religious harmony, tolerance and prosperity. During the Islamic Bengal Sultanate, founded in 1352, Bengal was a major trading nation in the world. It was a growing “civilisation” and a mighty one too. Bengal was called Gangaridae by the Greeks, and Greek historians noted that Alexander the Great withdrew from India anticipating a counter attack from an alliance of Gangaridae.

The Liberation War of 1971, which created Bangladesh (out of East Pakistan, former East Bengal), left the country with a broken social and economic infrastructure. After some initial hiccups, the country started growing at reasonable rates. The growth accelerated in more recent years, making it one of the fastest growing countries in the world. However, the country lagged behind in social engineering. Growth was not accompanied by concomitant improvements in civility.

This is not surprising. Growth

can generate wealth over a relatively short time period through the right policies and market incentives, but changes in behaviour and attitudes can be a long haul. Professor Forni of John Hopkins University notes (in *Choosing Civility*) that changes in civility can indeed be very complex. It encompasses learning how to connect successfully and live well with others with courtesy, politeness, mutual respect, fairness and good manners. And while Daniel Bell notes in his *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* that “economic growth has become the secular religion of advancing industrial societies”, Benjamin Friedman observes in *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth* that it is wrong to assume that only market incentive and government economic policies will automatically lead to social and political development.

Incivility and intolerance have almost become a pandemic; most of the countries in the world are affected by it. No hard data exist on the rise of incivility in Bangladesh, but it is apparent in the conduct of everyday life. It is not only the high level of corruption, which points towards greed and uncivil disconnect between institutional service providers and the public; it is visible on social media, in work environments (staff harassment), in educational

institutions, within families, in shops and on the streets. The show of wealth and political muscle buy fear or favour, and cronies of influential and wealthy persons roam fearlessly, threatening and extracting favours and trampling rules of law. These talk tons about incivility and its growing scourge at all levels.

It is not Bangladesh only; most other countries, and even the more advanced countries, are not immune to the scourge of growing incivility—civility being defined as “the free and respectful exchange of different ideas”. In the US, eight out of 10 Americans believe that the lack of civil discourse in the political system is a serious problem; 82 percent of respondents to a 2011 survey felt that political advertisements were too “nasty”, and 72 percent believed that political commercials were “inappropriate”. Political incivility has been linked to reduced trust in the legitimacy of political candidates, political polarisation and policy gridlock. Incivility in America today continues to erode the image of the once “great country” and rude behaviour is becoming the “new normal”, according to the fourth annual study titled *Civility in America: A Nationwide Survey*.

Other “great” countries and “civilisations” are also succumbing to this mad decline into incivility. The

process of “taking back control” from the EU is disrupting both UK and EU parliaments, and the toxic speeches of Nigel Farage in the EU parliament is fuelling this discord. Belarus is seeing thousands march on its streets as the country’s political crisis deepens, India is tripping on racial discord, political bickering and disharmony, and the arrogant Middle East is still nesting deep in incivility.

But why should we be concerned with incivility if a country is doing well in terms of economic progress? The answer is simple. Incivility is toxic, and “the consequences of incivility is very high in the long run”, notes Asjadul Karim in the Financial Express. He notes that it makes “people quarrelsome, less cooperative and highly intolerant.” In Bangladesh, incivility is on the rise because of, inter alia, “ill considered, intolerant activities of political parties as well as by some political leaders, either due to the lack of awareness or misconceptions”. It is eating into the political process too.

According to Anthony Pagden, a political scientist and a historian, “only the civilised can know what it is to be civilised” (1988), implying that for the uncivilised, there is no appreciation of good or civil behaviour. Incivility breeds incivility and this downward spiral can sink a society into barbarism, from which it will take

years, even decades, to escape.

We worry about incivility because it is contagious; prosperity and incivility breeds deadly arrogance and ego, which is often falsely garbed as “moralistic behaviour”. And we worry about incivility because the brunt of incivility is borne by the poor, who are helpless and who are conditioned to take the unpleasant outcomes of incivility as their “destiny”.

Incivility in our society, or for that matter any society, cannot be weeded out overnight, nor can it be ordered to vanish. These habits, acquired through years of poor behavioural norms, will require a long time, even generations, to get rid of.

It will require actions from the very preliminary level of schooling through to higher levels of education, to public and private print and electronic media, to forming regulations on ethical behaviour in work places and in parliaments. It will require giving due emphasis on it in the speeches and talks of public figures, at all levels, particularly at local levels, which are the primary breeding grounds of discontent.

And more importantly, it will require establishing good moral values. Civility and morality are not the same thing. Civility can exist without morality; it does not require one to be moral to be nice to someone. Indeed, civility can be hypocritical

in that immorality and civility can be combined for deadly immoral outcomes. It is therefore important to be very careful about the moral underpinnings of society to bring the best out of civility, or for giving civility a basis to do good. Terrence D Olson writes in *Civility and Being Moral*: “When civility is a utilitarian adoption of behaviours whose purpose is to get one’s way or to avoid disagreements, the words and smiles designed to keep the interaction from getting out of hand are more hypocritical than polite”. We need moral foundations to avoid such outcomes.

Transforming the country into a “civilisation” requires much more than “prosperity”. In fact, the run for prosperity can generate a dynamics of incivility, due to contending claims, competition and intolerance. The rise of a habitation into civilisation (where civility rules) require far more than just masses of people living together.

The complex interaction between prosperity, morality and civility shows how difficult this task can be. But we can stop it. Our social thinkers and policymakers need to grasp the details of interaction to give us a society that our coming generations deserve.

.....

Dr Atiqur Rahman, formerly of BIDS, Dhaka, Bangladesh is an economist, ex-adjunct professor at the John Cabot University, Rome, and ex-Lead Strategist of IFAD, Rome, Italy.





SHIRLEY JACKSON
(1916-1965)
American author

To learn what we fear is to learn who we are. Horror defies our boundaries and illuminates our souls.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Pizzeria buy
6 Conned
11 River to Rio Grande
12 Laughable
13 Hollywood worker
14 Annie of “Ghost-busters”
15 Finland neighbor
17 Mork’s planet
18 Outback bird
19 Ice cream desserts
22 Gym unit
23 Relaxed
24 Market buy
25 Money, in slang
27 “Doesn’t excite me”

30 1945 conference site
31 Forest feller
32 Before now
33 Gauguin’s adopted home
35 “Gladiator” star
38 Ocean’s motions
39 Swiss geometer
40 News item
41 Snide look
42 Cars’ scars

DOWN

1 More thin
2 Pea or peanut
3 Gets slick
4 Takes in
5 In round figures
6 Party staple
7 One, for Juan


8 Dialect
9 Menu choice
10 News-room fixtures
16 Coin-op eatery
20 Reduced drastically
21 Afg. neighbor
24 Fourth-yr. students
25 Park feature
26 “My Favorite Year” star
27 Horse with no wins
28 Range
29 Bank jobs
30 Duel count
34 Workers’ home
36 Tiny
37 Go wrong

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.


YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS

L	O	S	E	S		M	A	C	A	W
I	N	T	R	O		A	T	O	N	E
P	E	A	R	L		P	L	A	N	E
F	A	I	L			P	A	N	T	E
I	D	O				M	A	S	T	E
L	A	N	C	E		K	A	R	A	T
E	M	B	L	E	M	S		B	R	O
						R	A	T	E	
O	R	E	S			T	A	R	A	
R	O	A	S	T		T	A	K	E	S
A	S	K	E	W						
L	A	S	S	O		Z	E	S	T	Y


BEETLE BAILEY



BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES



BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

