PROJECT SYNDICATE

How globalisation killed our mother

MATTHEW, ANDREW, *and* PAUL CARUANA GALIZIA

THE worldwide network that facilitates transnational organised crime and corruption is, tragically, one of globalisation's most enduring success stories. It is also, therefore, one of its deadliest flaws. While the produce and proceeds of crime flow seamlessly across borders, justice and law enforcement remain largely trapped within national boundaries, and are being steadily undermined and captured. Meanwhile, journalists attempting to document this are intimidated, locked up, and murdered.

As the forces of globalised crime and corruption continue to chisel away at our freedom and security, the murdered journalists left in their wake have taught us powerful lessons about how to respond. These lessons concern not only journalism, but also law enforcement and the kind of society we want to live in.

One of these journalists was our mother, Daphne Caruana Galizia. She was assassinated in Malta on October 16, 2017, when a bomb placed under the driver's seat of her car exploded as she rushed to the bank to unblock her account, which had been frozen by the country's economy minister. It was the last in a string of attacks she endured for her reporting, but not the last violation Malta would suffer for what she had revealed.

A trained archaeologist, our mother uncovered a web of corruption linking major multinational deals, passport sales, and a sophisticated global money-laundering operation, and tugged on the threads until they led her to the heart of Malta's government.

The result was not what she expected. Instead of resignations came reprisals. Pockets of institutional independence in Malta that had survived four years of populism were quashed. And our mother, a beacon of hope and courage for hundreds of thousands, including judges and law-enforcement officials, was executed in broad daylight.

Candles left in respect of murdered Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. PHOTO: REUTERS

The people she exposed remain in public office, while those who campaign for justice for her murder are assaulted in public. By exposing the venality of the powerful in a place where institutions are little more than facades, our mother's work triggered a backlash that killed her, and is currently throttling the country's public life.

Little wonder, then, that in 2018 Malta fell the furthest in press-freedom rankings in Europe, a region that itself experienced the fastest decline globally. The country also slipped in democracy rankings and rule of law indicators, and leads the field in hate speech.

The impact of globalised crime and corruption is not limited to Malta and Europe, of course. In response, investigative journalists have banded together in global networks such as the Daphne Project. And the Panama Papers and Paradise Papers show just how effective investigative journalism can be in forcing greater transparency, undermining criminal networks, and driving up the cost of political corruption for its perpetrators.

But while journalists increasingly cooperate across borders, national law-enforcement authorities are still playing catch-up in combating crime and corruption. As a result, the impact of investigative journalism varies widely by country and over time. In countries where law-enforcement authorities are independent from the central government and private interests, and where the public can channel grievances effectively through responsive political institutions, investigative reporting can have an immediate impact on preventing corruption and state capture.

But in countries lacking the will or capacity to root out organised crime and corruption, and with a public too polarised to unite against its enemies, compelling transparency and accountability can have perverse results. In such places, journalists continue to be targeted—with dangerous consequences both for local communities and the global economy.

When journalists come under attack, it usually means that the societies within which they operate are so corrupt that their principal law-enforcement institutions and democratic checks have already been fundamentally compromised. This makes investigative reporters the last people left standing between the rule of law and those who seek to violate it, and it makes their work both more dangerous and less effective.

The most recent phase of globalisation gave us Moneyland, a vast playground for organised criminals and kleptocrats that hoovered up weaker jurisdictions like Malta into the service of dark money. The right response to this is not to retreat behind national borders, but to create a new global entity designed to address the transnational nature of organised crime and corruption. For a start, law-enforcement bodies could learn from journalism and work more urgently to develop the trusted-network approach that organised crime has perfected.

As the world seemingly enters a new phase of globalisation, we must not allow new opportunities to be extended to global crime and corruption. Otherwise, our collective future will belong to an alliance of dark money, disinformation, and the sort of division that robbed our country of its most prominent journalist.

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(Exclusive to *The Daily Star*)

Tara Mia and the story of a warped conscience

GOLAM MORTOZA

WE live in a world where things are constantly happening. Every day seems like an assault on our mental stability because of the nature of the events that take place, more so for a writer who has to go through the unpleasantness of trying to connect the dots and produce an analysis of them. Below is my collection of a few disjointed thoughts on several incidents that emerged recently.

First, many of you may have seen The Daily Star photo of Tara Mia, who was charged in a police case for "attacking" the law enforcement agency. A cursory glance at the photo will reveal that Tara Mia's right hand is completely unusable, a birth defect which resulted in his hand being unusually curved and scrawny and longer than usual. So he has to make do with his left hand—a poor substitute—to do everything that an able person does with both hands. A pauper who lives by begging, this disabled man has somehow gathered the strength to hold "machetes, hockey sticks and iron rods" and use them to assault the police. You may find it hard to believe, but apparently, our police force is a big believer in miracles.

Second, it is often said that the police are not praised as much as they are criticised. How true is it? Only days ago, police recovered the stolen scooter of now-well-known ride-sharing hero Shahanaj Akhter. Were they not praised for it? Indeed, they were. They were showered with praise and admiration from all quarters even though, quite frankly, it was their job to do so.

Physically challenged Tara Mia was accused in a case for allegedly attacking police in Sunamganj on December 28. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

In another case, a female staff member of Channel 24 was about to be harassed in Banani when she was rescued by an off-duty police officer. He came forward to help out of a sense of moral obligation. For this act of selfless service, the entire police department was praised. As well as the accolades, one thing that came up in the public discourse—as it always does after every such act—is that police can do whatever they "want", something that they have proved on multiple occasions. The question, here, is about when they want it and when they do not. The police were able to identify and arrest the helmeted men at Paltan because they wanted to. They didn't arrest the helmeted men at Zigatola because they didn't want to, and they couldn't be nudged into action even after the media made their job easier by identifying some of the criminals. The police are criticised because of the political motive at work behind this selective use of authority.

Third, what was the role of the police after the rape of a mother-of-four in Noakhali's Subarnachar? In their defence, the police authorities might say that all the accused in this case have been arrested. True, the accused were arrested from different places in which they were hiding. It was a praiseworthy job, but did the police stand by the victim after she lodged the rape complaint? The victim brought specific allegations against one Ruhul Amin whose people, she said, had threatened her against casting vote for BNP's "sheaf of paddy" and insisted that she should vote for Awami League's "boat". The police, however, didn't even mention Ruhul Amin's name in the FIR and instead had her illiterate husband sign the document that cited "pre-existing feud" as the reason for the rape. Why did the police concoct an excuse by ignoring the victim's statement? Even the National Human Rights Commission sought to ignore the victim's statement while its chairman made self-contradictory comments about it. All this can be construed as an exercise in discrediting claims about the political nature of the crime and its connection with the December 30 election.

Four, in Noakhali's Kabirhat upazila, a mother-of-three was gang-raped. And here, too, the role of police and a possible political motive behind the crime came to the fore. The victim is the wife of a BNP activist who was arrested before the election in a case filed in connection with a violent scuffle between Awami League and BNP men. Incidentally, the said violence occurred on the day when BNP leader Moudud Ahmed came under attack by Awami League activists. These are all reported facts. The local BNP unit alleged that the victim's husband was implicated in the case because of his political affiliation and that the same people who manufactured the charges against him also raped his wife. These rapists have a political identity, too, and the police were accused of trying to sweep it under the rug.

The trauma that a rape victim has to go through is unimaginable but the experience of having to relive it again through subsequent assaults on her dignity and security can be equally traumatic. It's outrageous when the society places the burden of proof on the victim—not on those who are responsible for that. The medical examination produces no evidence if the accused is one with powerful connections. We have seen a replay of this episode too many times in the past.

Five, Tara Mia has secured a six-month bail but there is no telling what will happen to him after six months. After the news of the Subarnachar rape victim—Parul Begum—emerged, one expatriate Bangladeshi living in Singapore gave her Tk 3 lakh to buy an auto-rickshaw. But will it heal the scars etched in her mind? What about the Kabirhat rape victim—what will she do now? She will have to bear the trauma of being "punished" for no fault of her own and prove that she was indeed raped.

There are thousands of Tara Mias and Parul Begums spread across our country. They are the face of the common man—the workers, the farmers and all the other nameless and faceless people who collectively keep the wheels of our society turning. These are the very people who took up arms to fight in the War of Liberation. Many of them didn't get the chance to study but they are not without feelings or conscience. I wish I could say the same about those of us who are educated—members of the privileged class, who are traumaexpected to do the right thing and make the right decision.

The fact is, we can deny all the allegations and blabber on about how we're still "the best" and "most beautiful" and so on, because we have the pen and the skills to use it, and say anything we want to say even if it's not true. We have mastered the art of disguising falsehoods as truths and vice versa. But history shows us that Hitler's spin doctor Joseph Goebbels did the same thing to justify their action, and look how the oppressed rose in the end and threw them in the gutters of history. Those of us who are now oppressing the likes of Tara Mia and Parul Begum, emboldened by the same toxic influence of power, should remember that the wheel of time is bound to turn one day. History will remember us for what we did.

Golam Mortoza is a journalist.

The article was translated from Bangla by Badiuzzaman Bay.

ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, signing the Constitution of India.

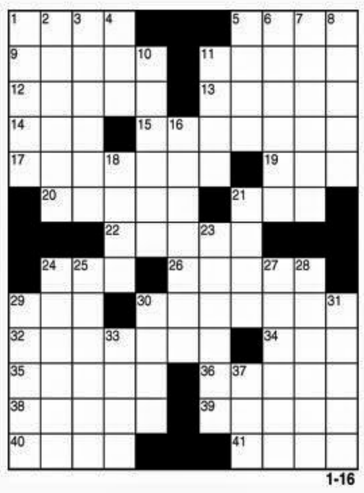
JANUARY 26, 1950
INDIA'S REPUBLIC DAY

The Constitution of India comes into force, forming a republic, with Rajendra Prasad sworn in as its first President. The day is observed as Republic Day in India.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Sighed word
5 Mushroom heads
9 "Id est," e.g.
11 Tale's end, sometimes
12 Heavier than heavy
18 Sporting site
14 Modern: Prefix
15 Candidate of 2016
17 Hog
19 Crude home
20 Wander off
21 Boater or bowler
22 Make blank
24 Doc's charge
26 Minimum amount
29 Take in
30 Blue-veined cheese
32 Superman's home
34 Fish eggs
35 Love, in Lombardy
36 Cheer up
38 Mystical deck
39 Quite full
40 Seine seasons
41 Knee protectors

DOWN
1 By the way
2 Record companies
3 Went to restaurant
4 Bro's kin
5 Hokey stuff
6 Singer Franklin
7 Go well
8 Incline
10 Sweet drink
11 Primary
16 Serving
18 Apple or pear
21 Get better
23 Fishing nets
24 French mathematician
25 Pal or Pooh
27 Layers
28 Sounded a horn
29 Flat fish
30 Proofing note
31 Must have
33 Debate group
37 Pool unit



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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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