**Snags of Social Media**

**Unbridled social media has not only posed commercial challenges to mainstream media but also obscured the sanity of coherent proliferation of ideals.**

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The value of social media as an agent of change cannot be ignored as it gives voice to the voiceless segments of so­ciety to contribute to civic engagement and foster democratic ethics. So­cial media platforms are also being used as a means for inspir­ing disruptive voices, messages, or ideologies to proliferate their views which are otherwise suppressed on state-owned or influenced formal media. While the inter­net has turned into an academ­ic collaborative apparatus, it has also, very rapidly, turned into a news-generating machine or so­cial media. Uninterrupted access, user-friendly features and appli­cations, the absence of an attri­bution mechanism and many other features of this revolution­ary medium have brought about numerous challenges to civilized and democratic societies. Unlike conventional media, social me­dia works on sensationalism in­stead of credibility of the news or information. The existing na­ture of social media has led to unbridled versions of democra­cy which are devoid of age-old practiced democratic norms. It is being perceived that these networking sites and platforms may be holding democracy hos­tage instead of leading to the free and equal democratic ideals they were believed to support. Ironi­cally, social media have become a platform for fake news and pro­paganda to stimulate certain au­diences toward a particular way of thinking. Consequently, in­dividuals or groups of people have transformed social media for their vested personal or po­litical interests. This transforma­tion has resulted in an increased ascent of populism around the world. Subsequently, the active role of the audience as made possible by social media has be­come a great opportunity for populist actors to spread their political messages or agendas.

[Our Aim Foundation distributes essential ration packs to 400 deserving families in Tharparkar](https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Apr-2024/our-aim-foundation-distributes-essential-ration-packs-to-400-deserving-families-in-tharparkar)

Pakistan is no exception to this phenomenon of massive reli­ance on social media for achiev­ing vested political objectives. Coherent proliferation of ideas is a thing of the past as access to social media has encouraged the proliferation of fragmented ideas which is fodder for popu­lists. In a very short span of time, Pakistan’s media landscape had an unprecedented transforma­tion from state-owned Pakistan Television to a swarm of private channels. With their primitive exuberant impunity in sensitis­ing content, these channels were brought into the confines of somewhat restrictions through the media’s own ethics and the state’s regulatory apparatus. Al­though, competitive commercial obligations dictated by Televi­sion Rating Point (TRP) phenom­enon continue to exist even to­day but it is controlled by factors like attribution and credibility of contents besides regulatory mechanisms by the State. In line with the rest of the global trends, Pakistan’s mainstream electron­ic and print media has been con­fronted with a new challenge of social media which has emerged as a competitor and has almost succeeded in eclipsing the sig­nificance of credible mainstream media. Unbridled social media has not only posed commercial challenges to mainstream me­dia but also obscured the sanity of the coherent proliferation of ideals. The mainstream media is grappling with a situation where it has to maintain its credibili­ty and sanity in the face of unre­strained social media with a con­tinuous trend of breaking news syndrome. It raises serious rami­fications for formal media to sus­tain this pressure and maintain its viability in the face of grow­ing social media onslaught.

[6.4 magnitude earthquake hits Japan](https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Apr-2024/6-4-magnitude-earthquake-hits-japan)

This upsurge in the popu­larity of social media has also transformed our political mi­lieu. The old playbook for shap­ing the country’s politics is out­dated; social media and youth mobilization have become game changers. In the garb of these po­litically transformed ideas, a par­ticular political force has gone to an extent where facts are re­placed with concocted versions. The youth which forms more than 64% of the country is driven by sensational social media nar­ratives leaving no room for sane democratic voices. The country’s perilous political, internal secu­rity, and above all economic sit­uation does not warrant any po­larised political commotion. The recent incident at Bahawalnagar is a true manifestation of ficti­tious propaganda which had seri­ous implications for national se­curity where related institutions were pitched against each oth­er; thanks to a well-orchestrat­ed social media campaign to ma­lign Pakistan Law Enforcement Agencies. The episode reflects a stark image of how the event was portrayed on social media on one side and mainstream media on the other; a responsible and sane depiction by the latter. It is also imperative to highlight that unverified and concocted asser­tions and content on social me­dia are quickly picked by hostile foreign elements for subsequent­ly twisting the facts to malign the country and its institutions.

[Large-scale plantations key to tackling climate change challenge](https://www.nation.com.pk/18-Apr-2024/large-scale-plantations-key-to-tackling-climate-change-challenge)

It is of paramount importance that concerted efforts be put to sensitise the masses on the rami­fications of uncredible content of social media for national securi­ty. Diversified trolls of social me­dia have serious repercussions for our societal virtues and lead to a fragmented Pakistani soci­ety. There is a need to enforce multidimensional prevention through social awareness, educa­tional curriculum and a stringent regulatory body duly supported by effective laws by the state. The intensity of the onslaught is such that it warrants a whole-nation approach instead of leaving the onus onto the State only.

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