

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Media-Created Public Opinion Is Boss

Knut Holdhus
October 28, 2023



Public Opinion, 22nd April 1874

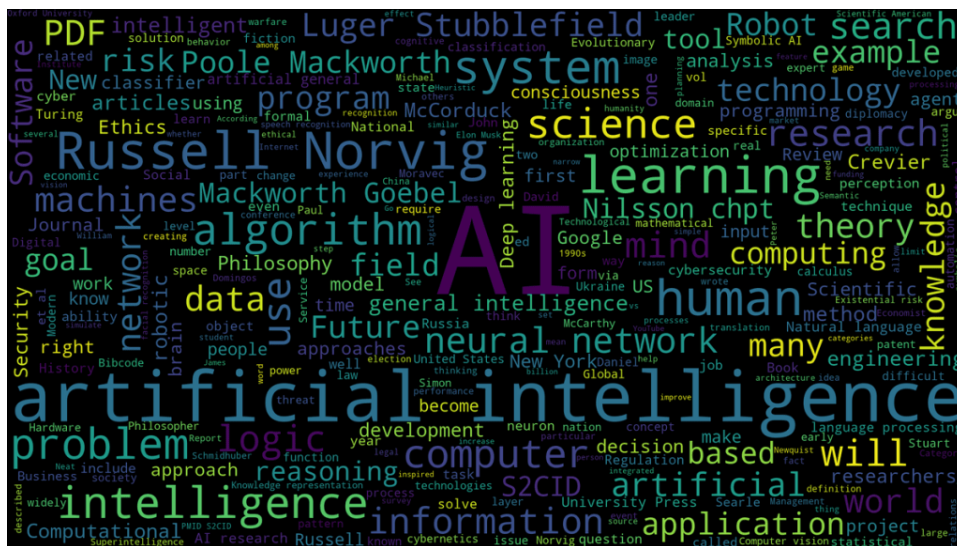
Government decisions based on public opinion shaped by media

Tokyo, 24th October 2023 - Published as an article in the Japanese newspaper Sekai Nippo. Republished with permission. Translated from Japanese. [Original article](#)

Unconvincing and hypocritical newspaper conference resolution. Doubtful fair reporting in newspapers

By Kiyoji Masu

Dangers of spreading disinformation



Word cloud generated image from the most common words on Wikipedia

Last week was Newspaper Week. The motto was "Know the present, learn from the past, and read for tomorrow." At the 76th Newspaper Convention held in Karuizawa, Nagano prefecture, it was mentioned that the appearance of artificial intelligence (AI) will facilitate the spread of false information and risk undermining the integrity of the discursive space. The following convention resolution was adopted,

"We must continue to deliver accurate reporting and fair commentary to people, protect and nurture a

healthy discursive space. In this era of a turbulent information environment, we pledge to contribute to the development of democracy." (Yomiuri Shimbun 19th October)



Johnny and Associates headquarters, at 9-6-35 Akasaka, Minato, Tokyo, Japan

It sounds very superficial, like a textbook resolution. Is it only AI that is responsible for the spread of disinformation? Are there accurate reporting and fair commentaries in newspapers? Are we not undermining the health of the discursive space? Such questions pop up.

In the case of the Johnny's scandal [big sexual abuse / pedophile scandal in the J-pop agency Johnny and Associates Inc., with founder Johnny Kitagawa (1931-2019) as main perpetrator], the government decided on the "freedom not to report" (Japanese: "danmari" - silence, refusing explanation) in order to protect the interests of affiliated TV stations and advertising.

With this in mind, when it came to the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (hereafter referred to as the "[religious organisation](#)"), they launched a massive torrential campaign against it. On the other hand, the [religious organisation](#) has continued to adhere to its "freedom not to report." Such convenient pragmatism is quite noticeable.

Announcement coverage from start to finish

Left-wing newspapers have argued that if they continue to report announcements made by governments and other administrative bodies, they will not function as a check on power. There is some truth to that, but it is also too arbitrary.



Logo of the Sekai Nippo

Earlier, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) submitted a request to the Tokyo District Court for an order to dissolve the [religious organisation](#) (reported 14th Oct. in various newspapers). But the press coverage of this was limited to reporting the announcement and did not examine the content of the request at all.

According to the published reports, "There were 32 judgments that deemed the [religious organisation](#) liable for damages. Solicitation of donations and the sale of goods made by believers to 169 victims were found to be unlawful (total compensation amount of about 2.2 billion yen)" and "There were approximately 1,550 people included in the reconciliations and settlements, and the total amount of settlement payments is about 20.4 billion yen" (Asahi Shimbun 13th October).



Seishiro Sugihara

However, serious doubts arise if this announcement is viewed from a different angle. Seishiro Sugihara, former professor at Musashino Women's University, pointed out in an article published in the 14th October issue of this newspaper,

"A large part of the compensation amount claimed by the Ministry of Education has already been determined in court as compensation paid by the religious organization, or as amounts (and number of people) settled through reconciliation or settlements."

Sugihara emphasized,

"The amount reported by individuals who file new claims does not directly become the total compensation amount. It only becomes part of the compensation when there is a legitimate reason to seek a refund, and yet the religious organization refuses to pay. The Ministry of Education's figures are outrageously exaggerated and serve as a form of manipulation."

This view cannot be known if only an announcement is being reported. At the very least, in terms of fair reporting, the claims of the [religious organisation](#) should have been published. But the press conference held by the [religious organisation](#) was only covered in a short report in the Asahi Shimbun and the Mainichi Shimbun 17th October with a two-column headline on the third page of the "society section". The third page is at worst a news dump and is often used as an excuse to say, "We reported it." In other words, it is a form of "freedom not to report".

A nearly dead code of ethics



In the first place, there are many doubts about fair reporting in the newspapers. In the past, the chief editors of Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times, both members of the Japan Newspaper Publishers Association, appeared on the front page of the Sunday edition of the Japanese Communist Party's official newspaper, Shimbun Akahata, and declared a "joint struggle" with the party over the relocation of the US Futenma Air Base to Henoko, Nago City (20th August 2017).

In this situation, those are no longer newspapers of impartiality. Reports on the [religious organisation](#) overlap with this political struggle. This is because the reports are all about announcements made by National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales (Zenkoku Benren), which is led by leftwing lawyers affiliated with the Communist Party and those who support extremist groups.

In this light, the two statements in the Newspaper Code of Ethics: "The duty of a reporter is to pursue the truth" and "reporting must be accurate and fair" are almost dead words. Reporting must not be "influenced by the position and beliefs of the individual journalist", and "commentaries must not be swayed by the world". Instead, reporting is now swayed by the world (public opinion) the reporters themselves have created.

Claiming that the spread of misinformation is exacerbated by AI without any self-reflection lacks credibility. I want to express my frustration that this year's Newspaper Week has been particularly hypocritical.

"Media-Created Public Opinion Is Boss" - text: Kiyoji Masu. Published 28th Oct. 2023 at 1.33 pm. Updated 4.27 pm.

More about media-created public opinion: [Incendiary Hate Speech from Washington Post](#)

Even more about media-created public opinion: [Bizarre Atlantic Report Condoning Terror](#)

And yet more about media-created public opinion: [Did Constant Hate-Mongering Cause Terror?](#)

Still more about media-created public opinion: [Japan Following the Way of China](#)



NEWS AND INSIGHTS

HOME ABOUT ▾ TEACHINGS ▾ TOPICS ▾ GENERAL ▾

Sunday, October 29, 2023 14:51

CONTACT US ▾

HAK JA HAN ▾

JAPAN ▾

MEDIA ▾

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ▾

COMMEMORATING ▾

VARIOUS ▾

REVIEWS ▾

Did Constant Hate-Mongering Cause Terror?

March 25, 2023 • Knut Holdhus

Share:



Introvigne calls for investigation of hate-mongering "cult experts"

In a comment on the mass-killing of Jehovah's Witnesses in Hamburg, Germany on 9th March 2023, renowned Italian sociologist of religion Massimo Introvigne calls for an investigation of hate-mongering "cult experts" regularly featured and quoted in mainstream media. Such investigations would no doubt reveal the key role played by such



More Posts



Media-Created Public Opinion Is Boss

October 28, 2023



Bizarre Atlantic Report Condoning Terror

October 26, 2023



Incendiary Hate Speech From Washington Post

October 24, 2023



Dangerous Precedent To Crush Religions

October 22, 2023



No Reasons For Dissolution

October 20, 2023



Japan Following The Way Of China

October 17, 2023



12 Religious Freedom NGOs Denouncing Japan

October 15, 2023

experts in firing up a perpetrator to commit atrocities.

The scholar points out,

“I would, however, suggest also investigating those who, by publicly slandering the Jehovah’s Witnesses and depicting them as an evil to be eradicated at all costs, might have slowly pushed the assassin’s fingers to pull the trigger.”

Introvigne made his comments in an article published in *Bitter Winter* a magazine for religious freedom and human rights, 18th March 2023. He is the head of *Center for Studies of New Religions (CESNUR)*.

His critical comments are not just directed at so-called “cult experts”, but also at large and influential media outlets, which uncritically let such self-appointed experts market their torrents of hate speech.



Kingdom Hall in Hamburg-Alsterdorf, ten days after the killing spree on 9th March 2023: damaged door, flowers and candles. Photo: NordNordWest / Wikimedia Commons. Licence: CC ASA 3.0 Germany

Many of the “cult experts” make substantial earnings on their anti-religious activities. It is clearly in their own interest to make religious movements into as big a problem as possible. American Steve Hassan is known for making a living of spreading disinformation and false claims about new religious

movements. Facts may easily be twisted by such “experts” to suit their own interests.

Introvigne draws parallels between the killings in Hamburg and last year’s assassination of former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe. According to the Italian sociologist, “cult experts” had demonstrably been in contact with the assassin Tetsuya Yamagami prior to his horrendous crime. Those experts did not outright suggest to him to murder Abe, but certainly did their best to stimulate and foment the young man’s hatred of the [Unification Church](#) and its allies.

Investigative reporter Jan Leonid Bernstein writes,

“We should never minimize the influence of hate speech on people. And definitely, we should not apply double standard based on which religious affiliation are the killer and the victim. Terrorism is terrorism. Abe’s murder has a terrorist component and the hate speech directed for years at the [Unification Church](#) by some anti-cult groups may certainly be somewhat responsible for what happened, whatever personal grievance the killer would have had.” (*Shinzo Abe’s assassination to be called terrorist*, article in *The European Times* 16th July 2022)

Massimo Introvigne wrote earlier,

“While the weak mind of the assassin had clearly been excited by anti-[Unification Church](#) campaigns by militant lawyers and anti-cultists, the latter succeeded in persuading most media, both in Japan and internationally, that rather than being a victim the [Unification Church](#) was somewhat responsible for the homicide, in a spectacular reversal of both logic and fairness.” (*The Assassination of Shinzo Abe and the Unification Church*, *The Journal of CESNUR*, volume 6, issue 6, November – December 2022, pages 74–96.)

Many are amazed at how “cult experts” again and again skillfully succeed in diverting potential criticism of their own



Categories

Send us a message

First Name Last Name



Email *

Your Message *

Submit

hate-mongering and incendiary rhetoric, by always blaming the religions. And in horrible attacks on religions, like we saw in Hamburg and in Nara, Japan, where Abe was killed, the victims become the culprits. The religions are without fail the guilty party.

According to such rhetoric, the actual perpetrator is just a victim, hardly to blame for his evil deeds.

It is interesting to note, though, that more and more are having their eyes opened to the role of so-called "cult experts" and the media in fueling the hatred that leads to horrendous killings like those committed by Tetsuya Yamagami and Phillip Fusz in Hamburg.

And in order to prevent such killings, it may well pay rich dividends to take a closer look at the role "cult experts" play in their constant hate-mongering and hostile barrage against religions.

Text: Knut Holdhus

Featured image above: Kingdom Hall in Hamburg-Alsterdorf, ten days after the killing spree of 9th March 2023: damaged door, flowers and candles. Photo: NordNordWest / Wikimedia Commons. Licence: [CC ASA 3.0 Germany](#)

« [Previous](#) [Mickler's New Book Grea... Illegalities Of Activist La...](#) [Next](#) »



GET STARTED

[Home](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

First Name

Last Name

Your Email Address

I consent to have this website use my personal information as they deem appropriate to my interest.

Follow us

