



PROPOGANDA OR MERELY REPORTING THE NEWS.

Peter Adamis 18 July 2014

In the age of technology, controlling the media and online social networks comes at a price to industry and to the consumer.

For some strange reasons we are attracted to and gravitate towards human suffering.

We want to know what is happening, to feel but not to be personally touched by the horrors that we watch and read on a daily basis. We all want to be informed, to be fed information that will help us create our own mind up and in most cases form an opinion based on what we hear, read and observe. Unfortunately we are fed only what those who control the information want us to see, hear and read in order to cultivate and influence public opinion to gain a moral, economic and global support.

The sad effects of such force fed online media is that it captures the hearts and minds of the gullible, the ill informed, the less experienced and the youth of today. Since the Syrian war began, the world has been fed daily images of atrocities on both sides of the civil war in Syria knowing full well that it is a proxy war between the super powers. Renewed interest in the Middle East has been since the ISIL (ISIL) terrorists have sprung unexpectedly on the our screen and we like fools clamoured to be fed more and more of the atrocities carried out by these new terrorist on the block. Like sheep we follow the stories and monitor the news on online media, newspapers (soon to belong to a bygone era), Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and a host o other like minded media outlets.

The recent hostilities between Hamas and the Israelis has caused the world to return back to the iPods, mobile phones, lap tops, personal computers and television sets to seek out the latest news. This in some cases has caused rifts between family members, ended long time friendships, created disharmony in our communities and overall creating an environment of an overdosed information population of human junkies waiting for their next online fix. Although we would all like to believe that the internet is free without any bias and that what we read see and hear is fact. Unfortunately that is not the case as technology has reached a pint where "EVERYTHING" can be mimicked and "EVERYTHING" can appear to be normal when the facts when they finally surface state otherwise.

The most gullible, intelligent and yet the less experienced of life are the restless intelligent, professional youth of today who are ready to believe that what they are being fed is in fact "the truth and nothing but the truth so help me God". I write this with some concern as my experience on social media and long time blogger have found that it is easy to influence and capture the hearts and minds of those willing to believe the impossible and even to believe images and articles that appear believable because of their alleged eye witness account or because of their academic qualifications. Furthermore what is sad is that criminal groups have also recognised this and have taken to the airwaves to fleece the uninitiated and less experienced users of the internet, costing the public and nations billions of dollars in lost revenue and saving.

One case example was where I went to great pains to demonstrate to another online blogger that what they were being fed was based on false information and that images and videos could be faked. The online exchange in a number of instances became rather hostile and only by remaining cool and without reverting to profanities did logic and wisdom finally step in to diffuse the situation. This demonstrated to me that if you are to remain online and use social media is to be yourself, be sincere, be honest and be prepared to say that you don't know the answer.

Don't rely solely on social media programs or academic articles unless they have been proven to be without prejudice and based on facts. In fact those who create face book groups should seriously consider the implementation of a "Code of Conduct" for the Groups and periodically refer to it as a guide when recalcitrant members step out of line. This in my view has been self regulated and proven to be a very effective means of self censorship and of educational value.

In this age of technology, there is no platform, no online justice, no means of identifying a false image, article, video or audio unless an individual is prepared to outlay thousands of dollars to identify the real from the unreal. It all gets back to our own experiences of life, our morals, ethics and the values instilled in us by previous generations that had no knowledge or little knowledge of the information technology. It is easy therefore to side track and put aside those positive paradigms of the past on the basis that the previous generation has no idea and yet those same paradigms are more important now than they have ever been.

Having said the above, what is the solution one may well ask. Do we go along on our merry way learning by our mistakes and suffering the consequences of those mistakes or do we allow government agencies to filter online information to safeguard us against nefarious characters and the evils of this world. Is the Big Brother approach the best way of remaining safe and encroaching on our privacy? I think not. I believe that it is the responsibility of governments to safeguard the interests of its people and the best method of doing so is by distributing relevant information and/or programmes to the general public in order to best arm themselves against criminal and information that is not in the best interests of its people and the nation.

The article below is but one of many examples that nations are using to influence the hearts and minds of the general public. In this case both nations are involved in a life and death struggle to gain the sympathy and the support in their endeavour to complete their missions and objectives. This particular conflict has been going on for so long that the public is sick and tired of the inability of both sides to come to an equitable understanding and bring about a peace by the recognition of both having the right to live in accordance with their beliefs.

If recognising Israel as a nation by the Arab countries is required it would then naturally follow that the Palestinians have a right to nationhood and not a State within a nation. Until that happens, we the general public will be subjected to more online information wars and we like online information junkies will be glued to our monitors and/or screens.



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HAMAS AND ISRAEL STEP UP CYBER BATTLE FOR HEARTS AND MINDS

15 July Sarah Fowler BBC News.

Israeli military propaganda (left) versus pro-Palestinian cartoon tweeted by Hamas



The latest surge in fighting between Israel and militants in the Gaza Strip has seen both sides revive the intense social media battle that was seen during the last Israeli offensive on the coastal territory, "Operation Pillar of Defence", in November 2012. Sites such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook have been inundated with posts seeking to win the hearts and minds of people in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world. The Israeli military and the military wing of Hamas, the Islamist movement that dominates Gaza, have employed increasingly sophisticated methods and techniques to try to build their respective support bases.

War of numbers. Since launching "Operation Protective Edge" on 8 July, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has posted dozens of updates each day on its Twitter account, which it says provides "real-time information and updates". This seems to serve a number of purposes, from live-blogging events on the ground to telling its side of the story. Israel's "Rocket Counter" as it appears on Twitter. The IDF provides updates on rocket fire from Gaza and the activity of Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system, with tweets such as: "BREAKING: Iron Dome just intercepted 7 rockets above Ashkelon". It also posts what it calls the "Rocket Counter", giving the total number of rockets fired since the start of Operation Protective Edge.



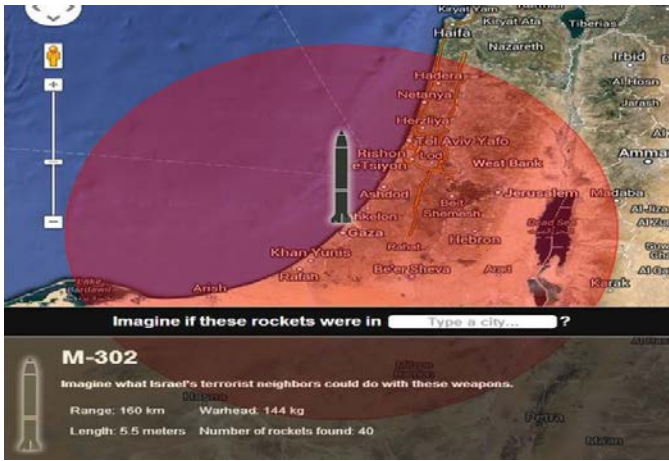
Hamas has been using a range of hashtags to promote its tweets. The English-language Twitter account of Hamas' military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, provides updates on casualties resulting from Israeli air strikes and reports on its own rocket activity, mirroring the IDF's account.

The Qassam Brigades operate several Twitter accounts in different languages, including Arabic and Hebrew, some of which have, at times, been suspended. Using the hashtags #GazaUnderAttack, #Gaza, #StopIsrael, and #PrayForGaza, the accounts defend the Qassam Brigades' actions and highlight the plight of Palestinian civilians. In a tweet that appeared to be aimed at the international community, the group said Palestinian casualties were "not just numbers". Both sides have increasingly turned to graphics to demonstrate their version of events in numbers and, at times, they have actively engaged with one another in an attempt to disprove a claim.



Hamas has a different take on this IDF graphic (original left) posted on Twitter. International sway. In its tweets, the IDF asks hypothetical "what if" questions with accompanying graphics to try to broadcast its message to the international community.

The IDF has even created an app, available on its [blog](#), asking people to "imagine" if Hamas lived in their country and fired rockets at their hometown.



It offers a series of maps that superimposes the Gaza Strip on other countries, including the US or UK, as a way to demonstrate the security threats it faces. The IDF has created an app aimed at helping people understand the scale of the rocket threat. The IDF has also referred to popular international events to frame its version of events in the current conflict.

Ahead of the 2014 FIFA World Cup final between Germany and Argentina, the IDF tweeted the number of Hamas rockets fired since the start of the tournament and urged people to "retweet so that all enjoying #GERvsARG will know". The use of the football hashtag would have doubtless broadcast this message to a much wider Twitter audience. Hamas tries to sway public opinion with images of injured Palestinians. Philip Howard, professor of communication at Central European University and University of Washington, says Hamas and the IDF both know that they have a wide audience, but that the bulk of their online followers come from overseas."



The most strategically important part of the audience are the journalists who follow their accounts.

They know that a well-placed tweet can help spin news coverage," he adds. Hamas has become more sophisticated in its use of social media for two reasons, says Mr Howard.

They want to reach out to journalists and leaders in the West and also try to remain engaged with young Palestinian supporters who may no longer see Hamas or the Palestinian Authority "as their best or only option", he continues.

Counter-offensive. The IDF and Hamas both post images and videos of the destruction and casualties caused by latest violence. Hamas tends to post more graphic images on its Twitter feed, including the bloodied corpses of children whom they say were killed in Israeli air strikes.



Doubts have been cast over the accuracy of some images that went viral on Twitter under the hashtag #GazaUnderAttack . Like Hamas, the IDF is active on several platforms, including the photo-sharing site Flickr. Recent images show Israeli civilians sheltering from rockets launched from Gaza, as well as military personnel.

One video posted by the IDF on its YouTube account, entitled 15 Seconds: Not Enough Time, compares the time it takes for athletes to run around a track and the time Israeli civilians have to take cover from incoming rocket fire. video caption reads: "During a rocket attack, Israelis living near Gaza only have 15 seconds to reach a bomb shelter. Even the world's fastest man wouldn't make it on time." Videos and counter videos have also surfaced, aimed at spinning the same events to each side's advantage.



Warnings. Hamas has meanwhile targeted the Israeli audience for the first time with the release of a music video sung in Hebrew and Arabic, the AFP news agency reports. The video, Shake Israel's Security, shows Hamas militants making, transporting and firing rockets at Israel in a bid to turn Israelis against the government.

There are also reports that hackers belonging to Hamas took over control of the Facebook page of Israel's Domino Pizza and published warnings in English, Arabic and Hebrew.

Both sides are broadcasting warnings to each other via social media channels. The hackers wrote in one Facebook status: "Today will strike deep in Israel, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem, Ashkelon, Ashdod more than 2000 rockets. We'll start at 7. Counting back towards the end of Israel...Be warned!" The IDF has also frequently issued warnings to Gazans online. In one recent tweet, it wrote: "To warn civilians of an impending strike, the IDF drops leaflets, makes personalized phone calls & sends SMSes.



How many militaries do that?" Meanwhile, Hamas officials have offered guidelines on social media use by civilians in Gaza in a video posted online.

In it, civilians are told not to publish images of rockets or missiles in central Gaza and to always mention "innocent civilians" when writing about casualties.

"There is nothing wrong with publishing images of the injured," it adds.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28292908>