

Press Tv: The mean spinning machine of the Islamic Republic

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Soft Power is not taken lightly by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Even if Iranian authorities extinguish independent or critical domestic media, they have launched an international English language news network that broadcasts 24 hours a day. "Press Tv was born out of the need to break the global media stranglehold of Western outlets. Press TV would be an occasion to develop for all people around the world the ideals of the late Imam, the great ideas of our great leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenai and the new outlooks of our beloved president Ahmadinejad" declared the Director General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcaster, Ezzatollah Zarghami, during the inauguration ceremony of the network. What Mr Zarghami failed to mention though is that Press Tv is a State owned, IRGC funded, Khomeini controlled network. For the readers who are not familiar with the modus operandi of the Islamic Revolution, it is worth bearing in mind that the Teheran junta fixes elections, persecutes religious minorities and murders homosexuals; it funds utterly bonkers extremist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah and various organizations responsible for terrorist attacks and mass murder in many parts of the world.

Operating in such a loaded environment, I wasn't surprised when I watched Press Tv and visited their website of how they blatantly turn factual news from competitive outlets into news pieces tailored to fit Khamenai's policies and how they clumsily make up facts to support their version of the news propaganda. For instance, the blogosphere relate a story that during the Green Revolution in Iran, Mr Zarghami, himself a former Republican Guard officer, attacked the "bias western media" on July 2009 and launched a smear campaign against BBC and CNN claiming that the Youtube videos of activist Neda Agha Soltan's death during the protests were "all fake and produced by Western Intelligence Services". Arguably, western media might have exaggerated to some extent the revolution's impact on the Iranian society. And since we are living in a world colored by shades of grey, almost every moral assertion is debatable and every truth can be someone else's "conspiracy". But when it comes to Press Tv, the "C word" is the lynchpin of the network. In no coincidence, every "and I'm choosing my words carefully" piece of news in the beltway contradicting the foreign policy of Iran is deemed to be a scheme of some sort, only visible to the brave and alert Press Tv reporters employed at different locations worldwide, including Washington, New York, London, Beirut, Damascus, Bahrain, Istanbul, al Basra, Jerusalem and many other strategic cities in the world.

While the network's one-sided reporting and twisted journalism pleases the hardliners in Iran, it did little to improve its stature as an English-speaking news station aimed to address an international base of viewers. The network's analysis marred by conspiracy theories and anti-Western paranoia only left it as much viewed as a low-budget weather channel and as much influential as a network of cults. In fact, Press Tv only received the international attention it seeks when it issued controversial reports "not to say utter non sense" to back certain claims made by president Ahmadinejad and other high-ranking Iranian officials. These reports morphed the news station into a Mecca for the most obsessed conspiracy authors and alienated every other normal viewer. In one report, Press Tv accused the Israeli Mossad and the CIA of orchestrating the single deadliest terrorist attack on American soil in September 11th 2001. In another report, Press Tv sided with Neo-Nazis fringes by denying the existence of the Holocaust and accused the Jewish elites of fabricating the detention camps stories to drag America into the war and pressure the colonial empires to help them "steal" the land of the Palestinians. Likewise, in 2007 a Press Tv website editorial about the failed terrorist attacks in London and Glasgow suggests they were part of an elaborate British plot to frame the "Muslim nation".

As one might expect, Press Tv didn't take long after their launching date before getting sanctioned for their unethical journalism. In 2010 the International Commission for Human Rights in Iran identified Press TV as being part of the Iranian regime's intelligence apparatus and as a collaborator with human rights violators for publicizing forced confessions of dissidents. By January 2011, this propaganda arm of the Iranian government has had its British bank account frozen. Furthermore, in May 2011, Ofcom, the regulatory authority for the telecommunication industries in the United Kingdom, ruled that Press TV was responsible for a serious breach of UK broadcasting rules and could face a fine for airing an interview with Maziar Bahari, the Newsweek journalist arrested covering the Iranian presidential election in 2009, that was obtained by force while he was held in a Teheran jail. Again, upon the release of Ofcom's findings, Mr Zarghami launched a smear campaign against Bahari and Ofcom. Bahari was accused of being a "an MI6 contact person" taking guidance from "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion"!

The Iranian news outlet faced another clash with reality during their coverage of the Arab Revolutions. Echoing the supreme leader words, Press Tv bent over backwards to picture the Arab youth movements as copycats of the

Khomeinist Islamic Revolution in 1979. Their extended coverage of the "Islamic Awakening" conference held recently in Teheran was their latest Hail Mary attempt to glue together a series of incoherent, often contradictory arguments to promote the supreme leader agenda. "The global arrogance led by the US and accompanied by Zionist lobbies and Britain sees its existence jeopardized as a result of the waves of Islamic Awakening in the Arab world, and has, therefore, moved in the direction of Iranophobia" declared in a Press Tv interview one Iranian MP participating in the conference. Obviously, none of Press Tv reporters dared to ask any challenging question to the so-called Arab Spring "experts" regarding Iran's double standards when it excluded the Syrian Revolution of the "awakening" to label it instead as a NATO led conspiracy executed by "radical terrorist elements". Needless to say, the propositions held by the conference speakers quickly turned into mockery by the bloggers and tweeters in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya where the images of the Iranian youth murdered in the streets when they protested against a rigged election and a life-long unelected supreme leader are still fresh in the collective memory. A witty Syrian Facebook activist did some extra research and shared on his profile page Press Tv's past editorials praising the violent Islamist insurgents in Somalia who waged Jihad against their government, their neighboring country, Ethiopia, and reportedly sought to annex other states to create what's known as "Greater Somalia". These Somali insurgents supposedly share the same "values" of the alleged "Syrian radicals" that Press Tv apparently hates so much. The Syrian Facebook activist attached one comment on these articles: "Iran, even your double standards have double standards!"

Another ridiculous ongoing debacle of the 24-hours news agency of government press releases is when it attempts to sway the public opinion into believing that while it's broadcasting from an isolated country where freedom of expression is suppressed in violence, it still holds the undeniable truth about the internal affairs of the United States of America. Almost on a daily basis, news segments and articles from Press Tv claim that the current "Occupy Wall Street" movement is another child of the late Khomeini Islamic Revolution. In one online editorial, an author boasts that "as the situation stands, a revolution is manifestly bound to happen no matter what the consequences might be. Under the influence of the popular uprisings in the Islamic world better known as the "Islamic Awakening" inspired by Iran's revolution back in 1979, the American community has begun to wake up and has decided to carve out their own fate instead of feeling their way in the dark. Only time will now tell how much harsher the regime in the US will become in order to maintain their power." This short sample of what features hourly on Press Tv is bound to make even the most serious of people chuckle. Comparing a civil society movement in a free and democratic country to an Islamic takeover of power that installed a bitter theocracy on its helm can only make sense in the minds of the brain-washed indoctrinated followers of the supreme leader. Most probably, it will make sense in Press Tv's former Chief online editor, Mr Abdulrahman, an American fugitive wanted by the FBI for murdering a press aide to the late Shah of Iran in Maryland.

Press TV is what is commonly referred to in the Middle East as the infamous "State Tv": a bunch of people ordered to lie on live tv for the common good of the ruling apparatus. The regular viewer is invited to take a resilience test by watching Press Tv and measuring his tolerance for 24h crap news, in English.

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