West's Information War Continues

YouTube has recently deleted the latest channel used by Iranian state media's PressTV. The move follows attacks on the Iranian media outlet by US-based social media giant Facebook earlier this year.

PressTV's own take on the deletion in its article, "Google renews attack on YouTube account of Iran’s Press TV," would note:

Google has for the seventh time targeted Iranian broadcaster Press TV, blocking the English-language news network’s access to its official YouTube account without any prior notice.

The US tech giant shut YouTube accounts of Press TV late on Tuesday, citing "violations of community guidelines."

Iranian state media is only the most recent target of US censorship and information warfare, with YouTube, Facebook and Twitter having also recently de-platformed government accounts in Myanmar as well as a concerted effort by these same networks to either de-platform or undermine the credibility of Russian and Chinese state media.

The use of ambiguous justifications like "violations of community guidelines" which themselves can be ambiguous and open to interpretation, helps demonstrate the political nature of what is clearly a campaign of censorship.
YouTube and other US-based social media platforms, still dominating the global social media industry, attempt to portray targets of what is clearly politically-motivated censorship as "fake news" or somehow engaged in dangerous "disinformation," while the accounts of Western-based media organizations actually involved in very real disinformation, often times in promotion of sanctions and warfare having a direct impact on millions of lives, remain online and in good standing.

Western Monopoly Challenged

Beyond social media, the UK had recently ousted Chinese state media, CGTN, which was met by Beijing in turn shutting down BBC broadcasts in China.

More recently, China-based BBC reporter John Sudworth would flee to Taiwan, fearing legal actions for his outrageous, one-sided propaganda regarding Xinjiang.

The BBC’s own article, "BBC China correspondent John Sudworth moves to Taiwan after threats," deliberately attempts to portray Sudworth as a victim of "threats" rather than a foreign agent involved in political interference under the guise of journalism finally facing legitimate legal actions.

The BBC article laments:

The number of international media organisations reporting from China is shrinking. Last year China expelled correspondents for the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal, among others.

And in September 2020, the last two reporters working in China for Australian media flew home after a five-day diplomatic standoff.

The Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) of China says foreign journalists are “being caught up in diplomatic rows out of their control”.

In reality, these foreign “journalists” aren't being "caught up in diplomatic rows," they are the primary actors helping drive these rows.

It's worth mentioning leaked documents revealing the BBC, among others including Reuters, signing secret contracts with the British Foreign Office to carry out influence operations both inside Russia and along Russia's peripheries in Eastern Europe.

It is without doubt that the BBC engages in similar activities inside and along China's borders as well, with Sudworth's own work clearly aimed at advancing Western foreign policy, not investigating or reporting actual news.

Years ago, the notion of Western nations fearing alternative media enough to engage in sweeping, transparent censorship against outlets like PressTV or CGTN, or the Western media fleeing or backpedalling in countries they've maintained offices in for years, would seem unthinkable.

The information war waged by Western nations is indeed heating up, but it is not the one-sided exercise of monopoly it used to be.

Today, alternative media, both state-sponsored and independent, poses a serious challenge to the West's monopoly over the creation and flow of global information. Only through the West's control over a relatively new form of media, social media, is the West's edge maintained.

For Iranian, Chinese, Russian and the media of many other nations seeking to introduce balance to the global conversation, the West's hitherto control over social media remains a serious hurdle.

US-based social media networks have been key to advancing Western foreign policy objectives, and perhaps especially in the realm of promoting and executing so-called "color revolutions."

Russia and China's recent pledge to work closer together to counter Western-sponsored "color revolution" and "disinformation" might benefit from a multipolar alternative to US-based social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

While Russia and China both have their own domestic alternatives which have proved an effective measure to
protect their own respective information space, the creation of a wider-appealing platform for nations along their peripheries, targeted by Western disinformation, could help give state-sponsored and independent alternative media the space it needs to finally balance out the lopsided advantage the West artificially maintains through censorship across its own networks.

The creation of both sovereign information space within nations and shared space between nations but outside of the control of Western censorship would be infinitely useful. When long-standing media organizations like PressTV struggle to reach audiences for a lack of alternatives to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, the utility of such space becomes clearer still.

*Gunnar Ulson, a New York-based geopolitical analyst and writer especially for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.*