Syrian ambassador: Electronic media and their role in the war against Syria

Below we offer for your attention the presentation by Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to Russia Dr. Riad Haddad that was made at the first international NEO conference "The Role of the Russian and foreign electronic media in the objective coverage of the most pressing international challenges of our time", which was held on 28 November 2013.

The content of the events that have been unfolding in Syria since March 2011 does not fall within the terms which are being used today when the talk is about the open war declared on Syria more than two and a half years ago. The facts confirm that everything that is going on is a combination of different types of war: a conventional war, a bandit war, a street war as well as diplomatic, economic, political, psychological, intellectual, and, most importantly, information and electronic wars. All of these wars have now spread beyond the Syrian borders, and the World Wide Web is being used as a theatre of operations where clashes are constantly taking place and their traces are left behind in real battlefields. Here I need to mention hackers' attacks on the electronic version of the Syrian news agency SANA on the part of the USA, as well as the ban imposed on the satellite broadcasting of Syria's television through the ArabSat and NileSat satellites as part of the sanctions imposed on Syria in order to conceal from the global community the truth about the events developing in Syria and its confrontation to terrorism. The local television channels have also been repeatedly attacked, for example, the Syrian News Channel al Ikhbariya. And we understand all difficulties associated with the coverage of all aspects of this war, hence we will dwell only on the information and electronic wars and their role in the Syrian conflict.

All parties to the conspiracy and aggression against our country have used the most terrible and heaviest weapon, that is, the radical fatwas, which would not have left such terrible traces if they had not been disseminated through various mass media, especially through two of them - the mendacious mercenary television, contributing to the bloodshed of Syrian citizens, and the electronic media which do not know boundaries. The specific feature of these types of the media is that they include both the press and television, and in order to get familiar with the electronic media's role in the open war against Syria it is necessary to distinguish between three types of these media:

1. Electronic media, the war accomplices.

Multiple studies conducted by different scientific and research centres, including those in Western Europe and the USA, have established the fact that dozens of well-known satellite channels have been accomplices in the bloodshed of the Syrian people alongside dozens of information agencies and one hundred electronic media conveying information in different languages. All this diversity of the mass media focused from the first months of the crisis on the coverage of a distorted picture of the developments that were unfolding in Syria by showing that while numerous "people's demonstrators" demanded to shift the regime and these people supposedly raised legitimate slogans, the Government responded to that with force and the use of bullets.

All of it is far from the truth, and even if these reports contained a tiny portion of the truth, it was a many-fold exaggeration. For example, instead of the dozen demonstrators who were actually there, the media alleged that there were thousands of them. And there were many such cases every day. It had gone so far that websites started spreading information about "criminal acts" filmed in other Arab countries and saying that they had been done by
the Syrian regime. And all of it was done in total disregard of the fact that millions of the residents of the country held demonstrations in different cities across Syria in support of the Government and President Mr. Bashar al-Assad.

The most horrible stage in the use of the electronic media was when armed bandits were filming their criminal actions and disseminating them across the information network. This is what happened, for example, in the case of the video footage which showed a terrorist called Abu Sakkar from the so-called Free Army eating in front of the camera the heart of a Syrian soldier killed by him, let alone many other facts demonstrating hundreds of unprecedented crimes, including children’s presence when people’s heads were cut off. Of course, all of that was done in order to create terror and fear in the hearts of civilians so that the latter agreed to become the necessary soil for the blossoming of terrorism.

2. Syrian electronic media

In spite of the enormous difference in the capabilities of using the electronic media, Syria’s young people have proved their patriotism. Thousands of young people volunteered spontaneously to create the Syrian electronic army, which was also taking part in the war side by side with the soldiers, but only in the world-wide network and using virtual weapons. Having improved their skills, they managed to attack the most well-known media which had been trying to increase the bloodshed in Syria, and our patriots posted there information which proved the greatness of our country. It should be noted at this point that the Syrian electronic media, which were mainly unofficial, managed in cooperation with the official national media to put right the distorted picture which was conveyed by the hostile information agencies and to discredit the enemy’s falsified information which misled people and it was spread by the most famous information empires. Here are just two of them: Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. When there were threats from Obama and statements about the necessity of military invasion of Syria, the Syrian young people managed to get hold of the email addresses of some American congressmen, communicated with them and exposed facts of the direct participation of the American Administration and its real responsibility for the bloodshed in Syria, for the dozens of thousands of innocent victims who had perished because of the overt and covert American support for the terrorist groups which had been included by America itself in the black list of prohibited terrorist organisations subject to elimination.

3. Russian electronic media

Everyone is well aware that Russia's official position constituted in the protection of international law and of the truth, in general, from the outset of the crisis. Its position was based, first of all, on the need to respect the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits any interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. And the truth is that the firmness of this policy made the hot heads reassess their position many times before intervening in the situation, which could have sent the region over the edge. Anyone who has followed the coverage of the events by the Russian media will understand that their actions were objective and professional, emanated from the real situation and were far from all kinds of exaggeration and distortion. Here we can name a few methods showing an active role of the electronic media during the crisis:

(A) conveyance of information on the developments in the battlefield by Russian correspondents and journalists who follow the army during the hostilities, and then posting this information to the special websites of the information agencies whose representatives, both from television channels and the press, have visited Syria.

(B) visits to hot spots and coverage of the truth about the developments, especially events in those areas which have found a lot of resonance in the international community; for example, when Russian correspondents visited the Syrian-Turkish border and the town of Khan al-Assal and carried out an objective professional investigation. Their work made it possible to show that the terrorists of the armed groups were precisely those bandits who had used chemical weapons. Then all the materials of that investigation were handed over to UN experts. These actions, as well as the dissemination of this information across websites, became an important step on the path of showing the truthful events occurring in Syria and exposing the hostile media spreading falsified information.

C) preparation of documentary programmes about some military operations that took place in the zones of clashes between government forces and armed terrorist groups. This was done so professionally that televiewers would feel like they were present in the battlefield.

D) participation of many Russian political analysts in TV talk shows which presented an objective point of view explaining Russia's position based on compliance with international law. Such actions stressed the need to look for a political solution to putting an end to the circle of violence created as a result of the systemic terrorism which is being tried to be brought to Russia.
E) coverage of the activities and statements of Russian high-ranking officials with the help of Russian websites. This, in turn, helped expose the lies around Syria.

In a word, I would like to emphasise that the electronic media played an important role in the open war against Syria. And here it is necessary to underline, on the one hand, the role of the electronic media of the enemy, who tried to fan the flames, and, on the other hand, the constructive role of the electronic media that are friendly to us, which revealed significant facts and made a great contribution to the shaping of the world public opinion which is against the war and bloodshed.

Finally I would like to say that the media, in all their diversity, and the electronic media, in particular, do not only cover and convey information on current events, but they also create these events.

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