

TRUTH IS THE FIRST CASUALTY IN A WAR

OUTLINE:-

1- Introduction

Truth finds little or no space in the times of war. Digital media and political decisions makes it hard for truth to find space. However, with digital literacy and checked media, truth can still survive in the times of war.

2- Misinformation is the first tool deployed in modern warfare

3- Why truth finds no space in a time of conflict

- a- To demoralise the opponent
- b- Invaders depicts invaded country as cause of conflict to gain support
- c- Deny the responsibility for the harm
- d- To manipulate public support in their favour
- e- To deny any harm is being done

4- Methods by which misinformation is spread in the times of war

- a- Social media is used to spread false news
- b- Pictorial tampering to invoke public sentiments
- c- Lobbying in multi-lateral organizations
- d- International laws are misinterpreted
- e- Fake news reports are used to justify war crimes

5- How truth can still survive even in a state of war

a- Digital literacy should be promoted

b- Social media platforms should play

to neutral role

c- Masses should focus on the historical

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d- UN should report reality through

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play its role to avoid war crimes

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IS THE FIRST CASUALTY

We live in a world where all wars will begin as cyber wars. It's the combination of hacking and massive, well-coordinated disinformation campaigns. (Jared Cohen, The New Digital Age). These words of Jared Cohen stand true in modern warfare where misinformation is the first tool to be deployed. Misinformation is used to demoralise the opponent and to blame the victim as cause of invasion. Arresting the responsibility of casualties, to gain public support and to deny any harm that is being done are the main reasons for which truth finds no space in the times of war. Misinformation is spread through social media, pictorial tampering and lobbying in the multilateral organizations. International laws are misinterpreted and fake reports are used to justify war crimes. However, by promoting digital literacy and constructive role of social media platforms, truth can still survive even in a state of war. Masses should focus on the historical context of conflict. United Nation and International Court of Justice should play their role in war times. Truth finds little or no space in the times of war. Digital media and political decisions makes it hard for truth to find space. However, with digital literacy and

checked media, truth can still survive
in the times of war.

In the times of war and conflict,
disinformation is often the first weapon
to be deployed. Constant exposure to
disinformation can leave masses confused,
uncertain about who or what to believe
or trust. Uncertainty leads to inaction
and compels us to stand aloof at a time
when the world most needs our help.

Thanks to the speed of internet and social
media, false and misleading information
reaches us faster and more persuasively
today than ever before. Therefore, educating
people about the role of misinformation
has become important than ever before.

There are several reasons due to which
truth finds no space in the time of conflict.

The primary motive of spreading
misinformation during conflict is to demoralize
the opponent. False statistics are used to
show that one side has complete advantage
over the other which demoralises the
public and army of weaker side. Public
morale is a catalyst for any army during
the conflict. For instance, the military
strengths of Pakistan and India are mostly
deceptively compared. India is the world's
most populous country with much larger
area as compared to Pakistan. Therefore,

it requires much larger forces than Pakistan. These factors are deliberately ignored to demoralise the public so that they don't retaliate with full strength in case of conflict. Hence, misinformation is a prime tool to demoralise the opponent.

Invaders use misinformation to blame the invaded country as cause of conflict. This tactic is generally used to gain the support of public. Firstly, the leaders during war hypocritically portray how the invaded country was a threat to general public and then portray themselves as saviours of general public. This tactic was efficiently used by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to depict Hamas ruled Palestine as cause of current Israel-Hamas conflict to provoke public sentiments in his favour. Thus, disinformation is also used to mold the public sentiments in one's favour.

False news is also spread during the conflicts to deny the responsibilities for casualties. International laws encompass all the war crimes. Any misuse of force can yield to dire consequences for leadership after the war. Therefore, aggressor states usually deny any such acts during the war even though they commit it. Recently, in Israel-Hamas conflict, Israel has

used white phosphorus to attack Hamas army and general public. Use of white phosphorus is war crime, therefore when Israel's stake holders were asked about it, they denied all such claims to escape war crime charges. Hence, misinformation is also used to avert responsibilities of casualties.

Another reason to spread misinformation is to mold public support in favour. This public support includes the support of national and international public. International public support has a great potential to be turned into international military and economic support. During the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Ukraine was portrayed as a victim of US Russian aggression which led to billion of dollars of support to Ukraine. However, Russia indulged into war to avoid NATO forces at its doorstep. Public sentiment is provoked through misinformation.

Lastly, misinformation is used to deny any harm that is being done to general public. It is a common war rule that only military fights and civilian population remains unharmed. Women, children and elders are dealt with dignity during wars. However, in some cases, these norms are violated.

Recently, Al-Shifa hospital, which contained about 1800 patients, was bombed by Israeli forces leading to multiple deaths. Similarly, the captives were stripped and their footage was uploaded on social media by Israeli forces, when Israeli foreign minister was asked about it, he denied the responsibility. Hence, misinformation is sometimes used to promote the sainthood of a sinner.

These are multiple means through which misinformation can spread. In modern era, social media is the prime source to spread false news. Social media platforms lack regulation by any specific state and freedom of expression generally turns into an unavoidable evil. Personal opinions and affiliations shadow the reality. In 2022, 10.9 lacks TikTok accounts were blocked as they were unverified. A report by European Union disinfo lab suggest that almost 75 channels were working to defame Pakistan as terrorist state. Hence social media is used as a tool to spread misinformation.

Pictorial tampering is another method to spread misinformation. These tampered pictures are used to provoke public sentiments. It is often quoted that "seeing is believing", this fallible

tendency of human is, generally tapped through false or tempered images. During war on terror, many reports of Washington Times were having false images to tap public sentiments. This led to public support to US to continue the aggression. Therefore, pictorial tempering is one of the ways to spread misinformation.

Lobbying in multilateral organizations can lead to misinformation.

Multilateral organizations such as United Nations, NATO, European Union etc. have lobbying groups. The world leaders having similar interest, can go against the reality to achieve their strategic aims. Modern politics turn on Machiavellian principles which deny ethics in politics. In recent Palestine conflict, the truth of Israel is the ultimate truth for US, France, Italy, UK, and many other countries. The leaders of these countries spread the self proclaimed truths of Israel in their countries leading to misinformation.

International laws are misinterpreted to spread misinformation. International laws are based upon the nation state principles in which countries are sovereign. Right to self defence and peaceful co-existence are the fundamental principles of the international

Laws. However, during conflicts these laws are misinterpreted. In the recent two wars, the right to self defence was interpreted as the right to aggression. Israel heartlessly attacked poor Palestinians on the basis of right to self defence. They killed more than 19,000 people and called it self defence. Therefore, misinterpretation of international law leads to misinformation.

Fake news reports are also used to justify war crimes. During war times, media exceeds its natural business to support specific group. Documentaries and fake news reports leaves the audience with half baked truth. People get confused about reality which leads towards inaction. For instance, during recent Hamas-Israel war, a video footage went viral in which 600 kids were killed brutally. Israel, as well as White House, blamed Hamas for kids slaughter. Lately, Al-Jazeera and New York Times confirmed that the killers (were not Hamas) people. Although the truth found its way, yet it was delayed. It seems difficult for truth to find place during conflicts but with certain measures, reality can still survive in war times. First of all, digital literacy should be promoted among masses. With the rise of internet in 21st century, world

has adapted digitalization. Electronic media took over the print media. Sources of news have increased but the legitimacy of news have decreased. Therefore, masses should leave the old trends to accept the news as it is. People should not check the news and then believe or absorb any information as true. Prophet PBUH also declared a person a liar who spreads or accepts false news or any news without verification. By promoting digital literacy, the truth can still survive in this age of technology. Moreover, with the rise of internet and electronic age, social media have strongly developed its roots in the modern world. Social media platforms should play neutral role during conflicts. In reality, this is not the case. Social media platforms have their biasness towards western bloc. The truth of west is supported by social media. For instance, Elon Musk, new owner of X (previously Twitter), showed clear biasness towards Israel by banning all the posts on X in the support of Palestine of which were against Israel particularly. Social media should avoid such biasness and serve as neutral platform. Masses should focus on the historical context of conflict if they

want to reach truth. Sadly, decisions (and) opinions nowadays are based on emotions and emotional connections rather than reality and rationality. The conflicts in the world have deep rooted history. For instance, war of Independence 1857 is portrayed as mutiny against Britishers by the locals. But in reality, it was the result of grievances local had due to the misconduct of British rulers. Similarly, current Hamas-Israel war is not due to attack of Hamas of 7th Oct, 2023 but the seeds of conflict were sown in 1897. Hence, masses should consider the historical contexts before forming any opinions.

UN should also play its constructive role in the times of war. It should report reality through digital media platforms. Mainstream media is mostly biased nowadays. Political affiliations overcome the affinity for truth. UN should develop its own mainstream channels for communication of reality. Their members should be allowed to cover the war. Safety of their members shall be assured from both sides. Although their are channels where UN proceedings are available, yet there should be proper media setup that can be activated during conflicts.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) should play its role to avoid war crimes. Only ICJ is the body which have legitimacy to interpret international laws. These decisions are also binding. The leaders and generals who commit war crimes shall be prosecuted. For instance, ICJ should probe into the use of white phosphorus in recent war. If it is proved that banned chemical was used, then the culprits should be penalized.

In a nutshell, it is true that it is difficult for truth to find space in the times of conflicts. The reality gets disillusioned and strategic interests become the ultimate reality. Sadly, reality of the super powers become the reality of media groups. Pictorial temporing, lobbying in multilateral organizations and social media play their role in propagating false information. But one can still hope to reach truth if one puts sincere efforts for it. Digital literacy, understanding the historical basis of conflicts and checked social can help truth to find space. It is rightly said that where there is a will, there is a way. One just has to put sincere effort to know the reality and one would reach it then.