MEMRI TV: The Neo-Fascist Propaganda Machine

What is MEMRI TV

A lot of people have become fond of this source of information and media, particularly in the western world. In the Muslim world, its adoption as a source for news was a bit different. Many of the Muslims in different forums merely publicized its transmissions much like Americans publicize youtube. However, little do the audiences of both worlds know the exact nature that forms the framework of MEMRI's tactical methodology in its conveyance of news.

A little basic information may help before getting to the meat and potatoes of the subject matter. According to the Institute's web site, "emphasizes the continuing relevance of Zionism to the Jewish people and to the state of Israel." It "explores the Middle East through the region's media". MEMRI bridges the language gap which exists between the West and the Middle East, providing timely translations of Arabic, Farsi, and Hebrew media, as well as original analysis of political, ideological, intellectual, social, cultural, and religious trends in the Middle East."

MEMRI has several offices around the world. Americans work in D.C.; British, Spaniards, Italians, Germans, and Norwegians work in the European Union; Israelis in Israel; Japanese in Japan; Arabs also make up some of the people who work for MEMRI.

The MEMRI Web site also says, "selected subtitled clips from mainly Arabic and Iranian television have been published since 2004." www.memritv.org

MEMRI's stance is that it is opposed to Islamic fundamentalism, not Islam itself, although the integrity of this position may be questioned because of links on MEMRI's website to certain evangelical Christian organizations who take a harder line on Islam. Yigal Carmon, MEMRI's founder, is a former advisor on terrorism to the Israeli Prime Ministers, Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin, so he actually worked for both Labor and Likud governments. Praise for MEMRI should be taken with a grain of salt since it is almost always motivated by politics, not the quantity or quality of MEMRI's work.

MEMRI has gained currency with most pro-Israel writers, as well as right-wing publications.

Who founded MEMRI?

MEMRI was co-founded by Meyrav Wurmser and its founder is Colonel Yigal Carmon, formerly of Israeli military intelligence, "both of whom were early critics of the Oslo accords.". The source of their critical opposition to the Oslo accords has unfortunately been removed from "The Jewish Daily Forward"

Colonel Carmon spent 22 years in Israeli military intelligence and later served as counter terrorism adviser to two Israeli prime ministers, Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin

Retrieving another now-deleted page from the archives of Memri's website also throws up a list of its staff. Of the six people named, three - including Col Carmon - are described as having worked for Israeli intelligence.

Among the other three, one served in the Israeli army's Northern Command Ordnance Corps, one has an
academic background, and the sixth is a former stand-up comedian. Col Carmon's co-founder at Memri is Meyrav Wurmser, who is also director of the centre for Middle East policy at the Indianapolis-based Hudson Institute, which bills itself as "America's premier source of applied research on enduring policy challenges".

MEMRI TV’s Mission

So what is this menace to journalism about? Well, here is a quote from their own website.

MEMRI’s main projects include:

- **THE JIHAD & TERRORISM PROJECT** ([http://www.memri.org/subject/en/50.htm](http://www.memri.org/subject/en/50.htm)): This project provides research about Islamist ideology and Islamist organizations that threaten the West, and also monitors groups that educate and preach jihad and martyrdom in mosques, school systems, and the media.

- **THE REFORM PROJECT** ([http://www.memri.org/subject/en/804.htm](http://www.memri.org/subject/en/804.htm)): This project monitors advocates of reform in the Arab and Muslim world, and the obstacles that they face in advancing their cause. The goal of this project is to provide reformists with a platform from which they can reach out to their societies and to religious, political, and educational leaders while also providing Western policy makers with a solid basis for long-term strategic plans aimed at supporting this effort.

- **The Anti-Semitism Documentation Project** ([http://www.memri.org/subject/en/51.htm](http://www.memri.org/subject/en/51.htm)): The Antisemitism Documentation Project documents antisemitic themes in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu-Pashtu, and Turkish newspaper reports, editorials, and other media sources. This project maintains the largest archive in the world of translated material from the Middle East from the past decade. In 2009, MEMRI, in conjunction with The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights, dedicated the Lantos Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial Archives, which will be the repository of MEMRI's Anti-Semitism Documentation Project.

- **THE ARAB & IRANIAN TV MONITORING PROJECT** ([http://www.memritv.org/](http://www.memritv.org/)): This project has produced thousands of clips and hundreds of hours of footage – the largest archives in the world. MEMRI TV is viewed in 197 countries around the world, and to date over 20 million visitors have accessed its website. The MEMRI TV Project monitors over 50 channels around the clock from Iran and the Arab world.

- **THE URDU & PASHTU MEDIA PROJECT** ([http://www.memri.org/subject/en/816.htm](http://www.memri.org/subject/en/816.htm)): This project, launched in January 2008, is vital to understanding the region that includes Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since the Urdu-Pashtu Media Project's inception, MEMRI has published reports and in-depth analytical research papers tracking and analyzing trends in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The themes covered have included cultural and religious freedom, terrorism, and emerging threats to international security; all are of significant value to the international counterterrorism community.

- **The Iran Studies Project** ([http://www.memri.org/content/en/country.htm?country=iran](http://www.memri.org/content/en/country.htm?country=iran)): This project is the only research project in the world that monitors, studies, and translates materials from the Iranian media on a day-to-day basis. The project, which is headed by native-born Iranians, has produced hundreds of hours of translations from Iran's most important media outlets and websites, including over 40 newspapers and more than 16 TV channels, as well as hundreds of original analyses on issues of vital importance, such as Iran's pursuit of nuclear capability, the growth of the Iranian military, speeches by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the increasing influence of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard
Corps (IRGC), political unrest in Iran, Friday sermons from Iranian leaders, and much more. The project also monitors liberals and reformists in Iran, including the Green Movement, advocates of women's rights and human rights, democracy, and other issues.

So what is the contention here? Well my dear readers, we have to translate the words of these individuals according to what they really intend and are meant to perform. This is because western media is inherent with double speak, rhetoric, and yes, even deception. The basis of the project is to select the most controversial content, seeking the most radical thereof, and to then spread its content for the purpose of demonization of the whole of the Arab world in particular and that of the Islamic world at large. In essence, it is a way to apply an "academic" spin on the realities on ground so as to gain worldwide sympathy and thus leading to international agreement with regard to policies enacted by imperial powers.

Let's have a look into the reliable nature of its operations

**Realm of Operations**

Since we know that MEMRI is operated by a group closely associated with the Israeli intelligence organizations then we can understand why an article in Haaretz, we find that the Israeli Army has sought to plant stories about "terrorism" in the press, and

"Psychological warfare officers were in touch with Israeli journalists covering the Arab world, gave them translated articles from Arab papers (which were planted by the [Israel Defense Forces] IDF) and pressed the Israeli reporters to publish the same news here." --Amos Harel, [IDF reviving psychological warfare unit](http://www.haaretz.com), Haaretz, January 25, 2005.

This should raise a question or two about the reliability and veracity of the stories peddled by MEMRI.

This is what Prof. Juan Cole had to say about this:

"So is MEMRI, which translates articles from the Arabic press into English for thousands of US subscribers, in any way involved in all this? Its director formerly served in... Israeli military intelligence. How much of what we "know" from "Arab sources" about "Hizbullah terrorism" was simply made up by this fantasy factory in Tel Aviv?
As someone who reads the Arabic press quite a lot, this sort of revelation is extremely disturbing. I also saw an allegation that British military intelligence had planted stories in the US press about Saddam's Iraq.
You begin to wonder how much of what you think you know is just propaganda manufactured by some bored colonel. No wonder post-Baath Iraq looks nothing like what we were led to to expect by the press, including the Arab press!"

Another assessment:

If you rely on MEMRI for your knowledge of Arab discourse, you are really not informed. Arab public opinion, based on MEMRI's releases, is reduced or caricatured to either Bin Laden fans or Bush fans, while Arab public opinion is mostly a fan of neither people. --As'ad AbuKhalil
Although widely used in the mainstream media as a source of information on the Arab world, it is as trustworthy as Julius Streicher's Der Sturmer was on the Jewish world. --Norman Finkelstein
If this is not enough, here is another example, the Wafa Sultan incident (which I myself personally watched)

Los Angeles based Syrian/American Psychiatrist Wafa Sultan appeared on an al-Jazeera television show opposite Dr. Ibrahim al-Khouly, a lecturer at Cairo's Al-Azhar University. Memri offered a heavily edited version of the show, and mistranslated several of the exchanges, making it appear that al-Khouly had issued a death fatwa against Sultan. Wafa Sultan became known as someone who had her life threatened because of her "Clash of Civilizations" point of view.

It turns out that Sultan had appeared on a daytime al Jazeera show, roughly equivalent to Jerry Springer, that Western Educated Dr. Ibrahim al-Khouly had not issued a fatwa, and as he is not a recognized Mufti, had he issued a fatwa, it would not be considered in any way, authoritarian.

A secularist blog covering topics broadly related to MENA, named Aqoul, took a tape of the whole show, and translated it, making it available in a PDF file: Transcript Translation: al-Jazeera - The Opposite Direction (26/02/2006). Posts on Aqoul, as well as one on the Winds of Change blog offer a great deal of insight into the distortions:

- Fatwas and Wafa Sultan, Aqoul, March 15, 2006
- On MEMRI & Translations: Winds of Change, a Thread Reply, Aqoul, March 29, 2006
- How to be a Muslim reformer, Aqoul, March 13, 2006
- MEMRI Mendacity, brief thoughts, Aqoul, October 14, 2006
- A Fine Illustration of MEMRI Mendacity, Aqoul, October 14, 2006

This is what Counter Punch has to say about the mendacious agitprop of MEMRI TV

A bizarre "interview" with imprisoned former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was circulated yesterday by MEMRI TV, a non-profit in Washington DC that specializes in translating and circulating mainly Arab-language materials, selected to display the Arab world in a poor light, to the advantage of Israel.

MEMRI tries to SLAPP those who reveal its nature

In November 2004, MEMRI threatened Middle East scholar Juan Cole (Univ. of Michigan) with a SLAPP lawsuit unless he retracted some of his claims.

Nature of the charges pace Cole:

"Colonel Carmon's letter makes three charges: 1) that I alleged that MEMRI receives $60 million a year for its operations. 2) That I alleged that MEMRI cherry-picks the vast Arab press for articles that make the Arabs look bad. 3) That I said that MEMRI was affiliated with the Likud Party."

Cole replies:
1. I think he would find that in democratic countries, in any case, a dispute over an organization's level of funding would be laughed out of court as a basis for a libel action. In fact, I am giggling as I write this.

2. "I continue to maintain that MEMRI is selective and biased against the Arab press, and that it highlights pieces that cast Arabs, especially committed Muslims, in a negative light."

3. "I did not allege that MEMRI or Colonel Carmon are "affiliated" with the Likud Party. What I said was that MEMRI functions as a PR campaign for Likud Party goals."

Source: MEMRI tries a SLAPP

Further scandalous demagoguery by MEMRI was brought to the fore with the Norman Finkelstein incident. As many of you may or may not know, Norman Finkelstein is a distinguished political expert and commentator and an adversary to U.S. backed Israeli foreign policy against the Palestinians.

Norman Finkelstein has clarified this incident in his website, the relevant excerpt here is what I chose to quote here. He says

The truth about MEMRI
MEMRI is a main arm of Israeli propaganda. Although widely used in the mainstream media as a source of information on the Arab world, it is as trustworthy as Julius Streicher's Der Sturmer was on the Jewish world. The evidence
MEMRI recently posted what it alleged was an interview I did with Lebanese television on the Nazi holocaust. The MEMRI posting was designed to prove that I was a Holocaust denier. Below I juxtapose the MEMRI version of my interview (both the actual broadcast version as well as the transcript it prepared) against what I actually said in the interview.

And then he posted the real interview both on video and transcription which can be found in his website here http://www.normanfinkelstein.com/how-memri-doctored-finkelsteins-interview-to-portray-him-as-a-holocaust-denier/

What Officials have Characterized About MEMRI

In an interview that Finkelstein had with InFocus,

"They use the same sort of propaganda techniques as the Nazis," Professor Norman G. Finkelstein, a well-known scholar on Israel/Palestine, told InFocus. "They take things out of context in order to do personal and political harm to people they don't like."

He ends with saying

"I think it's a reliable assumption that anything MEMRI translates from the Middle East is going to be unreliable," Finkelstein said.

Laila Lalami, writing in The Nation, states that MEMRI "consistently picks the most violent, hateful rubbish it can find, translates it and distributes it in e-mail newsletters to media and members of Congress in Washington". As a result, critics such as Ken Livingstone state, MEMRI's analyses are "distortion."
Whitaker states

“The stories it selects for translation follow a particular pattern: either they reflect badly on the character of Arabs or they in some way further the political agenda of Israel” (2002)

Harris says

“MEMRI engages in the practice of publishing selective and decontextualized excerpts of the Arabic press in ways that can present opponents of [Israel’s] occupation as religious extremists or anti-Semites” (2003)

Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London, says in 2005

“A well funded organization which specializes in finding quotes from Arab media for circulation in the West. The translation and selection of quotes tend to portray Islam in a very negative light”

These quotes, and many others were provided by Mona Baker of Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group in a world entitled “Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account” on page 74.

Conclusion

As we can see, this is just one example of the corporate sponsored media propaganda aimed with the usual vitriolic endeavors of maligning Islam and to seek the perpetual state sponsored terrorism that the Jewish state continues to perform in violation of international law.