



They are turning social media against us. Using it to influence our elections. Spreading propaganda. Disguising it as news. Pretty scary stuff.

I'm not talking about Russia. That's amateur hour. The media organization I'm talking about operates right here, in the USA. Out in the open. Legally.

It has a large staff of on-air personalities, reporters, cameramen and editors. It operates out of state-of-the-art studios in Washington DC, London, Rio, and half a dozen other major cities. It produces videos, news reports, and documentaries. It has tens of millions of social media followers. Their content is viewed and shared by countless young people across the western world. In short, they're targeting us.

CNN, right? Wrong.

Fox News? Wrong again.

The answer is... AJ+.

If you've spent time on social media, you've seen their stuff, I promise you. This isn't the work of a scrappy start-up in Silicon Valley. AJ+ is bankrolled by the government of Qatar. Never heard of Qatar? Most people haven't.

It's a tiny Persian Gulf state with lots of oil money; billions of dollars they're not afraid to spend on causes they believe in—causes like the terror group Hamas, which runs the Gaza Strip.

Without billions from Qatar and its ally, Iran, Hamas would blow away in the next desert sandstorm. But Hamas is only part of Qatar's terror portfolio. The Qatar government bankrolls the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Qaeda in Yemen and Syria, radical extremists in Libya, and Hezbollah in Lebanon—in other words, a rogues gallery of murderous Islamist terror groups.

Qatar's propaganda arm is the Arab news service Al Jazeera—which it owns lock, stock and America-hating, Israel-hating, barrels. Al Jazeera made a splashy attempt to break into the US media market in 2013. They bought a cable franchise for \$400 million dollars from former Vice President Al Gore. They signed up some major American TV journalists and opened up shop in New York and Washington. But the effort failed. Americans just couldn't cozy up to the idea that a news network that they had rightly associated with Osama bin Laden could be trusted.

But Al Jazeera didn't disappear. They just re-branded into the much nicer sounding "AJ-Plus" and they concentrated their efforts on the internet and a market that didn't have a bin Laden fixation—or much connection to 9/11 at all: young people. And they've been amazingly successful.

Their productions are well-produced, slick and left. In fact, they are so left that they make videos railing against leftist white women for being insufficiently sympathetic to leftist women of color, especially women of color who are gay or transgendered.

It's hard to ignore the irony that a media operation fully funded by a country that oppresses women and gays makes this kind of content for an American audience.

But the irony goes deeper.

The young and hip presenters at AJ+ depict America as racist through and through—past and present. Black Lives Matter has no greater media ally than AJ+. Nor do avowed socialists like Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. AJ+ jumped on her bandwagon early on, making a video in the summer of 2018 about then-candidate Ocasio-Cortez entitled "Socialist Rising."

Why, you might ask, would the government of a Middle Eastern country care about influencing young Americans?

The answer is this: anything that weakens the US is a victory for them and their radical form of Islam. If they can convince young Americans that the US is a bad place, young Americans are less likely to defend it, and less likely to support its efforts to fight Islamic terror. And if America is bad, then anyone it supports must also be bad. America supports Israel. Qatar, like its allies in the Iranian theocracy, wants Israel destroyed.

So AJ+ turns out video after video, news report after news report, portraying the democratic, free, liberal Israel as a repressive apartheid state despite the fact that Muslims living in Israel have more rights—such as freedom of expression and the equality of women and gays—than Muslims living in Qatar.

In AJ+'s world, Israel attacks their peaceful neighbors in Gaza for no good reason. No need to mention the rocket attacks randomly directed at Israeli civilians.

Weaken America. Weaken Israel. To Qatar, a few billion dollars for a few decades is a cheap price to pay if it can achieve those goals. But you don't have to play into their game.

The next time you see an AJ+ video or so-called "news report," consider the source.

Or better still, swipe left.

I'm Raheem Kassam for Prager University.