Will Facebook ban subversive propaganda against Cuba?

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Does Facebook have any notion regarding the sort of propaganda Radio Marti is trying to camouflage through its platform to Cuban internet users?

As I have warned in previous articles, and after being accused of allowing Russia to interfering in the 2016 presidential election, Facebook is being absorbed in a campaign to remove all the paid propaganda from its website.

The last attempt to improve its “unbiased” image occurred on Tuesday when the social network removed more than 650 websites, groups, and accounts identified as “inauthentic behavior,” according to its CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

The “conspiracy” refuted by Facebook, according to the report delivered to the American authorities, was carried out from websites that were tracked to Iran and groups linked to operations of the Russian intelligence.

According to Facebook, the accounts —also in **Instagram** and owned by Facebook as well— the news that were presented as independent or by groups belonging to the civil society were actually working in coordinated efforts targeting users from UK, Latin America, Middle East, and the U.S.

The websites, in the words of Facebook's head of cybersecurity policy Nathaniel Gleicher, were linked to state-owned media from Iran through the publicly available website registration information. Such is the case of **Quest 4 Truth**, which claims to be an organization independent from Iran media.

The vast majority of the removed accounts focused its activity range on the Near East and tried to manipulate public opinion on some U.S. policies and certain anti-Israeli, anti-Saudi Arabian stances. Similarly, they favor pro-Palestinians viewpoints.

The same source also confirmed in a news conference that Facebook removed a number of websites and accounts previously identified as Russian military services, and following the reports, they were unrelated to Iran.

The **HuffPost** revealed that this network had 813 000 accounts in Facebook and 10 000 in **Instagram** and spent around 6,000 USD in ads for Facebook between 2012 and April 2018.

In other words, according to Facebook latest policies, the removed networks were not only related to governments that Washington targets in its sanctions, but these countries also paid ads in order to spread their political propaganda.

So far, so good. Facebook assumes its right to host or not in its platform, paid political propaganda. The problem lays in discerning if the largest social network in the world can be consistent with its principles with other sort of "paid political propaganda."

Of course we are referring to the kind of propaganda Facebook is using against Cuba. The later was recently confirmed in the budgetary documents for the tax years of 2018 and 2019 of the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors, released by the **Miami New Times**.

The document highlights that the U.S. government has plans to use Cuban "native" and "non-branded" accounts in Facebook to spread content created by the government without notifying Cuban users in Facebook:

Due to the Cuban blockade of Radio and TV Marti, the OCB digital strategy has turned to social networks. These consist of Facebook, YouTube, and Google which are the most visited in Cuba. By using AVRA technology, the Radio Marti programs became radio-visual and were broadcasted via **Facebook Live** along with the programming of TV Marti. It certainly gives the OCB and additional, efficient, and profitable distribution either for its radio-visual or TV content.

In the tax year of 2018, the OCB is creating digital devices in Cuba aiming for creating fake accounts in Facebook to spread information. The websites opened

in the island increase the chances of reaching Cuban users in Facebook. The same strategy will be copycatted in other social networks.

According to the **Miami New Times**, the budgetary document suggests that the OCB (Office of Cuba Broadcasting) plans to spread American propaganda against Cuba to deceive users in Cuba and make them believe that the information is coming from other Cuban users, not from the Radio Marti headquarters.

Does Facebook have any notion regarding the sort of propaganda the OCB is trying to camouflage through its platform to Cuban internet users?

There is no doubt who are the ones paying for it. Since the 1980s, when the inappropriately called Radio Marti was created by the government of Ronald Reagan, such radio station has not stopped trying convey subversive propaganda against the Cuban Revolution either by radio or television; and recently by using new technologies. As the article states, the OCB created the text message service **Piramideo** (Pyramid), which could not “meet its goal of promoting dissent in Cuba” and for years managed to smuggle small satellite devices that could provide internet access until such smuggling was stopped in 2015 due to the excessive spending.

As we have said before, the hate speech against Cuba abounds in that social network and quoting the **Miami New Times**, Nasserie Carew, spokeswoman at the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors, the Facebook project never “took off.” But honestly, that is a “weird answer” if we take into account the plan was linked to documents that account for the 2018-2019 budget.

It is also weird that Facebook, a social network that presents itself to the world as an independent enterprise, emerges as part of a dirty war against Cuba in a U.S. government document. Is Facebook part of the **Task Force** created last January by the Trump Administration, which according to the State Department, “will evaluate the technological challenges as well as the opportunities to widen the access to the Internet and the independent media in Cuba? And it will certainly find ways to spread the usage of social networks and the free Internet access in the island.

Although the spokesman of Facebook did not answer any of the questions on the subject, we may assume that the new subversive plans of the OCB against Cuba are not allowed by such social network by a simple reason, as noted by Professor John S. Nichols, from the Pennsylvania University, co-author of the book **1987 Clandestine Radio Broadcasting** in his book:

"Third-party countries see what they’re doing and say, 'There goes the United States again doing that dumb stuff,'" he says. "It's small, mean, and not worthy of

a great power. Other countries say, 'If the U.S. is willing to violate international law, why should we obey our treaty obligations?' I think that has a long-term negative effect. And given what Radio and TV Martí might doing right now, it becomes hard for us to complain about what other countries might be doing to us."

Suffice to say that amid such strong misinformation campaign Facebook is in, removing the subversive propaganda posted in its platform would increase the trust of its users for sure. Besides, it should not be complicated to achieve it if we take into account that the budget report of the U.S. Broadcasting Board of Governors has saved Facebook time and resources in the investigation.

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