

DRAFT

The Role of Netizen Journalism in the Media War at the United Nations

by Ronda Hauben

Preface

The history of journalism includes many different forms of publication and many different methods of organization of those publications. Journalism scholars like Chris Atton and Tony Harcup of the UK point to a wide continuum of how the news is produced and who are the journalists who produce it. These scholars argue that it is too narrow to restrict the definition and consideration of journalism to commercially or government produced media. Instead these scholars propose that the many forms of alternative journalism should be considered as part of the spectrum of journalism and those who produce for these publications are to be considered in any study of journalists.

Traditionally alternative journalism provides for a broader set of issues to be raised than is common in commercially produced mainstream media. Often, too, alternative publications allow for a broader set of sources to be utilized. Such a media often reflects not only a criticism of the limitations of the mainstream commercial media, but also a demonstration that another form and practice of journalism is viable.

With the creation and the spread of the Internet, the emergence of a new form of citizenship, know as netizenship, has developed. Also a critical and vibrant form of online journalism has begun to develop. I call this journalism, netizen journalism. A more detailed exploration of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this paper as the paper is for a panel on questions related to the United Nations. As such, the paper will focus on the impact of netizen journalism on the United Nations and on issues related to the United Nations. But an awareness of the emerging phenomenon of netizen journalism can help to provide a context for issues investigated in this paper.

Introduction

In this paper I take three conflicts which are or have been on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council. The paper will explore the role of netizen journalism in relation to the efforts to resolve these conflicts in a peaceful manner. The three examples the paper will consider in relation to the UN are 1) the Cheonan conflict in South Korea (2010), 2) the war against Libya (2011), and 3) the crisis in Syria (2011-2012).

I. Medvedev and the Challenge of Media Manipulation to International Relations

In a recent speech, Dmitry Medvedev, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, spoke about what he called “the new security dimensions” in international relations.(1)

“Today,” he said, “we are witness to persistent attempts to make mass manipulation of public opinion a tool in international relations.”

He offered as an example what he calls the media campaign against Syria.

“Syria’s case is illustrative in this respect,” Medvedev said. “A very active media campaign unfolded with respect to Syria.” He explained, “What is clear is that this media campaign had little to do with ending the violence as rapidly as possible and facilitating the national dialogue that we all want to see there.”

He attributed this media campaign to the nature of what is considered the politics of certain countries. Describing this politics, he explained, “This sees a country or group of countries instill their own aims and objectives in the consciousness of others...with other points of view rejected.”(2)

What I propose is important about his talk for our panel on “The UN is a Dilemma” is that Medvedev argues that media manipulation by certain political actors presents a serious problem for the field of international relations. He argues that such a media campaign against Syria interferes with the goal of international relations “to concentrate on professional and serious discussion rather than propaganda efforts,” so as to be able to work out “a common approach to settling this conflict.”

While he does not see journalism as able to help solve this problem, I want to propose that there is the development of an alternative form of journalism that is taking on the problem. This is the journalism I call netizen journalism. Netizen journalism seeks to challenge the misrepresentations and distortions of mainstream western journalism that Medvedev presents as a serious challenge to international relations. Netizen journalism encourages not only the exposure of the distortions in the mainstream media, but research and writing to provide the background and information needed to determine how to settle a conflict. By challenging the media campaign fomenting a conflict, netizen journalism becomes a participant in the media war at the UN.

II. The Cheonan Incident, the UN, and Netizen Journalism

I first turn to the details of what happened with the Cheonan conflict which was brought to the UN in 2010, to examine how netizen journalism affected the media war in that situation and helped to make a significant contribution to the peaceful resolution of the conflict that was embraced at the Security Council.

The Cheonan incident concerns a South Korean naval ship which broke up and sank on March 26, 2010. At the time it was involved in naval exercises with the US military in an area in the West Sea/Yellow Sea between North Korea and China. This is a situation that had been the subject of much discussion on the Internet.

Initially the South Korean government and the US government said there was no indication that North Korea was involved. Then at a press conference on May 20, 2010, the South Korean

government claimed that a torpedo fired by a North Korean submarine exploded in the water near the Cheonan, causing a pressure wave that was responsible for the sinking. Many criticisms of this scenario have been raised.

There was no direct evidence of any North Korean submarine in the vicinity of the Cheonan. Nor was there any evidence that a torpedo was actually fired causing the pressure wave phenomenon. Hence the South Korean government had no actual case that could be presented in a court of law to support its claims.

In fact, if this claim of a pressure wave were true even those involved in the investigation of the incident acknowledge that “North Korea would be the first to have succeeded at using this kind of a bubble jet torpedo action in actual fighting.”(3)

The dispute over the sinking of the Cheonan was brought to the United Nations Security Council in June 2010 and a Presidential Statement was agreed to a month later, in July.(4)

An account of some of what happened in the Security Council during this process is described in an article that has appeared in several different Spanish language publications(5) The article describes the experience of the Mexican Ambassador to the UN, Claude Heller in his position as president of the Security Council for the month of June 2010. (The presidency rotates each month to a different Security Council member.)

In a letter to the Security Council dated June 4, the Republic of Korea (ROK) more commonly known as South Korea, asked the Council to take up the Cheonan dispute. Park Im-kook, then the South Korean Ambassador to the UN, requested that the Security Council consider the matter of the Cheonan and respond in an appropriate manner.(6) The letter described an investigation into the sinking of the Cheonan carried out by South Korean government and military officials. The conclusion of the South Korean investigation was to accuse North Korea of sinking the South Korean ship.

Sin Son Ho is the UN Ambassador from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), which is more commonly known as North Korea. He sent a letter dated June 8 to the Security Council, which denied the allegation that his country was to blame.(7) His letter urged the Security Council not to be the victim of deceptive claims, as had happened with Iraq in 2003. It asked the Security Council to support his government’s call to be able to examine the evidence and to be involved in a new and more independent investigation on the sinking of the Cheonan.

How would the Mexican Ambassador as President of the Security Council during the month of June handle this dispute? This was a serious issue facing Heller as he began his presidency in June 2010.

Heller adopted what he referred to as a “balanced” approach to treat both governments on the Korean peninsula in a fair and objective manner. He held bilateral meetings with each member of the Security Council which led to support for a process of informal presentations by both of the Koreas to the members of the Security Council.

What Heller called “interactive informal meetings” were held on June 14 with the South Koreans and the North Koreans in separate sessions attended by the Security Council members, who had time to ask questions and then to discuss the presentations.

At a media stakeout on June 14, after the day’s presentations ended, Heller said that it was important to have received the detailed presentation by South Korea and also to know and learn the arguments of North Korea. He commented that “it was very important that North Korea approached the Security Council.” In response to a question about his view on the issues presented, he replied, “I am not a judge. I think we will go on with the consultations to deal in a proper manner on the issue.”(8)

Heller also explained that, “the Security Council issued a call to the parties to refrain from any act that could escalate tensions in the region, and makes an appeal to preserve peace and stability in the region.”

Though the North Korean Ambassador at the UN rarely speaks to the media, the North Korean UN delegation scheduled a press conference for the following day, Tuesday, June 15. During the press conference, the North Korean Ambassador presented North Korea’s refutation of the allegations made by South Korea. Also he explained North Korea’s request to be able to send an investigation team to the site where the sinking of the Cheonan occurred. South Korea had denied the request. During its press conference, the North Korean Ambassador noted that there was widespread condemnation of the investigation in South Korea and around the world.(9)

The press conference held on June 15 was a lively event. Many of the journalists who attended were impressed and requested that there be future press conferences with the North Korean Ambassador.

During June, Heller held meetings with the UN ambassadors from each of the two Koreas and then with Security Council members about the Cheonan issue. On the last day of his presidency, on June 30, he was asked by the media what was happening about the Cheonan dispute. He responded that the issue of contention was over the evaluation of the South Korean government’s investigation.

Heller described how he introduced what he refers to as “an innovation” into the Security Council process. As the month of June ended, the issue was not yet resolved, but the “innovation” set a basis to build on the progress that was achieved during the month of his presidency.

The “innovation” Heller referred to, was a summary he made of the positions of each of the two Koreas on the issue, taking care to present each objectively. Heller explained that this summary was not an official document, so it did not have to be approved by the other members of the Council. This summary provided the basis for further negotiations. He believed that it had a positive impact on the process of consideration in the Council, making possible the agreement that was later to be expressed in the Presidential statement on the Cheonan that was issued by the Security Council on July 9.

Heller's goal, he explained, was to "at all times be as objective as possible" so as to avoid increasing the conflict on the Korean peninsula. Such a goal is the Security Council's obligation under the UN Charter.

In the Security Council's Presidential Statement (PRST) on the Cheonan, what stands out is that the statement follows the pattern of presenting the views of each of the two Koreas and urging that the dispute be settled in a peaceful manner.

In the PRST, the members of the Security Council did not blame North Korea. Instead they refer to the South Korean investigation and its conclusion, expressing their "deep concern" about the "findings" of the investigation.

The PRST explains that "The Security Council takes note of the responses from other relevant parties, including the DPRK, which has stated that it had nothing to do with the incident." (10)

With the exception of North Korea, it is not indicated who "the other relevant parties" are. It does suggest, however, that it is likely there are some Security Council members, not just Russia and China, who did not agree with the conclusions of the South Korean investigation.

Analyzing the Presidential Statement, the Korean newspaper Hankyoreh noted that the statement "allows for a double interpretation and does not blame or place consequences on North Korea." (11) Such a possibility of a "double interpretation" allows different interpretations

The Security Council action on the Cheonan took place in a situation where there had been a wide ranging international critique, especially in the online media, about the problems of the South Korean investigation, and of the South Korean government's failure to make public any substantial documentation of its investigation, along with its practice of harassing critics of the South Korean government claims. (12)

One such critique included a three part report by the South Korean NGO People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD). (13) This report raised a number of questions and problems with the South Korean government's case. The PSPD document was posted widely on the Internet and also sent to the President of the United Nations Security Council for distribution to those Security Council members interested and to the South Korean Mission to the UN.

There were many blog comments about the Cheonan issue in Korean. (14) There were also some bloggers writing in English who became active in critiquing the South Korean investigation and the role of the US in the conflict.

One such blogger, Scott Creighton who uses the pen name Willy Loman, wrote a post titled "The Sinking of the Cheonan: We are being lied to" (15) On his blog "American Everyman," he explained how there was a discrepancy between the diagram displayed by the South Korean government in a press conference it held, and the part of the torpedo on display in the glass case below the diagram.

He showed that the diagram did not match the part of the torpedo on display. The South Korean government had claimed that the diagram displayed above the glass case was from a North Korean brochure offering the torpedo identified as the CHT-02D.

There were many comments on his post, including some from netizens in South Korea. Also the mainstream conservative media in South Korea carried accounts of his critique.

Three weeks later, at a news conference, a South Korean government official acknowledged that the diagram presented by the South Korean government was not of the same torpedo as the part displayed in the glass case. Instead the diagram was of the PT97W torpedo, not the CHT-02D torpedo as claimed.

Describing the significance of having documented one of the fallacies in the South Korean government's case, Creighton writes (16):

“(I)n the end, thanks to valuable input from dozens of concerned people all across the world... Over 100,000 viewers read that article and it was republished on dozens of sites all across the world (even translated). A South Korean MSM outlet even posted our diagram depicting the glaring discrepancies between the evidence and the drawing of the CHT-O2D torpedo, which a high-ranking military official could only refute by stating he had 40 years military experience and to his knowledge, I had none. But what I had, what we had, was literally thousands of people all across the world, scientists, military members, and just concerned investigative bloggers who were committed to the truth and who took the time to contribute to what we were doing here.”

“ ‘40 years military experience’ took a beating from ‘we the people WorldWide’ and that is the way it is supposed to be.”

This is just one of a number of serious questions and challenges that were raised about the South Korean government's scenario of the sinking of the Cheonan.

Other influential events which helped to challenge the South Korean government's claims were a press conference in Japan held on July 9 by two academic scientists. The two scientists presented results of experiments they did which challenged the results of experiments the South Korean government used to support its case.(17) These scientists also wrote to the Security Council with their findings.

Also a significant challenge to the South Korean government report was the finding of a Russian team of four sent to South Korea to look at the data from the investigation and to do an independent evaluation of it. The Russian team did not accept the South Korean government's claim that a pressure wave from a torpedo caused the Cheonan to sink.(18)

Such efforts along with online posts and discussions by many netizens provided a catalyst for the actions of the UN Security Council concerning the Cheonan incident.

The mainstream US media for the most part, chose to ignore the many critiques which have appeared. These critiques of the South Korean government's investigation of the Cheonan

sinking have appeared mainly on the Internet, not only in Korean, but also in English, in Japanese, and in other languages. They present a wide ranging challenge of the veracity and integrity of the South Korean investigation and its conclusions.

An article in the Los Angeles Times on July 28 noted the fact, however, that the media in the US had ignored the critique of the South Korean government investigation that is being discussed online and spread around the world.(19) On August 31, an Op Ed by Donald Gregg, a former US Ambassador to South Korea, appeared in the New York Times, titled “Testing North Korean Waters.” The article noted that “not everyone agrees that the Cheonan was sunk by North Korea. Pyongyang has consistently denied responsibility, and both China and Russia opposed a U.N. Security Council resolution laying blame on North Korea.”(20).

Netizens who live in different countries and speak different languages took up to critique the claims of the South Korean government about the cause of the sinking of the Cheonan. Such netizen activity had an important effect on the international community. It also appears to have acted as a catalyst affecting the actions of the UN Security Council in its treatment of the Cheonan dispute.

In his Op Ed in the New York Times, Gregg argued that, “The disputed interpretations of the sinking of the Cheonan remain central to any effort to reverse course and to get on track toward dealing effectively with North Korea on critical issues such as the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”

North Korea referred to the widespread international sentiment in its June 8 letter to the Security Council. The UN Ambassador from North Korea wrote:

“It would be very useful to remind ourselves of the ever-increasing international doubts and criticisms, going beyond the internal boundary of south Korea, over the ‘investigation result’ from the very moment of its release....”

The situation that the North Korean Ambassador referred to is the result of actions on the part of South Korean netizens and civil society who challenged the process and results of the South Korean government’s investigation. Also, there was support for the South Korean netizens by bloggers, scientists and journalists around the world, writing mainly online but in a multitude of languages and from many perspectives. Several of the non-governmental organizations and scientists in South Korea sent the results of their investigations and research to members of the Security Council to provide them with the background and facts needed to make an informed decision.(21)

The result of such efforts is something that is unusual in the process of recent Security Council activity. The Security Council process in the Cheonan issue provided for an impartial analysis of the problem and an effort to hear from those with an interest in the issue.

The effort in the Security Council was described by the Mexican Ambassador, as upholding the principles of impartiality and respectful treatment of all members toward resolving a conflict

between nations in a peaceful manner. It represents an important example of the Security Council acting in conformity with its obligations as set out in the UN charter.

In the July 9 Presidential Statement, the Security Council urged that the parties to the dispute over the sinking of the Cheonan find a means to peacefully settle the dispute. The statement says:

“The Security Council calls for full adherence to the Korean Armistice Agreement and encourages the settlement of outstanding issues on the Korean peninsula by peaceful means to resume direct dialogue and negotiation through appropriate channels as early as possible, with a view to avoiding conflicts and averting escalation.”

Ambassador Gregg is only one of many around the world who have expressed their concern with the course of action of the US and South Korea as contrary to the direction of the UN Security Council Presidential Statement. Gregg explained his fear that the truth of the Cheonan sinking “may elude us, as it did after the infamous Tonkin Bay incident of 1964, that was used to drag us (the US) into the abyss of the Vietnam War.”(22)

Despite this dilemma, the Security Council action on the Cheonan dispute, if it is recognized and supported, has set the basis instead for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.(23)

While the netizen community in South Korea and internationally were able to provide an effective challenge to the misrepresentations by the South Korean government on the Cheonan incident, the struggle over the misrepresentations of the conflict in Libya was less successful.

III. False Claims that Led to the War Against Libya

A short article at the Current Events Inquiry website lists several provocative claims which helped to provide a false pretext for the NATO bombing of Libya. (24) Among them were reports by Al Jazeera and the BBC that the Libyan government had carried out air strikes against Benghazi and Tripoli on February 22, 2011. Russia Today reports that the Russian military who had monitored the unrest in Libya from the beginning, “says nothing of the sort was going on on the ground.”(25)

According to the report by the Russian military, the attacks had never occurred.

Another such claim widely circulated by major western media very early in the Libya conflict was that the Libyan government “is massacring unarmed demonstrators.” The NGO, the International Crisis Group (ICG) in its June 6, 2011 report says that such claims were inaccurate. The report explains that this version of the events in Libya “would appear to ignore evidence that the protest movement exhibited a violent aspect from early on.” This includes evidence that early in the protests, “demonstrations were infiltrated by violent elements.”

Similarly the ICG report found no evidence for claims that the Libyan government “engaged in anything remotely warranting use of the term ‘genocide’.”

A similar criticism was made of the claim that “foreign mercenaries” were employed by the Libyan government. A report by Amnesty International which is described in an article in the Independent newspaper in the UK on June 24, 2011 says that, “The Amnesty Report found no evidence for this.”

Netizen Journalism on the Conflict in Libya Presents a Different View

From the early days of the false media claims targeting Libya for an outside intervention to remove its government, a growing set of articles and comments were written and published online exposing the lack of evidence for these claims and demonstrating that they were distortions with a political purpose. These articles exposing the distortions were read and distributed by a growing set of online reporters. These examples demonstrate that a different form of journalism is emerging. While such a form of journalism may not yet appear to present an adequate challenge to the gross misrepresentations and inaccuracies spread by much of the mainstream western and Arab satellite media about the Libyan conflict, the nature of this newly developing form of journalism is important to explore and to understand.

This new journalism has at least two important aspects. One is serious research into the background, context and political significance of conflicts like that in Libya or Syria. Another is the application of this research to the writing of articles or to comments in response to both mainstream and alternative media articles.

As an example of this netizen journalism related to the conflict in Libya, I want to refer to a small collection of articles titled “Libya, the UN, and Netizen Journalism”.(26) This collection contains articles focusing on a critique of actions at the UN that provided the authority for the NATO war against Libya.

One article in that collection, “UN Security Council March 17 Meeting to Authorize Bombing of Libya All Smoke and Mirrors” is about the Security Council meeting which passed Resolution 1973 by a vote of 10 in favor and 5 abstentions. The article includes some sample comments from online discussions about what was happening in Libya at the time. While the UNSC members at the March 17 meeting speak about their support for the resolution to “protect Libyan civilians,” there is no acknowledgment that the resolution instead will in effect support the ongoing armed insurrection against the government of Libya.

While Security Council delegates and the mainstream media described what was happening in Libya as “peaceful protestors” attacked by a “brutal government”, online discussion of the situation during this same period describes the opposition in Libya as engaged in an armed insurrection. The following sample from comments from a discussion of an article on the British Guardian website in March 2011 provides an example of netizens questioning and critiquing the actions of the Security Council and asking why the UN is protecting and supporting an armed insurgency(27):

“Armed civilians or ununiformed fighters have no place being supported or protected by our air power. They carry a gun and get targeted that is their look out, not our job to hit the other side.”
JamesStGeorge, 22 March 2011

“The thing is the rebels are ‘civilians’ when ever it suits us.”
llundiel, 23 March 2011

“Of course once you start bombing, there will clearly be plenty of collateral damage. This then makes a complete mockery of the stated purpose of the intervention, to save innocent civilians.”
contractor000, 23 March 2011

“Yes tanks are not planes! Or in the air flying. The civilian protection has no place extending to armed rebels, they are not civilians.”
CockfingersMcGee, 23 March 2011

“So we are supposed to accept this scenario that the Military aggression against Libya is to do with protecting the protesters, the revolution, innocent civilians, the rebels etc. This sounds very reminiscent of attacking Iraq because of WMD.”
comunismlives, 22 March 2011

Similar discussions were going on at other websites. Here, for example, are some comments from a discussion at the Hidden Harmonies website.(28)

“Resolution 1973 is also directed at rebel force, but we are not bombing the rebels, but usurping the resolution to provide air cover in aid of the rebels. Prolonging Libya’s civil war only brings more harm to the civilians, and facilitating division of Libya’s sovereignty, are contravening/violating the resolution.”
Charles Liu, March 22nd, 2011

“We can argue technicalities, but everyone knows the current U.S.-led bombings are towards weakening Qadhafi and to bolster the rebel opposition. Obama and the Coalition publicly say so.”

“Its like seeing a thief caught on video sneaking around in a store and after seeing no one around, pockets the candy. He also says he is stealing.”

“Now we are suppose to ‘prove’ it? That’s quite retarded”.
DeWang, March 22nd, 2011

“‘under threat of attack’ clause includes threat of attack by the rebels, yet we are not bombing them for their incursion outside Benghazi. This violates the preamble’s stated limit of military authorization to not divide Libya’s sovereignty. Not withstanding any sort of red herring and semantics wiggling, the selective air strike in aid of the rebels violates UN resolution 1973, while 1970 gave no legitimacy to the armed rebellion in Libya, which the legitimate government of

Libya has the sovereign right to sanction against.”

Charles Liu, March 22nd, 2011

“I just don’t understand why the bombing is taking place at all.”

“1) It is a civil war. Why should the west take sides?”

“2) Wasn’t Qaddafi the US’s pet since Bush II? Why is the US seeking to remove one of their puppets? Is the US/west looking for another Iraq?”

“I wouldn’t be one bit surprised if this war was instigated by wall street looking to make a killing on oil and commodities.”

colin, March 22nd, 2011

“It’s a historical pattern of these UN Resolutions, including way back when the Korean War started, that ‘all necessary force’ is the general catch phrase for ‘unrestrained warfare’ limited only by what weapons are available.”

“Now, even the high cost of the cruise missiles, \$1 million a pop, is not enough to deter the launching of 100’s of these.”

“Well, I guess we are going to see the cost, sooner or later.”

r v March 23rd, 2011

These two examples of selected comments from online discussions at the time demonstrate that netizens raised serious concerns and critiques of the Security Council action passing UN Resolution 1973, while the mainstream media mainly reported what western governments were saying.

Similar questions and critiques were raised throughout the conflict in articles by independent journalists who were in Libya during much of the period of the defense of Libya from the NATO bombing and the NATO support for the armed insurrection in Libya. Such journalists included Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya of Global Research, Thierry Meyssan, from Voltairenet, Lizzy Phalen who reported for various outlets including Presstv, and Franklin Lamb whose articles were carried on various web sites.

Also a group that called itself Concerned Africans published an open letter which they also submitted to the UN Secretary General, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly. The letter which was signed by over 300 concerned Africans, described what it called the contribution to “the subversion of international law.” The letter maintained that in passing UNSCR 1973, “the Security Council used the still unresolved issue in international law of ‘the right to protect’ the so called R2P, to justify the Chapter VII military intervention in Libya.” (29) Other articles focused on the violations in Security Council procedures represented by

allowing Libyan officials who had defected to appear at the Security Council representing Libya. (30)

Similarly, Professor Mahmood Mamdani, a Columbia University who has studied the region and its history, points to the “political and legal infrastructure for intervention in otherwise independent countries,” namely the Security Council and the International Criminal Court working ‘selectively’, that has been created by Western powers.(31)

Among the many websites at the time publishing articles critiquing the UN’s actions in Libya were The Center for Research on Globalization, Voltaire Network, Libya 360, Mathaba, April Media, and American Everyman. (32)

During this period, several of the independent journalists or the journalists writing articles challenging the Security Council actions providing for the bombing of Libya appeared on Satellite news programs like that of RT News and Press TV. Also there were interviews and videos posted online.

While these articles, discussions, critiques and analyses did not succeed in stopping the NATO attack on Libya, they created an example of more accurate reporting and analysis about the attack on Libya. A few months later when an Aljazeera journalist explained why he resigned from Aljazeera, he pointed to the pressure from Aljazeera to misrepresent what was happening in his reporting. He explained that the support of Qatar for the militarization of the Libyan conflict was a turning point in the distortion of the news at his station. (33)

Also as the following comment by a netizen indicates, someone who supported the attack on Libya and who has learned lessons from what happened, is more likely to question the media claims about Syria(34):

“(I)t is also important to me that I feel I was deceived about the Libyan situation. Being like Libya would itself be reason to oppose intervention in Syria.”

And others suggest that the experience of NATO’s actions in Libya has been having an impact on what some at the UN and some of the nations of the UN will do with respect to Syria.

As one Netizen wrote after hearing of the Houla massacre (34):

“What has changed in the last week following the murder of more than 100 people in Houla, including dozens of children, is that a new urgency and disgust has been injected into an escalating crisis that has brought the country to the verge of civil war. The role of the Syrian opposition should also be clearly investigated as well. Rather than just blaming Assad in a media witch-hunt. As many of those killed were supposed to be people who refused to collaborate with the opposition.”

“It is obvious that the Russians and Chinese have learnt from Libya too. Where the number of people killed by unbridled NATO bombing has been carefully suppressed, and the use of the UN to cover « regime change », has only bought chaos in its wake. So the Oil there has changed hands, but most of the north of Africa is now transformed into a violent marasme. Both of those major powers now know from experience that – NATO with UN agreement means the destruction of peace, the loss of their assets in the region, and the continuation of war into other areas (Iran, Yemen, Pakistan etc. or closer to their own spheres of influence. China sea – the ‘Stans’, the southern (Muslim) aligned ex-Russian states etc. or into South America). They do not see any end. So they must draw a line somewhere.”

“Is the object of the west once again to cause a major mid-eastern war ?”

shaun

2 June 2012 10:00PM

IV. The Syrian Crisis and the UN: Critique of the Reporting on Syria

Similar to the mainstream media war against Libya, there is a set of false narratives in the mainstream western and Arab satellite media related to what has been happening in Syria. While such media essentially frames its news about Syria to demonize the Syrian government and its President Bashar Assad, its news stories support the armed opposition, and its journalists rely on opposition sources for the news that is to be reported.

In this situation, netizen journalism presents a critique of the mainstream media support for what is an armed insurrection against Syria. The forms this netizen journalism takes include articles, interviews, commentary, historical background, analysis and discussion. Critical articles about the mainstream media reports and misrepresentations are also common.

The Houla Massacre

The original mainstream media account of what has come to be known as the Houla massacre was that an opposition demonstration was suppressed by Syrian government shelling.

Criticism of this claim soon emerged pointing to the fact that the majority of those murdered were killed at close range, not by shelling. In response the mainstream western media produced a new element, a so called pro government militia that they claimed had gone into the homes of those killed and carried out the massacre. Why an alleged pro government militia, the so called ‘Shabiha’ would go into the homes of pro government supporters and massacre them, was not explained.

When Alex Thomson, a British Channel 4 reporter, went to the village that the opposition in Houla had said had produced the so called Shabiha accused of the attack in Houla, he found no evidence of any such militia. He writes, “Beyond a few languid soldiers and the odd policeman

no sign of militias. No trace of heavy weapons. No tank tracks on the roads.... Well these Alawites insist there are not, nor have ever been, Shabiha in these villages.”(35)

Neither do the mainstream western media wonder why the Syrian government would carry out a massacre of civilians at the very time that the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council are planning to discuss Syria.

In his book “Liar’s Poker” which analyzes the disinformation used to justify the NATO bombing of Serbia, the Belgian journalist Michel Collon observes that “Information is already a battlefield which is part of war.”(36)

Seeking Facts About the Houla Massacre

Shortly after the news spread about the Houla massacre, netizen media sites included articles which revealed that the area where the massacre was carried out was under the control of the Free Syrian Army, not of the Syrian government. A Russian news team had gained access to the site the day following the massacre and did interviews to determine what had happened. Their report was originally published in Russia but soon was translated into English.

Their account noted that Houla is an administrative area, made up of three villages. It is not the name of a town. Some of this area had been under control of armed insurgents for a number of weeks. The Syrian army maintained certain checkpoints. The Russian journalists’ account explains that on the evening of May 24, the Free Syrian Army launched an operation to take control of the checkpoints, bringing 600-800 armed insurgents from different areas.

At the same time that there was the fight over the checkpoints, several armed insurgents went into certain homes and massacred the members of several families. Among the families targeted was a family related to a recently elected People’s Assembly representative. This family and another family that were killed were said to be families that supported the Syrian government. “Other victims included the family of two journalists for Top News and New Orient Express, press agencies associated with Voltaire Network,” reports the news and analysis site Voltairenet.(37)

Soon after the news of the massacre appeared, there were articles challenging the claims that it was the work of the Syrian government. In his article “Death Squads Ravage Syrian Town – West Calls for ‘Action’, Tony Cartalucci of the Land Destroyer Report blog, writes “‘Cui Bono?’ To whose benefit does it serve to massacre very publicly entire families in close quarters and broadcast the images of their handiwork worldwide?”(38) He argues that this is in no way in the Syrian government’s interest.

In another article he points to a UK government official blaming the deaths on “artillery fire” by the government. Claiming to be responding to such reports, several governments including the UK government expelled Syrian diplomats. Even though these claims were soon demonstrated to

be false, Carlucci points out that there was no retraction from the UK government or reversal of the expulsion of Syrian diplomats. Cartalucci writes(39):

“UK Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt peddling what is now a confirmed fabrication, told for days to the public as the West maneuvered to leverage it against the Syrian government. The UN has now confirmed that artillery fired by government troops were not responsible for the massacre, and instead carried out by unidentified militants. Despite this, the UK has failed to retract earlier accusations and has instead expelled Syrian diplomats in an increasingly dangerous, irrational, aggressive posture.”

Others online recognized that a photo BBC posted which was allegedly of the corpses from the Houla Massacre, was actually a photo that had been taken in 2003 of deaths in Iraq. Describing how the misrepresentation was detected, Sy Walker explains on his blog (40):

“The information on which it’s based comes from a pro-Syrian tweeter called [Hey Joud](#), whom I’ve found to be well informed and savvy.”

“A friend of this tweeter discovered the misrepresentation and tweeted about it:”

“@BBCWorld propaganda:[http://imageshack.us/photo/my-image ...](http://imageshack.us/photo/my-image...) showing a pic of bodies from Iraq claiming it’s the?#HoulaMassacre? ?#Syria? <http://shineyourlight-shineyourlight.blogspot.ca/2012/01/9-nike-years-of-war-in-iraq.htm>leyourlight-shineyourlight.blogspot.ca/2012/01/9-nike”

BBC changed the photo, Walker explains, adding:

“This is not the first time I’ve reported on [image fakery](#) with regard to Syria. The western media’s sustained attack on that beleaguered nation has now been underway for more than a year. A comprehensive account of all its deceptions and misreporting over that period would fill many volumes.”

In a blog post titled “Hula Hoax”, Mathias Broeckers also comments on the BBC presenting the 2003 Iraq photo as a photo of Houla. Broeckers writes(41):

“It is the forbidden geopolitical agenda, the big Picture that isn’t talked about, as opposed to the horrors by which the wars are legitimized.”

Other online journalists comment on the bias of the United Nations Human Rights Council and its inability to do an objective investigation of the facts of the Houla Massacre. Reporting about an interaction between an anti-war activist from the “No War Network”, Marinella Corregia, and Rupert Colville, spokesman for the Human Rights Council, an article on the Uprooted Palestinians blog is titled “UN report on Houla massacre? But they only talk to Syrian opposition – by phone.” Colville explains to Corregia that the Human Rights Council will do its investigation by speaking with the local network of opposition members they have contact with

in Syria by phone, with opposition members they have met in Turkey and with opposition members they have met in Geneva.(42)

Martin Janssen, a Dutch Middle East expert and journalist who reports from Damascus and whose articles appear online is also concerned that there are other important sources of information that have information about what happened, but that the Human Relations Council investigators will not speak with them because the investigators are only interested in hearing from opposition sources (43).

Janssen said that he was in contact with a Catholic organization in the area of Houla, a monastery in Qara in the Homs-Hana region, and the two Russian journalists, Marat Musin and Olga Kulygina, who were able to visit Houla the day after the massacre, on May 25 with a tv crew. Janssen reported that Musin and Kulygina tried to offer their findings to the UN Special Commission on Human Rights doing the investigation, but that the Commission was not interested in hearing from them. Colville indicated that the sources the investigators had were adequate because all their other sources had already informed them that the ‘shabibha’ were responsible for the massacre. The Commission was not interested in hearing from anyone with different views or with information different from that given to them by the opposition.

The online discussion in response to Janssen’s article was a serious discussion critiquing the mainstream media and putting forward the criteria of what a media should do. The discussion is an important one as it sets out both the failings of the current mainstream media and the needed objectives for a more competent media.

Netizen Journalism Coverage of Houla Massacre

Along with the account of what happened in the al Houla region, were articles proposing a broader perspective. This included historical background describing where the US and NATO utilized death squads in prior conflicts. One article “Syria Under Attack by Globalist Death Squads”, by Bramdon Turbeville presents background on how certain US officials including Robert S. Ford, the former US Ambassador to Syria, and John Negroponte who was US Ambassador to Honduras in 1981-1985 and later in Iraq, supported death squads first in Nicaragua (known as the “Salvador Option”) and later in Iraq.(44) Turbeville’s article and articles by others like the article titled, "The Salvadorian Option for Syria: US-NATO Sponsored Death Squads Integrate ‘Opposition Forces" by Michel Chossudovsky, put the death squads functioning in Syria in this historical context.

Along with the articles I am describing that are available in English, there are also a wide range of similar articles online in French, German, and other languages. There are also online discussions and comments about the Syria conflict. A collection of articles, “[The Houla Massacre: The Disinformation Campaign](#),” available at [Global Research website](#), lists a number of the articles recently published on the media war over the Syrian conflict. (45)

There are various forms of online discussions. One such discussion on an online forum was initiated with the post, “ Houla Massacre, Syria: What If?” The discussion considered whether the Syrian government claims that it was not responsible for the massacre was or wasn’t a lie. Online sources referred to in discussions like this could be either mainstream media or alternative media sources. Through discussion, referring to various articles and details, netizens in this online forum concluded that armed insurgents were to blame, not the Syrian government.(46)

The Media and Syrian Sovereignty

Since it is rare at the current time that the mainstream western media deviates from a hostility toward the Syrian government and a sympathy with the armed insurgents, it seems significant that in Germany one of the mainstream national newspapers, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung has printed a significant story documenting the role of the Free Syrian Army in the Houla massacre. The journalist, Rainer Hermann, speaks Arabic. He has been reporting from the Middle East for over 22 years and he did his thesis on modern Syrian social history. His article “Abermals Massaker in Syrien” appeared in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung on June 7. (47)

His article has been welcomed by many netizens and has been reprinted at various online news sites. Several online sites featured the article and offered an English translation of it. The story corroborated the report of the Russian journalists that the Free Syrian Army insurgents were behind the Houla massacre.

Similarly there was an anonymous criticism of Rainer’s article on the Houla massacre from opposition forces, and Rainer wrote a second article “The Extermination” responding to the criticism.(48) His article appears to be in response to sources who are troubled over the attacks and discrimination that the armed insurgents have been introducing into the Syrian struggle, but it is perhaps also an indication that netizen journalism is having some effect in the current media war over Syria.

Similarly, there is a report by the British media criticism site, Media Lens on the low key recognition by a BBC journalist that it is not adequate to blame the Houla massacre on Syria’s President Assad, as several of the media are doing, without more knowledge of what actually happened, and with an approach which includes more shades of gray rather than just treating it as a stark black or white issue.

Netizen Journalism and the UN

Since the Houla massacre, the Syrian conflict, some say, appears to be at a turning point. Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has a recent article arguing that there are lessons that have been learnt from what happened with Libya and that the UN has to take into account these lessons. In his Op Ed, “Oh the Rights Side of History“, Lavrov writes (49):

“When deciding to support UN Security Council Resolution 1970 and making no objection to Resolution 1973 on Libya, we believed that these decisions would help limit the excessive use of force and pave the way for a political settlement. Unfortunately, the actions undertaken by NATO countries under these resolutions led to their grave violation and support for one of the parties to the civil war, with the goal of ousting the existing regime - damaging in the process the authority of the Security Council....

It is clear that after what had happened in Libya it was impossible to go along with the UN Security Council taking decisions that would not be adequately explicit and would allow those responsible for their implementation to act at their own discretion. Any mandate given on behalf of the entire international community should be as clear and precise as possible in order to avoid ambiguity. It is therefore important to understand what is really happening in Syria and how to help that country to pass through this painful stage of its history.”

Along with such comments from diplomats, netizens are covering and discussing what the UN is doing about the Syrian conflict. A summary by Moon of Alabama of the General Assembly meeting discussing the Houla Massacre described how the UN Secretary General, the Secretary General of the League of Arab States and other officials, along with many of the representatives of the nations at the UN, blamed the massacre on the Syrian government, even though there were few facts available as to what had happened and who was behind the events.(50) Though rarely mentioned in the mainstream media, there were comments by the ambassadors of several member states including the Syrian Ambassador and the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, those of Venezuela, of Nicaragua, and a few others calling for an investigation, into the details of the massacre, before making any rush to judgment.(51)

V. Conclusion: Channels of Communication for International Relations

In the Libyan and Syrian conflicts, the misrepresentations by the mainstream western media and Arab satellite media have seemed difficult to counter effectively. In the Cheonan situation, the misrepresentations were effectively countered both internally and on an international level. In his presentation to journalists at the press conference marking the start of China’s presidency of the UN Security Council in March 2011, China’s Ambassador to the UN, Li Baodong, recognized the impact of the international media on the work of the Security Council. He went so far as to refer to the international media as the “16th member of the Security Council.”(52) The Cheonan conflict is one where the international critique of the South Korean Cheonan report was an encouragement to at least some members of the Security Council, to act diplomatically to calm the conflict. Similarly, the North Korean Ambassador held a rare press conference and indicated that he found encouragement in the international support for the critique. Along with the many online articles by netizens critiquing the role of the South Korean government in the Cheonan conflict, progressive media in South Korea covered the activities of those challenging the Cheonan report and also reported on the Russian investigation of the problem. There were also articles in the Chinese media and the Russian media that critiqued the South Korean efforts to blame the breakup of the ship on North Korea.

The actions of the Security Council in the Libya and the more recent Syria conflict show the serious nature of the problem Medvedev referred to in his talk in March.

Looking at the problem it is important to analyze the nature of the media manipulation and the means of responding to such distorted information.

In his book *The Nerves of Government* Karl W. Deutsch writes that: “Men have long and often concerned themselves with the power of governments, much as some observers try to assess the muscle power of a horse or an athlete. Others have described the laws and institutions of states, much as anatomists describe the skeleton or organs of a body. This book concerns itself less with the bones or muscles of the body politic than with its nerves – its channels of communication and decision.” (53)

Deutsch goes on to explain that “it might be profitable to look upon government somewhat less as a problem of power and somewhat more as a problem of steering and communication.” He maintains that, “It is communication, that is, the ability to transmit messages and to react to them, that makes organizations....” He proposes that this is true for the cells in the human body as it is for the “organizations of thinking human beings in social groups.”(54)

The significance of this perspective is that distorted messages are the basis for distorted social organization. A social organization that can make an accurate assessment of the conditions on the ground in a conflict, is in a position to analyze what is needed for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

There are a number of scholarly articles studying the impact of the Internet on media and on communication among netizens. Some of the more interesting articles focus on the communication channels created, and the nature of not only the transmission of information, but also its reception.

Deutsch makes a distinction between power and information. He writes that “Power, we might say, produces changes, information triggers them in a suitable receiver.”(55) It is not the amount of what is transmitted that is necessarily significant, but rather the nature of what it is, what the receiver is, and the effect of the information on the receiver. Deutsch gives the example of the relative weakness of the Nazi quisling government in Norway at the end of WWII, and the relative strength of the resistance because it had better channels of communication. (56)

Joseph S. Nye in an article, “The Future of American Power”, argues that information is indeed important in the battle for the US to try to maintain its power.(57) He writes that, “Conventional wisdom holds that the state with the largest army prevails, but in the information age, the state (or the nonstate actor) with the best story may sometime win.”(58) He advises, “It is time for a new narrative about the future of U.S. power.”(59) But for him whether or not the story helps to obtain the desired goal is important, not the truth or accuracy of the narrative.

At a program at the Japan Society in New York where Nye spoke about his book “The Future of Power”, he was asked a question about his view of US actions in the NATO war against Libya.

Nye responded that what President Barack Obama had done with respect to the NATO war against Libya was exactly right. (60) Obama had waited till he had the needed narrative to justify the military action against Libya. It was important, Nye explained, that the US not be seen as once again attacking a Muslim country as had happened with Iraq. Instead the Arab League and the UN Security Council resolutions provided a narrative “of a legitimate enforcement of humanitarian responsibility to protect civilians.” This provided Obama with the ability to claim that the US was taking “collective responsibility”, not that the US was undertaking a military intervention.

The problem with Nye’s argument is that he is focusing on how the world perceives the action he is taking, not on the actual nature of the action itself.

But what happened in Libya was a military action to support an armed insurgency against Libya. The NATO bombing of Libya was not for the protection of civilians, but for the protection of an armed insurrection against the government and people of Libya.

Similarly, when the UN Security Council passed UN Resolution 1973, many of the Ambassadors who spoke said the resolution was to protect peaceful protesters in Libya. A few days later the Russian Federation’s President Vladimir Putin, who was then the Prime Minister of Russia, said that the “protection of civilians” was but a pretext by which to intervene in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation.(61)

Nye’s contention that a convincing narrative can gain support for actions, fails to recognize the harm in lives lost and the devastation wrought that results from the use of “convincing narratives” to justify actions that are contrary to the obligations of the UN Charter and the pursuit of the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Also such duplicity sullies the image of the United Nations amongst peace loving people around the world.

I have briefly surveyed research in English about Chinese netizens and have found important scholarship developing in this field. Similarly, there is scholarship in journalism which explores the relationship of alternative journalism and citizenship. I want to propose that there is a need for research in the field of international relations and communication which explores the new forms of online media and discussion that are developing, often across geographic borders. Those who have taken up the struggle against the misinformation in the Cheonan case or against the media attacks on Libya and Syria are pioneering this relatively new form of alternative journalism, netizen journalism. Speaking about the potential for such a journalism Michael Hauben, whose pioneering research on the social impact of the Internet recognized the emergence of the netizens, writes (62):

“As people continue to connect to Usenet and other discussion forums, the collective population will contribute back to the human community this new form of news.”

Hauben recognized that a new form of news was evolving which would include both the contributions of netizens and the capabilities of the Internet. Describing the frustration of many netizens with the traditional media that they had to rely on before the Internet, Hauben wrote, “Today, similarly, the need for a broader and more cooperative gathering and reporting of the

News has helped create the new online media that is gradually supplementing traditional forms of journalism.”

What Hauben realized is there was a symbiosis developing between the news, netizens and the Internet. These were evolving into an interdependent partnership which had become substantial. He wrote, “the collective body of people assisted by (Usenet) software, has grown larger than any individual newspaper....”

There are many examples that have developed of netizens making their contributions to the News and the Net.

One important example of this new media was the anti-cnn web site created in China in 2008.(63) The website was created in response to western media distortions of the Tibet demonstrations and riots and the website critiqued these distortions.

Netizens in South Korea and in various online sites around the world took on to challenge the inaccuracies and serious problems in the South Korean government investigation into the sinking of the Cheonan. Their work had an effect at the UN. In 2011, there was an online critique by netizens of the UN Security Council misrepresentation of the armed insurgency in Libya as peaceful demonstrators needing foreign military intervention for protection. The UN can only benefit from such input. It is still too soon to know whether netizens will be able to have a significant impact on the UN in its handling of the crisis in Syria, but those defending Syrian sovereignty have received support and encouragement from the increasing spread of netizen journalism.

The significance of this new form of journalism is that there are netizens who are dedicated to doing the research and analysis to determine the interests and actions that are too often hidden from public view. By revealing the actual forces at work, netizens are making it possible to have a more accurate grasp of whose interests are being served and what is at stake in the events that make up the news. If such a journalism can help to provide the UN with a more accurate understanding of the conflicts it is considering, it can help to make more likely the peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

Notes

(1) ”Conference organized by the Russian Council for International Affairs”, 23 March 2012, Moscow.
<http://eng.news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/3582>

(2) He refers to how Libya and more recently Syria have been the victim of this politics. “How are we to see the mantras repeated by particular countries that consider themselves the main exporters of democracy if, say in the Libyan and now the Syrian cases, countries whose internal political lives are governed by completely different norms are chosen as models to follow for democratic development?”

(3) “Questions linger 100 days after the Cheonan sinking”, *Hankyoreh*, July 3 2010, online at
http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/428715.html

(4) Ronda Hauben, In Cheonan Dispute UN Security Council Acts in Accord with UN Charter, 9-5-2012
http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2010/09/05/in_cheonan_dispute_un_security_council_discovers_un_charter/

(5) The article, “Heller mediacion de Mexico en conflict de Peninsula de Corea” by Maurizio Guerrero, the UN Correspondent for Notimex (the Mexican News Agency), was published on July 5.

Maurizio Guerrero, “Heller mediacion de Mexico en conflict de Peninsula de Corea”, *Notimex*, July 5, 2010 (published in *la Economia*)

With the Cheonan Dispute: UN Security Council Discovers the UN Charter
<http://enlaeconomia.com/news/2010/07/05/69561>

(6) Security Council, S/2010/281, “Letter dated 4 June 2010”
<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/DPRK%20S%202010%20281%20Korea%20Letter%20and%20Cheonan%20Report.pdf>

(7) Security Council, S/2010/294, June 8, 2010 Letter, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/NKorea%20S%202010%20294.pdf>

(8) Media Stakeout: Informal comments to the Media by the President of the Security Council and the Permanent Representative of Mexico, H.E. Mr. Claude Heller on the Cheonan incident (the sinking of the ship from the Republic of Korea) and on Kyrgyzstan.

[Webcast: Archived Video - 5 minutes]

<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/stakeout/2010/so100614pm3.rm>

(9) Video of North Korean Ambassador Press Conference
<http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2010/pc100615am.rm>

(10) UN Security Council, S/PRST/2010/13
<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/443/11/PDF/N1044311.pdf?OpenElement>

(11) Lee Jae-hoon, “Presidential Statement allows for a ‘double interpretation, and does not blame or place consequences upon N. Korea.”, Hankyoreh, July 10, 2010.
www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/429768.html

(12) Ronda Hauben, “Netizens Question Cause of Cheonan Tragedy,” OhmyNews International, June 8, 2010.
http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?no=386108&rel_no=1
Ronda Hauben, “Questioning Cheonan Investigation Stirs Controversy,” OhmyNews International, June 29, 2010.
http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_sangview.asp?no=386133&rel_no=1

(13) PSPD Report Sent to Security Council, <http://blog.peoplepower21.org/Peace/31028>,
<http://blog.peoplepower21.org/Peace/31029>, <http://blog.peoplepower21.org/Peace/31030>

(14) Yeran Kim, Irkwon Jeong, Hyoungkoo Khang and Bomi Kim, “Blogging as ‘Recoding’: A Case Study of the Discursive War Over the Sinking of the Cheonan”, *Media International Australia*, November 2011, No 141, pgs 98-106.

(15) <http://willyloman.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/not-a-perfect-match-updated2.jpg>

(16) From PCC-772 Cheonan: South Korean Government Admits the Deception (and then Lies about It), June 30, 2010. <http://willyloman.wordpress.com/2010/06/30/pcc-772-cheonan-south-korean-government-admits-the-deception-and-then-lies-about-it/>

(17) The press conference was held on July 9 at the Tokyo Foreign Correspondents Club. The program was titled “Lee and Suh: Inconsistencies in the Cheonan Report”. <http://www.fccj.or.jp/node/5810>. See also, David Cyranoski, “Controversy over South Korea’s Sunken Ship”, *Nature*, July 8, 2010, online at http://www.nature.com/news/2010/100708/full/news.2010.343.html?s=news_rss

(18) The Russian team proposed a different theory for how the Cheonan sank. They had observed that the ship’s propeller had become entangled in a fishing net and subsequently that a possible cause of the sinking could have been that the ship had hit the antennae of a mine which then exploded. “Russian Navy Team’s Analysis of the Cheonan Incident”, Posted on July 27, Hankyoreh, modified on July 29. http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/432230.html The Russian Experts document is titled “Data from the Russian Naval Expert Group’s Investigation into the Cause of the South Korean Naval Vessel Cheonan’s Sinking”

See also “Russia’s Cheonan Investigation Suspects that Sinking Cheonan Ship was Caused by a Mine”, posted on July 27, 2010, Hankyoreh, modified on July 28, 2010. http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/432232.html

(19) Barbara Demick and John M. Glionna, “Doubts Surface on North Korean Role in Ship Sinking”, *Los Angeles Times*, July 23, 2010. <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jul/23/world/la-fg-korea-torpedo-20100724/2>

(20) Donald P. Gregg, “Testing North Korean Waters,” *New York Times*, August 31, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/01/opinion/01iht-edgregg.html>

(21) Records at the UN show that the practice of sending such correspondence to the Security Council dates back to 1946. This is the date when the symbol S/NC/ was introduced as the symbol for “Communications received from private individuals and non-governmental bodies relating to matters of which the Security Council is seized.” The Security Council has the practice of periodically publishing a list of the documents it receives, the name and organization of the sender, and the date they are received. The Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council states that the list is to be circulated to all representatives on the Security Council. A copy of any communication on the list is to be given to any nation on the Security Council that requests it.

There are over 450 such lists indicated in the UN records. As each list can contain several or a large number of documents the Security Council has received, the number of such documents is likely to be in the thousands.

Under Rule 39 of the Council procedures, the Security Council may invite any person it deems competent for the purpose to supply it with information on a given subject. Thus the two procedures in the Security Council’s provisional rules give it the basis to find assistance on issues it is considering from others outside the Council and to consider the contribution as part of its deliberation

(22) Tae-ho Kwon, “South Korean Government Impeded Russian Team’s Cheonan Investigation: Donald Gregg”, Hankyoreh, September 4, 2010. http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/438299.html

(23) See for example “PSPD’s Stance on the Presidential Statement of the UNSC Regarding the Sinking of the ROK Naval Vessel Cheonan” <http://blog.peoplepower21.org/Peace/31086>

(24) <http://ceinquiry.us/2011-08-22-acceptable-distortion-lies-war-libya>

(25) *Russia Today*, “Airstrikes in Libya did not take place” – Russian military, 1 March 2011

<http://www.rt.com/news/airstrikes-libya-russian-military/>

(26) “Libya, the UN, and Netizen Journalism”, *The Amateur Computerist*, Winter 2012, vol. 21 No. 1
<http://www.ais.org/~jrj/acn/ACn21-1.pdf>

(27) Comments from discussion of article on “Comment Is Free” at the *Guardian* (UK)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/mar/23/libya-ceasefire-consensus-russia-china-india>

(28) <http://blog.hiddenharmonies.org/2011/03/libya-whats-going-on/#comments>

(29) “An Open Letter to People’s of Africa and the World from Concerned Africans.”
<http://www.concernedafricans.co.za/>

(30) “Abuse of UN Processes in Security Council Actions Against Libya” <http://www.ais.org/~jrj/acn/ACn21-1.pdf>

(31) See for example “What Does Gaddafi’s Fall Mean for Africa?” <http://www.ais.org/~jrj/acn/ACn21-1.pdf>

(32) See Introduction, “Netizen Journalism and the Story of the Resistance to the NATO Aggression Against Libya”
<http://www.ais.org/~jrj/acn/ACn21-1.pdf>

(33) See for example: Ali Hashem, Interview at the *Real News*
http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=8106

(34) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jun/02/syria-intervention-observer>

(35) Alex Thompson’s blog, Sunday June 3, 2012. <http://blogs.channel4.com/alex-thomsons-view/search-houla-killers/1811>

(36) Michel Collon, *Liar’s Poker*, International Action Center, New York, 2002, p. 45. (This is an English translation. The book is originally published in French.)

(37) Marat Musin, THE HOULA MASSACRE: Opposition Terrorists “Killed Families Loyal to the Government”, Detailed Investigation, Global Research, June 1, 2012, [ANNA NEWS \(Original Russian\) and syrianews.cc](http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31184), <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31184>. See for example: Thierry Meyssan, “The Houla Affair Highlights Western Intelligence Gap in Syria”, <http://www.voltairenet.org/The-Houla-affair-highlights>. Investigators from [Vesti24](http://www.vesti24.com): Marat Musin, Olga Kulygina (Al-Houla, Syria)

(38) May 26, 2012 “Death Squad’s Ravage Syrian Town – West Calls for Action”, May 27, 2012.
<http://landdestroyer.blogspot.com/2012/05/death-squads-ravage-syrian-town-west.html>

(39) <http://www.infowars.com/wests-houla-syria-narrative-crumbles-expels-syrian-diplomats-anyway/>

(40) <http://sydwalker.info/blog/2012/05/27/houla-horror-truth-is-elusive-lies-are-easier-to-spot/>

(41) Mathias Broeckers, “Der Hula-Hoax” <http://www.broeckers.com/2012/06/05/der-hula-hoax/>

(42) <http://www.rt.com/news/houla-massacre-un-syria-635/>

(43) June 2, 2012, The Horrors of Houla (The blog is in Dutch [De verschrikkingen van Houla](http://www.verschrikkingen.nl))
<http://opinie.deredactie.be/2012/06/02/de-verschrikkingen-van-houla/>

(44) Bramdon Turbeville , SYRIA UNDER ATTACK BY GLOBALIST DEATH SQUADS , May 27, 2012, Syria360 blog <http://syria360.wordpress.com/the-syrian-uprising-in-context/> ["THE SALVADOR OPTION FOR](http://www.syria360.com)

[SYRIA": US-NATO Sponsored Death Squads Integrate "Opposition Forces"](http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31359) - by Prof. Michel Chossudovsky - 2012-05-28 <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31359>

(45) The collection of articles, "The Houla Massacre: The Disinformation Campaign," at Global Research <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=31399>

(46) Forum with discussion, Houla Massacre, Syria: What If? <http://forums.randi.org/showthread.php?t=237195>

(47) "Abermals Massaker in Syrien" Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 6-7-2012 <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/neue-erkenntnisse-zu-getoeteten-von-houla-abermals-massaker-in-syrien-11776496.html>

Partial English translation, "Prime German Paper: Syrian Rebels Committed Houla Massacre", Moon of Alabama, 6-9-2012 <http://www.moonofalabama.org/2012/06/prime-german-paper-syrian-rebels-committed-houla-massacre.html>

Another article appears on the National Review website , 6-9-2012 by John Rosenthal

<http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/302261/report-rebels-responsible-houla-massacre-john-rosenthal#>

(48) New FAZ Piece On Houla Massacre: "The Extermination", Moon of Alabama, 6-15-2012

<http://www.moonofalabama.org/2012/06/new-faz-piece-on-houla-massacre-the-extirmination.html>

(49) Lavrov, Oh the Right Side of History, http://www.mid.ru/bdcomp/brp_4.nsf/0/D54B1EB2726D75F544257A1E003935A8

When deciding to support UN Security Council Resolution 1970 and making no objection to Resolution 1973 on Libya, we believed that these decisions would help limit the excessive use of force and pave the way for a political settlement. Unfortunately, the actions undertaken by NATO countries under these resolutions led to their grave violation and support for one of the parties to the civil war, with the goal of ousting the existing regime - damaging in the process the authority of the Security Council...

It is clear that after what had happened in Libya it was impossible to go along with the UN Security Council taking decisions that would not be adequately explicit and would allow those responsible for their implementation to act at their own discretion. Any mandate given on behalf of the entire international community should be as clear and precise as possible in order to avoid ambiguity. It is therefore important to understand what is really happening in Syria and how to help that country to pass through this painful stage of its history.

(50) See for example the summary by Moon of Alabama, <http://www.moonofalabama.org/2012/06/the-syria-discussion-at-the-un-general-assembly.html> See also "The UN and the Houla Massacre: The Information battlefield" <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2012/06/12/un-and-houla-massacre/>

(51) See "The UN and the Houla Massacre: The Information Battlefield." <http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2012/06/12/un-and-houla-massacre/>

(52) Ronda Hauben, International Media "the 16th Member of the Security Council"

http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2011/03/15/media_and_security_council/

(53) Karl Deutsch, *Nerves of Government*, The Free Press, New York, 1966, p. xxvii.

(54) *Ibid.*, p.77.

(55) Ibid., p. 146.

(56) Ibid., p. 153.

(57) *Foreign Affairs*, Nov/Dec 2010 Vol 89, Issue 6, pp. 2-12.

(58) Ibid., p. 2.

(59) Ibid., p.10.

(60) Ronda Hauben, ,“On Libya, Soft Power, and the Protection of Civilians as Pretext”, *Global Time*, April 18, 2011.

<http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/foreign-view/2011-04/645498.html>

(61) Ronda Hauben, UN Security Council March 17 Meeting to Authorize Bombing of Libya all Smoke and Mirrors.

http://blogs.taz.de/netizenblog/2011/03/30/un_march_17_meeting_res1973/

Pavel Felgenhauer, Putin and Medvedev Lead Opposing Coalitions in the Russian Elite, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, March 26, 2011

http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=21271&Itemid=65

(62) Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*, Los Alamitos, CA, IEEE Computer Society Press, 1997, Chapter 13, p. 233. See also the Preface, and Chapter 1.

(63) See for example, Ronda Hauben, “Netizens Defy Western Media Fictions of China”, *OhmyNews International*, May 9, 2008, http://english.ohmynews.com/articleview/article_view.asp?no=382523&rel_no=1

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