

HOW TO ESTABLISH PUBLIC OPINION

It is noted that governments in general fear public opinion and give it a great deal of attention; they value public opinion highly and realise its effect, this is why they tend to monitor it closely.

In times of war and disturbances, the control of public opinion becomes all the more significant, and governments move swiftly to quell any public opinion against them. In times of peace their control of public opinion becomes more relaxed; however if they felt that some concepts which may damage their credibility were being spread they at once move to quell them and prevent them from provoking a public opinion against them, also if they sensed that some concepts or news items may trigger a public opinion against them, they would soon take the initiative to combat such items and prevent it.

In the Second World War, we witnessed the warring governments controlling public opinions closely, preventing the spread of opinions and concepts which would threaten them and become a potential unfavourable public opinion; and in the wake of the Second World War, when an agreement between the U.S. and Russia was struck about spreading the concepts of freedom, independence and progress in the colonised countries; Russia had meant eradicating colonialism and the U.S. meant changing the style of colonialism. In order to resist this, the other colonial powers took steps towards fighting those concepts by either resisting and suppressing them or by attempting to implant them and give them an erroneous significance and a reality contradictory to their essence.

When Hizb ut-Tahrir came on the scene, carrying the concept of the Islamic state, all the governments consented that it should be resisted and that its opinions should be stopped in their tracks lest they turned into a public opinion against them. And when the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was sent, Quraysh did not budge at first, however when she sensed that his Message threatened to turn into a public opinion, she soon moved to resist it and prevent it from turning into a public opinion. Therefore, almost as a rule, every government tends to fight any concept or opinion or news item that could potentially turn into a public opinion against it.

So what is the method which these governments adopt in fighting the public opinion?

In answer to this, it is noted that governments tend to concentrate their efforts in combatting the concepts and opinions which could potentially become public opinions, this is done by banning these concepts and opinions from being broadcast in public places, whether by way of direct talk such as oratory or ordinary talk, or by way of indirect contact such as writing in newspapers, magazines and books. The government's work is concentrated chiefly in preventing public debates; as for the private talks, the governments do not make an issue of it. It is true that in some cases they tend to clamp down on private meetings, but this in fact happens rarely and it is usually taken up by regimes which do not realise the meaning of rule, and such cases are actually isolated and do not form part of the government's strategy; therefore they are not considered part of the government's work designed to combat the concepts which could turn into a public opinion.

As far as a political party is concerned, governments tend to prevent the party from holding any public activity; they ban the leaflets, magazines, newspapers, books, speeches and public talks whether in the streets, mosques, or cafes etc... As for the study circles and talks in private places, governments have never made it their business to ban them, however it is known that there were some isolated cases which took place in certain countries and these were very rare and not in fact based on governments' initiatives and directives, thus they do not form part of the governments' drive in combatting the concepts which could become public opinions. In reality, no attempts have been made to ban the activities taking place in private places such as study circles and talks; if the governments had wanted to ban the circles in the way they banned the speeches and public talks they would have been able to do so, in the same way they managed to ban leaflets. If they did not do so, this is because they did not make it the focus of their attention and because their method of preventing the concepts from turning into public opinion is by banning the spread of the concepts, opinions and news in the public places.

This is also noted in the tradition of the Messenger of Allah (SAW), Quraysh was very anxious to prevent the Messenger of Allah (SAW) from talking in public places; the disbelievers used to first

send someone to counter the talk of the Messenger of Allah (SAW), they then resorted to harming and persecuting him in order to prevent him from talking to people in public places; they also used to prevent Abu Bakr from praying in his mosque which he built by his house.

This indicates that the method which the rulers used to prevent the concepts is to ban the public talks; this also indicates that the effective way of bringing about a public opinion is by talking to people in the public places.

Therefore, the method of generating public opinion would be by talking to people in public places. However, the talk in public places could be conducted privately with one or several persons, such as talking to persons in a cafe while sitting at an isolated table in a way that would not enable other persons to come and listen to the talk, or such as talking privately to a patient in a hospital; this type of talk would not help generate a public opinion, the talk must be open so that it is heard by whomever wants to listen. Also, one could talk in the streets or the mosque or the cafe in way that enables anyone to listen, however, the speaker may give some general and vague concepts and he may attempt concealing what he really wanted to say, this would also not generate public opinion for the listener and whoever wanted to listen may not be able to realise what the talk is about and therefore he would not be able to pass it on to others; the talk must therefore be frank and clear.

Furthermore, the speaker could be delivering a clear and frank talk, and when he sees a government agent he keeps silent, or when he reaches a point which he knows that the listener does not agree with, he abstains or avoids the subject; this also does not establish public opinion, the talk should not contain any reservations so that the concept is conveyed clearly and completely as it stands, in order to enable it to be spread in full and in detail.

Therefore, to bring about a public opinion, the talk must be held in public, openly, clearly, frankly and without any reservations, and this could be carried out in two ways:

- 1 - The indirect contact by way of newspapers, leaflets and books.
- 2 - The direct contact such as through speeches and conversations.

The indirect talk would generate a public opinion but it does not initiate a public awareness nor does it help the building of a popular base.

The public opinion which we aim to generate is the one that emanates from a general awareness, and the one which we aim to build, upon a popular base. And this cannot be brought about unless the contact is direct and personal.

Therefore, the public opinion which we aim at generating is the one carried out by way of talking personally to people in the public places openly, frankly and without any reservations. And this is what is known as the popular contact. Therefore, the method of generating the desired public opinion is to conduct the popular contact.

However, it should be known that the meaning of popular contact in this context has no link with the slogans which are being trumpeted nowadays such as the popular leadership and popular reaction etc, it is rather a specific term which has been put to indicate a certain reality.

And what is nowadays being repeated is merely a group of terms which have been taken from what the Westerners have written in the books of psychology and sociology about the groups, their establishment and their formation. These terms convey the wrong meaning for two reasons: One is because when the psychologists and sociologists wrote about these issues they did so on the basis that those events were partial, then they erred when they made general analogies with all the events; therefore, what they wrote formed part of the general analogy and that was wrong. Besides, some of what was written was based on logical deductions and not a sense of reality; the logical deduction is prone to error, for it is a host of theories which have been logically deduced and then taken as principles, to base actions upon these would be wrong without any doubt, therefore it would be wrong to consider them.

The second is because those who repeat such slogans try to implement them on events which are different to the one they had been theoretically designed for. Therefore they go wrong when they attempt to implement them, thinking that the theories are correct, they therefore contradict themselves, they sometimes say : “The shallow minded masses”, other times they would say: “The masses have become aware”. Awareness contradicts shallow mindedness, therefore, what is being said about the masses by those affected by the western culture should be disregarded, a look at reality would be the appropriate approach.

In fact the masses mean the group that is gathered permanently. The various groups are usually found in public places, it would be very rare to come across various groups in private places, although a group would be gathered in a private place, however such group cannot be called masses. And what is meant here is to talk or communicate with the groups that are gathered permanently. Therefore the right term to describe the popular contact would be talking to the people in the public places.

Attention should here be drawn to a couple of matters:

1 - The popular contact does not mean talking to the group or the groups, but talking to people in the places where the groups i.e. the masses are to be found, regardless of whether the talk is to one person, or to a group or groups, this means talking in the public places; therefore, talking to a group in a private place, as for instance talking to a group in a house would not be regarded as popular contact, on the other hand talking to one single person in a well frequented shop or in the streets would be considered popular contact and this could generate public opinion, thus that which is of consequence would be the place where the talk is held and the situation of the talk, not the group or the individual.

Therefore, when the governments decide to prevent a public opinion they tend to ban the talks in the public places even to one person, whereas they do not attempt to ban the talks held in private places even if it were to a group; the house raids which take place during a state of emergency to ban a meeting are a rare occurrence and isolated cases which do not form part of a method or a strategy, this type of ban is in fact to prevent a conspiracy and not to prevent a public opinion.

2- The popular contact is not talking to society, thus it would be inappropriate in this context to monitor the type of existing relationships between people, it is rather talking to people with the aim of conveying to them concepts or opinions or news which the people would in turn talk about and transmit and spread, thus the aim would be to get them to talk about those concepts and opinions. Therefore, no difference should be made between a town and a village, nor between a rich area and a poor area, nor between a Muslim and a non-Muslim area, nor between a capitalist society and an Islamic one; the same path should be tread in any place and with every group, as long as the talk is taking place in a public place regardless of any other consideration.

This is the nature of the popular contact: To talk personally, openly, frankly, clearly and without any reservations to people in public places.

This contact would be in various situations, some of which are:

- To talk openly in the streets.
- To talk openly in the cafes.
- To talk openly in the mosques.
- To talk openly in the hotels and the offices.
- To talk openly in the governmental departments.
- To talk openly in the well frequented public baths and not the deserted beaches or river banks.
- To talk openly in the car, train, plane etc..
- To talk openly in the hospital and the doctor’s surgery.

-To talk openly in public parks.

-To talk openly at radio and television stations and using loud speakers.

All these are situations where the popular contact could take place and where one can choose the situation he wants or the one that could be made available to him. As for the types of popular contact they are confined to what could be actually spoken, for instance the oratory is one type, the other type would be ordinary talk which includes debates, discussions and lectures; all these types are widely available to everyone, if one could not make a speech he could hold an ordinary talk and if one cannot give a lecture he could take part in a debate or a discussion.

As for the styles of popular contact, these are not restricted, but they are determined by the nature of the contact; a person for instance could use the style of opposition to an action or an opinion, or he could ask about an action or an opinion or something, he could also draw attention to something or to an action or to an opinion; and there are numerous other styles where the originality could reap tangible results and shorten the time of generating a public opinion.

This is the method of generating the desired public opinion, which is to carry out the popular contact in any of its various situations and in any of its types and in styles where originality is apparent.

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