

# *Information as a jeopardous element on international order*

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*In a rich moonlit garden, flowers open beneath the eyes of entire nations terrified to acknowledge the simplicity of the beauty of peace.*

(Aberjhani, 2008)

Information and ideas are commonly used as elements of reality formation. Nowadays, there are numerous theories about how ideational variables influence the creation of the world we live in. The list of informational and ideational sources is extensive. We can address science, language, informational technologies, among others. Since information and ideas are key parts of decision-making processes, politics are not out of this process. In International Relations (IR), constructivism is one of the most important theories in which ideational factories are the focus of analysis, not the state and its material capabilities.

Considering the principle of ideational factors as a fundamental piece of the well-known dichotomy between high and low politics, this essay will explore the correlation of information spreading, its use and how it can affect international order. Due to its complexity, it is established that the international order is based on the Western values and ideas, and it has been keen on the liberal order since the end of the Cold War.

## **What is information and how can we use it?**

When someone is asked such a question, the answer is connected to various meanings. A common one relates to facts we learn from each other and different sources daily. Theoretically, information can be understood as any value resulting from the

outcome of any process. There is a mathematical expression to explain this process: input > process > output, in which the process is determined by  $f(x) = f() + x$ , in which  $f()$  and  $x$  being the information and  $f(x)$  the outcome (LOOSE, 1998). Considering this function as a process, we might imply the possibility of manipulating this process to change the outcome.

Having that information is one of the basal elements of the construction of our reality, the desire to control this process for whoever is concerned comes as predictable. Information is fundamental in the process of domestic and regional governance since the decision-making and the political processes are highly influenced by the information the person behind these decisions has (HUDSON; VORE, 1995). In the Western view, the debate about how transparent governmental issues run is always present, being a trace of our model of democracy. That is how we can use it: once someone can fabricate a narrative, this person can change how the structure of a decision works, how society thinks, and how to use all of this in favour of their beliefs.

Once the information is in the hands of someone determined to use it not to operate the structures and the public institutions for the common good of a society, the domestic level of politics is jeopardised. Considering the level of analysis of IR (SINGER, 1961), when these malicious operators hijack the domestic level, it is instantaneously reflected on the international level. If we think on the question of the level of analysis contemplating that the system undergoes a process of self-feeding, the bottom influences the top, and the top reflects on the bottom. We can, then, start pointing out different menacing levels.

In the end, whoever is in control determines the outcomes of such a movement in the political game. Contemporary examples demonstrate this, being the 2016 United States' election the most famous among all. The term *fake news* not only was established as part of the vocabulary of English and non-English speakers but also delegitimised the entire discussion about the wrong information used in political events. After Trump's strategy of using fake information, the term was not about false communication anymore, but instead,

it turned to be a label to every fact with the power of hindering their ideology (FREELON, WELLS, 2020). The power provided by the information awakens a different perspective: Freelon and Wells (2020) highlight disinformation as the real process of using fake news — a term already menaced by Trumpism. As it was already mentioned, fake news is nothing more than wrong information, misinformation; on the other hand, disinformation is using the wrong information deliberately in the name of personal gain.

After this successful experiment by Donald Trump, governments worldwide have seen to be contaminated by this immoral practice to gain power — Brazil and Hungary are two examples of places where these practices have been applied. Combined with the Covid-19 pandemic, the world faces a rise of non-democratic forms of government bearing that information is highly important to the good function of democracy structures. The literature brings different forms of democracy and how they work with different capacities among them: participation, transparency of their institutions, political participation, and so on. The question that remains is how countries might deal with each other with different levels of these capacities.

As proposed by Dingyu Chung (2019), there are five types of democracy: elite, nationalist, liberal, socialist, and relational. In which one of them operates with a different level of these capacities — e.g., nationalist, and elite democracies are designed to work with low political participation while liberal and socialist ones work with a high one. Since the Cold War, we have been experiencing the predominance of the liberal order and its model of democracy — with the victory of the U.S. over the Soviet Union in the ideological tug-of-war. However, the international environment of crisis that led to the migration problem and the current Covid-19 outbreak, lead some perspectives of this form of democracy to be misinterpreted. Liberal democracies are designed for international cooperation, but it is interpreted as interventionism and an attack on the country's sovereignty.

We have been exposed to the rising of nationalist democracies with a strength unseen since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the breaking of the socialist order. As

already mentioned, this form of government works with low political participation, since leaders are most common to take place and no international presence since it is read as international interference. This rise of nationalism is strongly attached to disinformation. The government attacks democratic institutions, painted as the impediment of any progress, to gain full power as well as any other international figure to maintain power centralised without interference (GABRIELSSON, 2016).

This turns out to be a jeopardous element to the international order once the globalisation status our world has. The international interconnection makes it impossible for a country to isolate without any menace to its internal structure — political or economic. Due to the status of global trading, the international financial system, and now the cooperation to the vaccine, certain countries end up hindering international relations to the common good of progress. An example is the U.S. and the denouncement of hijacking suppliers from Brazil last year (PARAGUASSU, 2020), and how it could be a return to the sum zero dynamic — where if one has, another must not have (JAFFRELOT, 2003).

Considering what was exposed, it is possible to draw a line connecting disinformation, as the use deliberately of false information, nationalism, as the rise of a government that will fix every problem with no bureaucracy involved (CHUNG, 2019), and international order. Once a government is based on disinformation and nationalism is evoked as a fast solution, there are no places for trust on the international level, jeopardising any cooperation for the common good. For example, during the pandemic, Donald Trump brought into the light of the public the efficacy of a pill capable of preventing contamination: chloroquine. Trump could use the entire conjuncture — considering the suspicion of the virus to be a biological weapon, the anti-China feeling was also very strong (SOLNIL, 2021) — in a tentative way of selling a simple solution to a complex problem.

## **Final Considerations**

Information can change our realities not only to fit the theoretical speech. The reality is a chain of decisions made with the information available and the willingness of the decision-making in accepting them. When we address a world in which information is no longer only the value of a process but a weapon to gain power, reality is in danger of being affected. The international order is almost the same due to the meaning of how the patterns produced by rules, institutions, laws, norms, and other practices (BARNETT, 2021) are maintained to stabilize the international power.

There is a balance of power in which every country has its own height, exerting a different role at the international level due to its extra or lack of height. The realists are correct about this balance — the objective of this text is not to answer that but to notify how information has its practical nature. Considering governments' roles in democracies bridges authoritarianism, populism, the international community must be ready at the institutional level to avoid that. Once these democracies change due to the disinformation, the international order also changes — such as in the post-war and at the end of the Cold War, in which propaganda had an essential role.

The relations inter-nations are less effective than before and due to the pandemic, globalisation is signalling its weakness. In general, changes are marvellous events but also extremely challenging. Even if the occident is prepared to change and integrates into a single fight to defeat this misuse, it is extremely hard to go against disinformation without any preparation from the state level. The media is considered as an ally due to its reverberating power, but also responsible for spreading this movement that now puts at risk the way the Western society was built — leading these institutions and figures to a rupture in the near future.

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