

Venezuela in the crosshairs of digital fascism and the international media



Caracas, August 17 (RHC)-- Venezuela has been the target of an intense international communication campaign based on hatred and the undermining of the democratic foundations of the country.

Driven by international actors, troll centers and media aligned with external interests, the application of a strategy of destabilization of the Venezuelan Government and the questioning of the transparency and legitimacy of the elections is evident.

These actions are part of a campaign of hatred and psychological operations aimed at generating anxiety, uncertainty, frustration and helplessness in the population and in this way leading them to situations beyond any rationality.

The actions developed, at least in appearance, in an inorganic way, have a coordination at the bottom and use important human and economic resources for the propagation of hate speech and fake news with unusual scope.

Added to this strategy is the installation of alleged NGOs and the presentation of reports without any type of support in the field or in the territory or even pollsters, which offer inputs to both media and influencers, who in this way validate their speeches on the Venezuelan situation.

The final instance is the validation of these speeches when they are replicated by first-rate agencies and media.

This week teleSUR addressed the communication campaign against Venezuela from different axes, with the help of specialized analysts who explain how these actions of digital and media warfare are developed.

Digital platforms, hate platforms

Julián Macías, an expert in network analysis and an activist against digital disinformation, has highlighted the use of various tactics to spread fake news and generate viral content as part of the hate campaign developed internationally.

One of the actors pointed out by the specialist is Atlas Network, a global association that brings together dozens of far-right think tanks, with a lot of influence in the United States and Latin America and that is beginning to spread its wings in Europe in the face of the rise and consolidation of ultra-conservative parties.

Macías points out that after investigating the origin of “digital fraud” against the Venezuelan electoral process, of the 10 accounts with the most impact, several are linked to Atlas Network.

“There are different influencers who belong to this network and who have a great influence in the conversation with other accounts that pose as media outlets such as UHN Plus or Alerta News 24 Horas that have total hegemony,” says the specialist.

In turn, it highlights the use of “meme accounts” that, through parodies, reach tens of thousands of retweets. With these operations, Macías points out that “this is not a one-off thing, it is an organic thing. It is not a meme account that published this by chance; there are dozens of accounts in different countries doing the same thing.”

Among the content generated by this type of account are the use of Argentina’s celebrations after winning the World Cup or images of the Rio de Janeiro carnival as if they were demonstrations in favor of the far-right candidate María Corina Machado. All of them are massively replicated and thus amplify their reach.

The false content also includes manipulated images, such as the case of a police officer pointing at a pleading woman, when in reality the video of the entire sequence shows that such a scene never happened.

However, and despite their obvious falsehood, bot accounts, communication agencies give this type of content a massive reach and incorporate influencers, many of them linked to the Atlas Network.

“Felipe Calderón, the former president of Mexico who works for the IADG (Atlas Network) retweeted this account dozens of times spreading hoaxes like this with more than 50K rts” posted the specialist on his personal account.

Meanwhile, Macías points out that this type of operation “costs money but then there are guests to influencers that also costs money and there are people and organizations very involved in the entire campaign. There are different actors such as María Corina Machado herself, Milei himself, Bolsonaro and Donald Trump with Steve Bannon as a guru and a lot of people without any scruples in using lies, hatred and bot farms on digital platforms to generate a reality, a parallel narrative.”

The mass media

For political communication expert Flavia Carrato, who has closely followed the development of this media campaign aimed at the Venezuelan electoral process, “we are witnessing a coordinated effort to manipulate the international perception of the elections in Venezuela.”

The strategy, which began months before the electoral act itself, has installed article after article, report after report, the idea of ??an alleged lack of credibility in the voting system of the Bolivarian Republic.

Carrato points out in this regard: “the media are using language and a narrative that seek to sow distrust in the Venezuelan electoral system, presenting itself as fraudulent or unreliable, without providing conclusive evidence.”

And she highlights that this strategy is not new, but part of a recurring pattern in situations where there are geopolitical interests at stake. “What is sought with this campaign is to undermine the confidence of voters in their own electoral system, generating a feeling of uncertainty and delegitimization. It is a way of preparing the ground to justify external interventions or more severe sanctions,” she explains.

A closer look at international media reports shows that many of the accusations are based on unreliable reports, opinions from so-called experts and anonymous testimonies, without solid factual support. Carrato notes that “these types of reports are designed to be replicated on social media and other media, amplifying the message and creating a false impression of consensus on the alleged illegitimacy of the Venezuelan electoral process.”

The expert highlights that one of the most common tactics is to use sensational headlines that attract attention but do not reflect the complexity of the situation in Venezuela. “Stories are published that suggest electoral manipulation or authoritarianism, but when analyzed in depth, they often lack substantial evidence. The goal is not to inform, but to influence public opinion,” she says.

Carrato also highlights the role of social media in spreading this narrative. “Social media has become a battlefield where these false narratives spread rapidly. By using bots and fake accounts, these messages are amplified, generating a perception of crisis that does not correspond to the reality in Venezuela.

The media delegitimization articulates at the level of public opinion in order to manipulate it and subsequently favor an external action that threatens, for Carrato, not only a government, but also directly attacks “the sovereignty of the country and the right of Venezuelans to decide their future without external interference.”

The strategy of spreading hate speech and then calling for reaction in the streets is not new in Venezuela, and at various times in recent history, the extreme right coordinated a narrative based on actions of extreme violence that were then disseminated by the international media in order to show a country in chaos and overwhelmed.

The fight against fascism

The communication campaign against the Venezuelan electoral process has not only managed to affect the perception of the West regarding institutional quality, but it also has consequences within the country since it acts at the level of the voters' morale, making them believe that their participation will not make any difference, generating impotence and hatred and finally, this feeling tries to be taken to the streets by the extreme right, such as the calls of María Corina Machado "to collect", an updated version of what was previously "the exit" or "until the end".

Given this situation, specialists point out the need to generate legislation and tools to counteract these strategies designed and applied by international fascism.

"We have to learn to deconstruct the whole from the details, to destroy the applied hybrid war strategy," said Angela Carrato to Beto Almeida on the program Latitud Brasil.

Carrato points out the integration between the nations and peoples of Latin America as fundamental to confront the campaigns of hate and destabilization aimed at diluting sovereign states and subordinating them to the interests of large corporations and the United States.

"We can achieve it, we, Latin Americans, can achieve this integration and it is essential to start with the subcontinent, with South America, or we will be irrelevant," he said forcefully.

Meanwhile, Macías calls for legislation on the matter and to directly attack this type of operation. In this sense, he mentions the case of the United Kingdom, which in the face of the latest fascist wave against the migrant population "has taken it seriously and is beginning to arrest people who believe this disinformation."

For its part, Venezuela enacted the Law against Fascism, Neofascism and Similar Expressions, in order to give the State tools to combat cyberfascism. The legislation created a National Commission against Fascism, Hate and Violence and has at its core the regulation of social networks to protect the stability of state institutions affected by cyber attacks.

However, given the magnitude of attacks of this type, the President of the Republic, Nicolás Maduro, called for avoiding the use of WhatsApp and has decided to suspend the platform owned by the magnate Elon Musk until it adjusts its activity to national regulations.

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