

Chile's fight for a Constitution

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Activists hand out leaflets with information about the work of the Chilean Constituent Convention. January 25, 2022. Photo: Javier Torres / AFP

By Guillermo Alarado

In my commentary published on March 21, 2019, I said that the phrase "lie, lie that something remains" has gone through history with numerous paternities, but it is still in the instruction manual of unscrupulous politicians, useful fools or useful not so dumb ones.

It is a resource, I pointed out then, always at hand for those who dedicate themselves to sow falsehoods, with the conviction that at the end of the day something will remain in the imagination of their audience, where little by little it will be transformed into an unshakable conviction.

I bring this subject up again in connection with the process underway in Chile, where on September 4, less than a month from now, the population is summoned to the polls to decide whether to approve or reject the Magna Carta project, which is to replace the one inherited by the Pinochet dictatorship.

Although the process entered its final stretch this Friday with the launching of the so-called "electoral strip", the struggle between one side and the other has existed practically since the creation of a Constitutional Convention, which was in charge of drafting the text, was approved.

The dominant tone during this time has been the recurrent use of those who seek the rejection of false information, what some call "fake news".

An article by journalist Juan Carlos Ramírez, published by the Argentine newspaper Página 12, points out that among the most spread lies are alleged conspiracies of the Mapuche community to take control of the country, as well as that the government will prohibit the practice of any religion.

The hoaxes are mind-boggling, such as one that abortion will be allowed even hours before the birth of the baby, that the flag and the national anthem will be eliminated or, perhaps the most widespread, that the State will erase the right to own land, houses or vehicles.

Fabian Padilla, founder and director of the Fast Check initiative, assures that there are three types of disinformation narrative in the Chilean constituent process, the first of which consists of altering the content of the text, as in the case of the elimination of property.

The second type is to discredit members of the Commission, as in the case of Mapuche leader Elisa Loncón, the first president of the Commission, who suffered a persistent campaign of hatred, misogyny and racism.

Finally, false phrases are attributed to members of the drafting body, which, although later denied, remain as truth for many people just because they appeared in the networks.

Rarely has there been such a clear example of the struggle between truth and lies in a process that should be followed very closely, as it contains elements that we will soon see in other parts of our region and the world.

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