

Western Media Continues to Spread Fake News About North Korea

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In modern warfare, one of the greatest weapons is the power to manipulate information. In a globalized international society, extremely integrated and connected by an infinite information circulation network, a media which controls the dissemination and content of such information is in an extremely advantageous position, as this power allows it to shape public opinion. In the mass society, we are all hostages to the dissemination of information and to the way it is carried out, which puts us in a position of extreme fragility, as we are daily forced to consume false information strategically manipulated by its disseminators.

Lies fill a large part of the mass media, as it is controlled by the most powerful groups in society and which are better able to guarantee their interests. In the Western world, the use of false information to denigrate the public image of people, countries, ideologies and movements that in some way oppose the liberal hegemonic ideology has become frequent. One of the biggest victims of this information war is North Korea, a country that is extremely denigrated in the West with numerous and repeated lies about its political regime and its society as a whole.

North Korean **President Kim Jong-un** was the youngest victim of the unfounded “death” news in Western media. In fact, it has become common for all North Korean public figures who are absent from the media spotlight for a few days to be reported as “dead” around the world – these death reports are often accompanied by weird accusations that such people were “sentenced to death”, even if there is no evidence for such conclusions. Once again, history repeated itself: after about two weeks without public appearances, Kim Jong-un was presumed dead by the West.

The trigger for world hysteria was Kim’s absence from the celebration of the last Day of the Sun – a traditional Korean holiday – on April 15th. Immediately, a media bombardment began in the West, with worldwide reports of the alleged “death” or “serious state of health” of the Korean President. The legend was generated around an alleged cardiac surgery, which would have been unsuccessful. According to the New York Post, the deputy director of HKSTV in Hong Kong said that Kim would be dead, citing a “very solid source” – which was not identified – while the Japanese newspaper, Shukan Gendai, said that Kim would be in “vegetative state” after undergoing cardiac surgery at the beginning of the month. On social media, the hashtag #kimjongundead quickly gained absurd popularity, being one of the most accessed on Twitter.

Apparently, the West wants to see Kim Jong-un dead, but the truth came out, with a series of official responses denying the avalanche of lies by the mass media. The South Korean

intelligence service was the first to report the lie behind the information that Kim either died or was ill. "Our position in the government is firm", special national security adviser, Moon Chung-in, said in an interview with CNN this Sunday (26), "Kim Jong-un is alive and well". The adviser also said that Kim had been in Wonsan - a tourist town in the east of the country - since April 13 - which is why he was absent from public commitments - adding, "No suspicious movements were detected so far".

Then, a satellite photo captured an image of the President in Wonsan, showing that Kim is alive and well. The North Korean media then responded to the Western media offensive with several messages from Kim, confirming his health and thanking the messages of support received from public figures around the world who sympathized with the President's alleged serious state of health. The most curious thing is that the lies invented by the West call attention for the degree of accuracy and complexity. Not satisfied with inventing death, vegetative condition and heart surgery, the media agencies released fake news stating that China had sent a team of doctors to operate Kim. Fortunately, Beijing denied the information immediately, leaving no doubt to its deleterious character.

In the end, Kim is alive, well and there is no concrete data that can tell us anything more accurate about his health. Obviously, the lie promoters already knew all this with antecedence, but they were concerned to make a lie in order to provoke inflamed reactions worldwide and destabilize Korea by tarnishing its image, portraying it as a dictatorial country, extremely closed and with a systemic censure - so strong that they are able to hide from the whole world a news as important as the death of their own president.

The darker side of this "fake news age" is that this false information drives big political decisions and is capable of influencing the actions of the people on large scale. Another example of the info-war power is Brazil, where fake news accusing China of having created the new coronavirus was officially admitted by the government, generating a serious diplomatic crisis between both countries and causing a wave of synophobia and hostility against Asians in the country, with Chinese immigrants being beaten on the streets. On social media, millions of messages containing fake news about the virus are spread daily and already completely permeate the popular mentality.

An important tactic of information warfare is the handling of which news should be broadcast. Despite the huge repercussions of Kim Jong-un's "death", very few agencies have so far reported about the farce of this information, or, if they did, have invested little in its dissemination. The reason is simple: in addition to the interest in spreading fake news, denying previous information is costly and damages the image of these media outlets, which prefer to keep the lie.

Even though Pyongyang denies Kim's death, Beijing denies having sent doctors for heart surgery and South Korea itself admits that it is all about fake news, in the popular imagination of Western mass societies, an image of Korea as a "terrible dictatorship" and "the most closed country in the world" is already formed and can hardly be rebuilt without a strong media work committed to the truth (which is far from emerging).

The fact is that Kim Jong-un is alive and, more than ever, it is proven that most of the content released about non-Western countries is made up of fake news. In our times, the circulation of information is a real battlefield, really worthy of attention for purposes of national defense and strategy.

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