

STATE (IN)STABILITY:

Past, present and future perspectives for the nation state

Topic for 2021: State (in)stability in the age of post-truth

“The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist.”

Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism

Throughout the millenia every change in the human landscape has tried to establish itself on a firm bedrock of truth. The controversies within that landscape have invariably revolved around disagreements *about* truth. Every social, political and economic order, with all its cultural, moral and intellectual factors in play, has claimed legitimacy based on a set of truths about the world.

In the Middle Ages, European and Islamic intellectuals had debated whether important truths about the world can be discovered by reason, divine revelation, mystical union, or some combination of those. In the European intellectual tradition, the debate continued throughout the Early Modern Age, the Enlightenment, and straight through the 19th and 20th centuries, serving as a rough template for the development of discussions about the credible sources of knowledge and truth. In short, epistemological concerns have been fundamental in every academic discipline, as they have in many fields of human enterprise.

These discussions have not always been unbiased and fair, and one can certainly say that various groups and/or regimes have tried to enforce as true those beliefs which fit a worldview rather than fit any known world. However, it seems that in the 21st century there has been a push towards a “post-truth society”, not referring to a society in which events take place “after” truth, but rather one which has somehow, vaguely yet ostensibly, moved beyond truth. The concept is, however, a new one, so it neither has a conclusively agreed upon definition, nor is the state of affairs which it is meant to denote altogether clear. On the other hand, it is abundantly clear that new realities within social and traditional media have influenced all levels of social, political, economic and cultural discourse to the extent that growing information bubbles have produced a number of inwardly coherent systems of language and belief whose members have little to no common ground on which to carry an intelligible discussion with anyone outside their own bubble.

Regardless of the still loose and competing definitions of ‘post-truth’, it is clear that the concept is connected with, and possibly encompasses, a wide spectrum of phenomena, such as

- information bubbles,
- fake news
- conspiracy theories,
- the distrust of science, traditional media and political authorities,
- the rise of contemporary populist movements,
- cult-like behavior,
- the acceptance of fringe ideas in the political mainstream,
- historical revisionism,
- etc.

Because of the influence which these various “post-truth phenomena” have at all levels of discourse, and their possibly destabilizing effects on the global political and economic order, democracy, society and culture, we are interested in contributions, including paper and panel proposals, revolving around (although not limited to) the following questions:

1. How are above and other post-truth phenomena connected with the concept of ‘post-truth’ and how essential are they to the emergence of the post-truth society?
2. How are post-truth phenomena influencing politics, economics, society and culture? Are they causing instabilities and what kind of trends might we expect as a result?
3. What are the causes of the push towards a post-truth society, and how should we try to define the concept? What lessons can be drawn from the history of science, and have post-modernism and social constructivism played a significant role in the creation of post-truth?
4. Although the concept of ‘post-truth’ is a new one, what historical precedents are there for the type of phenomena which it may denote?
5. What are the economic and political motivations for actors pursuing various post-truth activities such as fake news (and/or others)? What is the psychological motivation behind them?
6. What are the security implications of post-truth phenomena, especially fake news?
7. Are the assumptions made in the first three paragraphs of this Call for Papers valid, or is the relationship between truth and power naturally biased towards power? In other words, if we speak of a “post-truth society”, are we naively assuming the existence of a “truth society” in the recent past, or is the need for new concepts and explanatory models simply produced by a rise of revisionist forces against a status quo?

Because the above-mentioned phenomena are both emerging and broad, we encourage authors from a large number academic disciplines to contribute to the discussion, these being, but not limited to, *political science, international relations, security studies, economics, law, psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, religion, cultural studies, anthropology, and others*. Also, because the guiding idea of STATE (IN)STABILITY is to encourage the investigation of any and all stabilizing and destabilizing factors to individual states as well as the international state system, the conference accepts proposals from outside the purview of the annual topic.

Proposals should be sent to conference@libertas.hr

Abstracts should contain:

- Name and Surname of author(s)
- Affiliation and contact info of author(s)
- Title of Paper
- 250 – 300 words
- 5 – 7 keywords

Abstract Example

John Doe, Unknown University (jdoe@unknownuni.edu)

How to Write a Conference Abstract

Abstract: This is an example of how to write an abstract for the conference. All abstracts should contain 250 – 300 words. They should be written in .doc or .docx format. They should be sent to conference@libertas.hr. The text should be Justified (CTRL+J). Submissions for the conference should contain authors name and surname, affiliation, title of paper, abstract and 5 – 7 keywords.

Key words: Conference, Abstract, Author, Affiliation, Title.

The abstract submission deadline is August 31 2021.

All relevant information available at stateinstability.org.

Participation fees: the STATE (IN)STABILITY 2021 conference is funded by Libertas International University, and requires no participation or registration fees from participants.