# BUSUN XXIV

## INSTITUTIONS & INDIVIDUALS



## DISEC

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# Introduction

**The Disarmament and International Security Committee:**

Also known as DISEC or the First Committee, its mandate is to maintain and strengthen International peace and security through disarmament, the regulation of armaments, and other cooperative measures.

As a subsidiary of the General Assembly, DISEC **discusses** and makes **recommendations** on issues being discussed in the Security Council or any situation that falls within the UN charter. It also has the capability to **initiate studies** or establish **commissions** to promote international collaboration in its assigned field. For the purposes of this simulation, DISEC may not take any direct action on an issue.

Please direct any questions or concerns to disec@busun.org.

# Topic One

**2020 Coronavirus Pandemic**

<u>International Sharing of Medical Information</u>
- Should medical data be shared through organizations or with specific countries?
- What rules or regulations should be in place when sharing personal medical data?

One of the most important aspects of fighting a global pandemic is information. Specifically, information on transmission rates, methods of infection, death rates, and other data that could help formulate a cure or vaccine. Withholding information from the rest of the world is one of the biggest threats to international security associated with pandemics.

If the epicenter of a pandemic does not share information regarding the effects and transmission of a disease, governments cannot adequately prepare for spreading of the illness, or may be falsely led to believe the situation is better than actual reality. This can lead to a much slower response to a pandemic which in most cases will lead to increased deaths and long-term infections. In most situations, countries would thus have to wait to take action until they have detected their own domestic cases. At this point, the virus would already have a foothold in the country. According to the University of Southampton, 95% of infections could have been avoided if China had acted 3 weeks earlier.[1]

A slower release of medical information also limits the ability of countries and research organizations to develop cures, vaccines or even detect the virus. Without the virus' genome, it would be difficult to distinguish it from any other number of diseases with similar symptoms. There are indications that the Chinese government may have kept the genetic map of the virus for itself for more than a week after it had been isolated. The genome was allegedly decoded on January 2nd, but only released on the 12th.[2] Some countries and organizations also suspect that China took more time than necessary to release patient and case data at a time when the pandemic could have been slowed. Finally, there are allegations that the WHO was not well informed by the epicenter of the pandemic, preventing it from properly informing the international community on the incoming virus.[3]

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In the case of COVID-19, an important piece of information about asymptomatic transmission may have been omitted in officially released statistics. This prevented other nations from preparing for such an eventuality, promoting the spread of the virus. According to the University of Hong Kong, 232,000 people had been infected on February 20th, compared to 75,000 officially confirmed cases. This fueled narratives and ideas that the pandemic would be easier to manage than it really was.[4]

In contrast to the previous point, in countries such as Italy and Spain, mild cases of the virus were omitted from official statistics. This caused an inflation of the death rate to 9 or 12%, making the virus seem much more dangerous than it really was. Due to this, other countries may have taken measures that were too aggressive for the situation they faced. This would have had a significant impact on the countries' economic and social situation.[5]

While many countries blame China for not distributing information promptly, China's government counter-argues that not only did it communicate properly, but the steps it took were adequately necessary to ensure an effective reaction to the virus. They state that "since the beginning of the outbreak, we have been continuously sharing information on the epidemic with the WHO and the international community in an open, transparent, and responsible manner."[6] The head of the National Health Commission Ma Xiowei explains that "the truth is the Chinese government did not delay releasing or conceal information, but informed the international community about the virus and the situation at a moment's notice". Moreover, any delay can be attributed to the fact that the "characteristics of the virus require time and rigorous effort to solve."[7] Some scientists do argue that "in sequencing unknown pathogens, '…' accuracy is as important as speed." In fact, during the SARS outbreak in 2003 the source of the epidemic was wrongly assumed to be chlamydia, reducing the public's confidence in the public health response.[8] By waiting to distribute information internationally, China may have ensured that the information that was received was accurate and useful, but also increasing risk by giving the disease time to spread.

Most medical and patient information is shared at the regional level. In fact,

many countries are still attempting to create national healthcare information systems such as Australia, Finland, Germany or Turkey.[9] The leap to an international HIE (Health Information Exchange) system would be even more complex.

The issues with an International HIE system are numerous. The first is communication: files would need to be translated accurately from one language to the other. Alternatively, they could be written in a universal language but that would betray the point of it being an effective worldwide system. In the same vein, different nations use different information sorting systems which would need to be adapted and standardized. While technology is a way of counteracting the first two problems, it is also a problem in and of itself. Should the database be computer accessible, it would become imperative that any medical centers be equipped with a computer and access to the files via the internet or other means.

In addition to technical and operative matters, there are the obvious moral and ethical implications of such a system. The right to patient privacy and the need to consent before the sharing of confidential medical information could impair the ability of an international health system to track the actual spread of a pandemic or disease. Moreover, the WHO acknowledges the difficulties in standardizing the nature of medical relationships. For example, the patient-physician relationship "continues to be 'an' enormous debate".[10]

Despite these issues, the Dolphin project is attempting to create a shared regional, and maybe even international medical database. "Since 2007, a collaborative effort to achieve clinical data sharing has been carried out at Zhejiang University in China, Kyoto University and Miyazaki University in Japan". It aims to create a 'super directory' across countries by medical information data centers set up through nations. It would also provide translation services. However, this project has only been applied to regional information sharing and in the context of sending the medical information of travelers from one country to another in the event of a health issue.[11]

While not necessarily a medical records information service, the United Nations Statistical Commission

currently works with governments, national information services and non-governmental information gathering organizations such as google to find and analyze statistical data around the world. It could be the model for an international HIE request service.[12]

Exclusive Medical Resources
- Should the countries that are producing or investing in a vaccine have priority over the first doses?
- Should countries be permitted to preemptively purchase doses of vaccines in development?
- How can the global distribution of vaccines and medical resources be ensured? By organizations? Individual aid?

Medical information is important but once it has been attained it must be used to formulate preventative measures, cures, vaccines etc. The virus has affected people at the global scale, but in the race for a vaccine, many countries may be tempted to make sure they get the first treatments.

While social distancing measures, quarantines, hand washing, and other preventative measures may slow the spread of the virus, the best way to prevent it from returning is to develop a vaccine against it. Many biotech companies currently working on vaccines are being funded by governments, but these funds may include the condition that the first doses be delivered to the paying government first and not those who need it the most. The United States has been buying vaccine doses from companies such as AstraZeneca, $1.2 billion for 300 million doses of the vaccine. They have also struck deals with J&J, Moderna and Sanofi.[13] In doing so they are making sure that their own population will receive doses of the vaccine before everyone else. This has naturally risen tensions between some nations.

The United States also attempted to formulate a deal with CureVac, a German company. The German government promptly insisted that no country should have a monopoly on a future vaccine and that they are "interested in making sure that vaccines and the like are also developed in Europe." In fact, a German Economy Ministry spokeswoman explained that under German foreign trade law, Berlin can examine and takeover bids from non-

EU countries "if national or European security interests are at stake".[14]

While these two highly developed parts of the world joust over these organizations, less developed areas are witnessing a very distressing situation.

It may seem that a COVID-19 vaccine will become a commodity afforded by the richer countries of the world. The issue is that these are the same countries that have access to a greater amount of resources to deal with a pandemic, regardless of access to a vaccine. Instead of using them to mitigate the spread in areas where social distancing or quarantines cannot be sufficiently enforced due to various socio-economic issues, they would expand the gap in security between wealthier and poorer nations. About 13.8% of the world population lives in Sub-Saharan Africa[15] a region which only accounts for 1.3% of the world's GDP.[16] The death toll could rise much higher than it has in any other Western country.

The complicated factor in all of this is that any part of the world that is still affected by the pandemic could transmit it to another region despite travel bans or other restrictive methods, creating yet another phase of the pandemic.
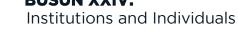
Although the exclusivity aspects of these financial deals may seem less than ideal, there are some important incentives to funding vaccines in this way. Governments buying vaccines from private companies in this manner allows them to be much cheaper when distributed to disadvantaged people within the country. While this does not scale up to disadvantaged nations, a country that is not dealing with the virus is much more able to help others that are. Importantly, many research organizations have argued that this method allows them to speed up research. A smaller delay in having a functional vaccine would be beneficial to all. Even if some don't get it immediately.[17]

Having the will and items necessary to provide aid to another country is just the beginning. Political issues have long been a hurdle to providing aid to people in need. In Venezuela for example, a prolonged political crisis has limited information about the state of the pandemic in the country and the accessibility of medical help. According the UN, "the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has received reports that political

leaders and journalists reporting on COVID-19 are being detained, and that threats have been made against health workers for expressing concern about the lack of equipment to fight the pandemic or for providing information on the number of cases." Moreover, fuel shortages further limit the ability of organizations to bring in equipment. Importantly, the country is under harsh sanctions from countries such as the United States due to the ongoing political crisis, making it ever harder to provide the resources necessary to stop the spread of the virus.[18]

Providing Help in Politically Divisive Countries
- Should / what kind of aid should be directed to Venezuela, North Korea and Iran?
- Should sanctions relief be considered to facilitate aid to the above countries?

Having spoken about the internal political divide that exists in Venezuela, there are also external political divides when deciding whether to, and what kind of aid to provide to certain countries. Earlier the problems with outside help were framed with the internal difficulties that came with providing aid, in this section, some of the external ramifications are considered.

North Korea has been the subject of sanctions from, but not limited to, the United States, Europe, Japan, South Korea and Australia. These have ranged from restricting cultural or diplomatic exchanges to prohibitions on product exports and imports. These have been justified as punishing the following allegations: cyberattacks, money laundering and human rights violations. They are also aimed at curtailing the nations' nuclear program and forcing it to denuclearize.[19] In order to provide adequate levels of aid some sanctions might have to be lifted,[20] there is a worry that without proper oversight, the country might take this opportunity to continue its nuclear program or the actions that allegedly led to the imposing of sanctions in the first place.

However, the sanctions which were aimed at protecting other countries' security may play a part in decreasing it. North Korea's population is at extreme risk of the virus due to the "decrepit state of its public health infrastructure". It is a prime location for a new center of the epidemic

which could spread from there back into South Korea or China once more. In addition, North Koreans themselves could be facing an enormous death toll if they do not receive some form of help.[21] Supplies such as testing kits, PPE had already been sent as aid to the country. Special healthcare training was also provided but a $10 million aid package was stopped due to cross-border tensions.[22]

In addition to this, there is some doubt as to how truthful the country is being with its own statistics. As mentioned earlier, North Korea shares a border with China and South Korea, the original epicenter of the epidemic and a country that was hit extremely hard by it. Yet, officials only confirmed the first case of the virus after having imposed border checks and quarantine measures.[23]

The North Korean government explained that their first officially confirmed case involves a former defector who crossed back into the north from the south. This claim may exacerbate the tensions already present with South Korea and its allies. However, the country took extremely powerful measures to combat any possible spread of the virus including: sealing its border, stopping business with China (its main source of trade), and quarantine all diplomats in Pyongyang for a month.[24] Even if cases began to multiply in the country, such powerful measures might prevent some transmittance to other countries and rekindling the epidemic.

Returning the case study of Venezuela, providing aid to the country might be, or be seen as, an attempt to support and legitimize Guaido or Maduro's government. There have already been rising tensions between the Russian Federation and the United States over this very issue. Tension between the parties has also put into doubt the truthfulness of Venezuelan disease statistics. There are reports that "pertinent epidemiological data" is being suppressed, "disease control initiatives" are being banned and this has begun to hinder "international humanitarian support".[25]

Resistance to Restrictions and Other Threats to International Security
- What kind of measures should be taken to enforce virus containment?
- What measures should be taken to limit food insecurity in light of

complications with international trade routes?

It has been stated many times that one of the biggest threats to international security is for a region to remain with high rates of infection. In countries such as Serbia, thousands of people began to protest restrictions designed to slow the spread of COVID-19.[26] In Nigeria, a country where 40% of citizens live below the poverty line, most of the population has been disobeying lockdown and social distancing to continue working. This is a necessity as most of them live day to day.[27] In these situations, governments risk having to take aggressive action against their own citizens or risk the virus spreading further than it already has. In both cases, these areas become a threat to international security in the event that travel bans or other restrictions cannot be sufficiently enforced.

This problem is further exacerbated by the threat of declining demand for certain crops. This poses an imminent threat to countries which depend on certain agricultural exports. The prices of these crops have been decreased and it is wreaking havoc on rural income. Export restrictions may also damage food security in countries that require food imports. This pressure on international food chains and losses of income / remittances could lead to 265 million people suffering from "acute food insecurity by the end" of the year. Countries that are currently being helped or may require help include: Angola, Bangladesh, Bhutan, DRC, Haiti, India, Kenya, Kyrgz Republic, Liberia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Tajikistan.[28]

While there is enough food in the world to feed those who need it, international trade would need to be vigorously maintained. It is necessary to establish a standardized procedure with increased care and safety in order to prevent the international spread of the virus. Moreover, some countries may be tempted to stockpile food for their own population as opposed to exporting it where it may be direly needed.[29]

Past UN Action:
Resolutions relating to the issue of Pandemics have been passed by the WHO and United Nations councils in the past.

General Assembly resolution 67/81 "Reaffirms the leading role of the World Health Organization and the

important role of the United Nations system in enhancing the visibility of health issues in the different international forums and supporting member states in responding to the challenges of the implementation of universal health coverage."[30]

The World Health Organization's landmark resolution WHA69.1 passed in 2016 urged member states to "Enhance international cooperation to achieve health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all." It also called for investments into "universal health coverage, including needs-based allocation among socioeconomic groups in favour of the most vulnerable and deprived populations within national contexts in order to reduce the burden of disease, financial risks, inequality and injustice." Finally, the resolution calls on member states to "enhance institutional and operational capacity and infrastructure for public health including scientific and operational competence of public health institutions, as appropriate to national circumstances".[31]

General Assembly resolution 72/139 "calls upon the international community and global health partners, as well as regional and national stakeholders, to support Member States in carrying out their primary responsibilities to accelerate the transition towards universal health coverage and tackle social, economic and environmental determinants of health...". It also "Encourages Member STates to secure sustainable financing for health research and development on emerging and re-emerging diseases...".[32]

There are also some resolutions that deal specifically with the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The first, General Assembly resolution 74/270 called for "intensified international cooperation to contain, mitigate and defeat the pandemic, including by exchanging information, scientific knowledge and best practices and by applying the relevant guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization". It also called "upon the United Nations system, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, to work with all relevant actors in order to mobilize a coordinated global response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic and financial impact on all societies."[33]

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Finally, General Assembly resolution 74/274 "reaffirms the fundamental role of the United Nations system in coordinating the global response to control and contain the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and in support Member States, and in this regard acknowledges the crucial leading role played by the World Health Organization." Moreover, it "requests the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the World Health Organization and other relevant agencies of the United Nations system '...' to identify and recommend options, including approaches to rapidly scaling manufacturing and strengthening supply chains that promote and ensure fair, transparent, equitable, efficient and timely access to and distribution of preventive tools, laboratory testing, reagents and supporting materials, essential medical supplies, new diagnostics, drugs and future COVID-19 vaccines, with a view to making them available to all those in need, in particular in developing countries." Finally, it "calls upon Member States and other relevant stakeholders to immediately take steps to prevent, within their respective legal frameworks, speculation and undue stockpiling that may hinder access to safe, effective and affordable essential medicines, vaccines, personal protective equipment and medical equipment as may be required to effectively address COVID-19".[34]

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# Topic Two

**Cybersecurity**

<u>Introduction</u>**:**
In 2020, 4.6 billion people were active internet users, a staggering 60% of the population, and in many countries, internet usage is near 100%.[35] With this, a new battlefield has emerged between the world's superpowers - the cyberworld. International government-backed cyberattacks are now commonplace events, with the US-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies' Cyber Incident list recording an incredible list of attacks every month - and this only includes the largest most significant attempts. Many more attacks may be occurring without anyone's knowledge, and due to the anonymity afforded by the remote nature of cyberattacks, it is often hard to place blame on any individual or organization. On the level of the citizen, government surveillance from both international governments as well as their own has become increasingly commonplace. A new age of mass manipulation has also begun with the tools afforded by social media, with astroturfing and conspiracy theories able to easily take root in the online sphere. With new algorithms being devised by private companies and intelligence agencies alike to process the new mountain of data being produced by all 4.6 billion people, the world seems set on heading into a new dark age of censorship and surveillance.

<u>Background:</u>
In 1988, Robert Tappan Morris released the first destructive computer virus, known as the Morris Worm, which crippled the fledgling internet by forcing computer systems to copy the program endlessly, consuming the limited computing resources of the time. While Morris' worm was released with innocuous purposes - he wanted to see how many computers were on the internet at the time - it revealed the enormous power of malicious actors. Many years later, in 2007, the Chinese Ministry of State Security reported foreign hacking attempts by Taiwan and the US. This would only be one of many hundreds of attacks made in the coming years, but it marked the turning point of the early 2000s, as computing technologies become critical infrastructure in every nation's government.[36]

In order to protect their national security, many governments quickly devised organizations dedicated to

tackling these issues; notable examples include the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency in the US, and the Special Communications Service of Russia. More covertly, many nations also began to assemble groups dedicated to *offensive* cyber attacks. While the exact details on these organizations are beyond us, the increasing number of well-funded "independent" cyber-attacks against governments, especially relating to intelligence and national secrets, belays the truth of the situation.[37]

Espionage has also evolved in the information era, and the technology which allows governments to both hide and obtain information have accelerated at a breakneck pace. A single hacked email server can have major ramifications, as exemplified by the 2016 US presidential elections. The Chinese government has been accused of stealing industry secrets in order to propel its economic growth, and many attempts have been made to obtain nuclear technologies. As a result, nation-states have developed new cryptographic algorithms and protocols in an effort to combat these attacks. Yet, these strategies have never and will likely never completely

succeed in preventing these attacks; even if a perfect encryption strategy existed, the human factor is a persistent vulnerability. More disruptive forms of cyberwarfare exist as well, however, which can even have dramatic physical consequences. The stuxnet virus was perhaps one of the most infamous attacks made of this sort. Exposed in 2010, this virus targeted Iran's nuclear centrifuges by detecting the presence of a brand of centrifuges suspected to be used by the Iranian government, and then overpowering them to the point of destruction. Reportedly, the virus succeeded in destroying 1/5th of Iran's nuclear centrifuges, a striking example of the power of cyberwarfare.[38]

While the threats described so far are on the levels of nation-states, cyber attacks pose great dangers to individuals, especially from their own governments. Governments have long sought ways to control their citizens, and the extraordinary amounts of information offered through surveillance are historically unprecedented. While some nations have laws against surveillance of their own citizens, provisions for anti-terrorism efforts or the use of intelligence alliances allow nation-states to evade these restrictions. In particular, the Five Eyes alliance of the

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US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand has become infamous due to the leaks of Edward Snowden exposing how each country allowed the surveillance of their citizens by the other member countries to avoid domestic surveillance restrictions. Also of note to this committee, the Five Eyes alliance has been purported to spy on our committee, DISEC.[39]

This surveillance does not include the violations of privacy also committed by the private corporations who hold our data. Recently the CambridgeAnalytica scandal in the US exposed the power that the data held by corporations has, and the nearly unrestricted access they had to it. Also of worry with social networking is the ability to influence populations on a scale unprecedented historically. Due to the anonymity and reach offered through online communication and social media, it has become easier and easier for corporations and governments alike to manipulate large swaths of the population through fake-grassroots movements.[40] The spread of conspiracy theories like QAnon or Pizzagate also indicate the power of social media in controlling the public consciousness. This issue may initially appear to be a national issue, but due to the international nature and impact of these organizations their role in protecting international security and cyberwarfare must be carefully considered.[41]

Past Action:
The UN has been historically slow to act on the issue of cybersecurity, with little substantial policy established regarding the use of cyberwarfare. One of the first resolutions passed regarding cybersecurity was the 2001 "Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security," proposed by Russia. This resolution established the Group of Government Experts (GGE) on cybersecurity, however, this advisoral role has had little impact on the accelerating development of cyberwarfare.[42] Like most areas related to security, cyber sovereignty has been a critical block to progress on establishing frameworks regarding cyber security. Cooperation among nation-states is limited as, fundamentally, the interests of each individual state is to achieve dominance in the realm of cyber power. Like the development of Weapons of Mass Destruction previously, competition in the realm of

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cyberwarfare may continue unless a small collection of states achieve such dominance such that they are able to block other nations out. But, again as can be seen from ongoing attempts to achieve nuclear power, in the realm of security cooperation is only temporary.[43]

China and the US, two of the largest superpowers in the realm of cybersecurity, have attempted to hold dialogues beginning in 2013. These China-US Cyber Working Group sessions met several times with both nations accusing each other of cyberattacks. Eventually, these talks succeeded in establishing a weak agreement in 2015 by the Chinese and American governments not to hack private companies for commercial gain. Suspicions were cast that state-backed Chinese operatives had begun seeking technologies that could be used for both commercial and non-commercial purposes, evading the word of the agreement.[44]

The UN GGE failed to report in 2017 after releasing consensus reports in 2013 and 2015 due to contention over the application of traditional wartime international law to the realm of cybersecurity. The GGE was primarily led by China, and opposed by the US, who rejected the possibility of a treaty for cybersecurity akin to the Outer Space Treaty produced by a different UN working group. In response to the failings of the GGE, the US has suggested that it will seek partnerships with "smaller groups of like minded partners to call out bad behavior and impose costs on our adversaries." China too is part of a smaller bloc with members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which most prominently includes Russia.[45]

In 2018, with resolution 73/27 the general assembly of the UN established an Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on the topic of cybersecurity. This OEWG differed from the GGE in that membership was open to all interested UN member states. Therefore, many smaller nations which previously would not have had input in the GGE are now given the opportunity to express their positions.[46]

# Topic Two

**Bloc Positions**

*Western Developed Nations:*

Many of the western developed countries have extensive digital infrastructure, and are highly reliant on the internet. Moreover, the greatest proportion of states with known cyberwarfare capabilities lie within this group. Broadly, many of these states have freedom of speech as one of their founding values, because of this, controversies regarding the use of surveillance against their own citizens have damaged these nations the most. Generally, the western nations look to maintain and advance their hegemony in the digital world, and have the greatest number of tools at their disposal to do so.

*Shanghai Cooperation Organization:*

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was created in 2001 by China, Russia and a number of ex-soviet states. Now, it includes nearly the entirety of Asia, excluding South-East Asia. China and Russia both have relatively aligned interests, opposing the dominance held by the western states. To this aim, China and Russia have sought to apply existing legal frameworks from international accords on wartime law to apply to cyberwarfare. Additionally, Russia and China have courted the support of less developed nations through support in the development of their digital infrastructure.

*ASEAN, African Union, South America*

Generally, these nations don't have the technological capabilities of the aforementioned nations. Many of their citizens may lack internet access, or are not highly dependent on its use. If any cyberwarfare capabilities exist, they are highly limited, and most likely restricted to domestic surveillance. These states seek to preserve their sovereignty in the face of the overwhelming capabilities of other nations and the inexorable power of international companies like Huawei or Facebook in exploiting their nations and citizens.

# Topic Two

**Questions to Consider:**

- Does cyberwarfare fall under the scope of traditional warfare and its international conventions? In what ways is it different?
- Should a treaty be devised limiting the usage of cyberwarfare? Should nations be sanctioned for engaging in cyberwarfare?
- What is the role of corporations in cybersecurity? Should they be bound by international agreements? What about their home nation's domestic laws in international operations?
- Are countries responsible for all cyberattacks from within their borders? Can a country be charged for an attack? Should the hackers be extradited?
- Does cyberwarfare include opinion manipulation? Should platforms and countries be responsible for harm caused by ideas spread through them?

*Nota bene: DISEC is only concerned with international security and disarmament. Not technical details or operations.*

**Further Reading:**

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