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## Case analysis 7

### **Introduction**

Shedd and Stradner's cases demonstrate how digital platforms, media manipulation, and coordinated influence efforts are used by Russia, China, Iran, and maybe the United States to meddle in elections. Instead of actively harming physical infrastructure, these actions frequently rely on social media networks, data-driven messaging, and disinformation tactics intended to sway public opinion. These operations focus on voter perception, political division, and trust in democratic systems rather than conventional military power. Additionally, the materials indicate that these practices are becoming more commonplace as part of contemporary geopolitical competition, in which governments try to obtain an advantage by influencing rivals' internal political processes. Simultaneously, comparable strategies of narrative control and psychological manipulation in international elections would be employed by the United States overseas. The main question in all of these circumstances is whether or not these actions qualify as warfare at all, and if so, whether or not they may be morally justified in accordance with conflict ethics. In this Case Analysis I will argue that Ubuntu shows us that these actions do constitute information warfare because they intentionally disrupt shared social trust and collective political life, but they cannot be justified because they undermine the interdependent relationships that make political and moral community possible.

### **Information Warfare and Analysis through Ubuntu**

The use of digital platforms and communication technologies as instruments of strategic impact is central to Jarred Prier's idea of information warfare. Information warfare works by influencing audiences' perceptions, amplifying stories, and manipulating what they think is true rather than using overt physical force. The fact that this type of conflict focuses on belief systems and cognition rather than infrastructure is one of its main characteristics. States utilize bots, coordinated accounts, and algorithmic amplification to disseminate messages that affect political behavior on social media, which turns into a major battlefield. Because it mixes into regular online communication, it is challenging to distinguish between coordinated state activity and organic speech, making this type of warfare challenging to identify and control. According to Prier's concept, election meddling by China, Iran, and Russia clearly qualifies as information warfare. The objective is to actively influence electoral outcomes by affecting voter perception and undermining confidence in democratic institutions, rather than merely voicing political beliefs. To undermine political coherence, these efforts frequently use division, uncertainty, and repetition of emotionally charged themes. Since the United States would be strategically manipulating foreign public opinion for political gain rather than engaging in open democratic participation, such actions would likewise fall under the same description if they were carried out elsewhere.

However, the ethical assessment becomes more crucial when viewed through the lens of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is based on the premise that a person is a person through persons, which expresses the idea that people exist via their interactions with others. Mutual respect, trust, and understanding are essential to political communities. By undermining citizens' capacity to rely on a common truth, information warfare directly disturbs these conditions. The connective fabric that enables a society to function as a cohesive moral and political entity is shattered when outside actors affect

public discourse, rather than merely influencing individual ideas. This is not a minor setback under Ubuntu. It is an example of interdependence itself being disrupted. The shared foundation for communal life becomes insecure if communities are unable to trust the information environment in which decisions are made. The approach compromises the relational conditions necessary for real democratic involvement, even if the strategic objective is political advantage. Because both foreign and US meddling approach political communities as tools rather than as interrelated groups whose stability depends on mutual recognition and trust, they would both be considered violations of Ubuntu. The right action, from this perspective, would require prioritizing restoration and preservation of shared informational trust rather than exploiting its vulnerabilities. Even in a competitive international system, maintaining the integrity of collective understanding is necessary for sustaining the human relationships that give political life its moral grounding.

### **Just War Thinking and Information Warfare**

This is not a minor setback under Ubuntu. It is an example of interdependence itself being disrupted. The shared foundation for communal life becomes insecure if communities are unable to trust the information environment in which decisions are made. The approach compromises the relational conditions necessary for real democratic involvement, even if the strategic objective is political advantage. Because both foreign and US meddling approach political communities as tools rather than as interrelated groups whose stability depends on mutual recognition and trust, they would both be considered violations of Ubuntu. Morkevičius' theory clarifies the ethical complexity of electoral meddling. States may contend, on the one hand, that influencing elections abroad is a strategic defensive tactic, particularly in situations where competitors are thought to be acting similarly. States may defend such measures as

essential reactions to perceived dangers from a just cause standpoint. However, when the injury entails undermining the democratic process of another country, proportionality becomes a serious issue. Undermining electoral integrity can have long-term negative effects on public trust and undermine the legitimacy of political institutions even in the absence of physical destruction. Maintaining discrimination in information warfare is extremely challenging. Election interference impacts entire populations, including those who are not directly involved in state policy decisions, in contrast to traditional military action, which can be used against combatants. Because the entire information environment becomes the attack medium, it becomes challenging to isolate genuine targets. Since the main objective is frequently strategic benefit rather than protection or defense in a strict moral sense, right intention is also dubious.

Morkevičius' theory gains more ethical significance when evaluated through the lens of Ubuntu. Ubuntu highlights that moral action depends on maintaining links within a shared human community, even if just war rules permit some types of defensive information operations. Election meddling, whether by the US, China, Iran, or Russia, damages these ties by undermining trust between states and between individuals and institutions. The result erodes the interpersonal ties that enable political community, even if the goal is presented as defensive. As a result, moral obligation and strategic justification clash. Under some circumstances, information warfare may satisfy just war standards, according to Morkevičius; however, Ubuntu questions if this rationale is adequate when the strategy itself undermines interdependence. The United States would still be in violation of this relational criterion even if it took reciprocal action since doing so would not restore common moral foundation but rather feed a cycle of mistrust. On this viewpoint, using information operations sparingly and placing more of a priority on safeguarding the integrity of global informational ecosystems would be the morally

just course of action. Maintaining mutual respect and trust is still a fundamental moral duty, even in times of turmoil.

### **Conclusion**

Prier and Morkevičius' examination of election meddling demonstrates that these acts unmistakably qualify as information warfare. Instead of using direct military force, they entail intentional attempts to sway political opinion, affect election results, and undermine confidence in democratic regimes using digital and psychological means. It is much more debatable, nevertheless, if such acts can be justified. Ubuntu emphasizes the interconnectedness of political and human groups, offering a critical lens through which to assess these processes. According to this viewpoint, information warfare is a disturbance of the common trust and relationship structure that enables collective life rather than just a tactical tool. States impair the environment necessary for political groups to operate cohesively, even if they defend these activities by citing reciprocity or strategic need. One significant criticism is that states may claim they are merely retaliating against their enemies and that they would be at a strategic disadvantage if they did not engage in information warfare. Although this is a serious matter, Ubuntu contends that engaging in such activities leads to a more widespread erosion of international confidence that eventually hurts all parties. The informational environment gets increasingly brittle as more states adopt similar strategies. Thus, my analysis indicates that information warfare is still unethical because it undermines the fundamental connections that support political and human societies, even though it may be a more prevalent aspect of contemporary geopolitics.