

THE IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS ON SECURITY ISSUES

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The present book, titled "The Impact of Fake News on Security Issues," authored by the renowned university professors from Târgu Jiu, Cătălin PEPTAN and Flavius Cristian MĂRCĂU, addresses a theme of strict, acute relevance and current impact. It boasts a robust scientific framework and is considered one of the most valuable investigations into fake news conducted in Romania. It is, in any case, the research that benefits from the most solid and well-organized zetetic methodology, generating the most relevant practical inductions concerning fake news about the COVID-19 pandemic, the military crisis in Ukraine, the economic issues in the European space consequent to the war in Ukraine, and the seismic movements in Northern Oltenia.

The study is divided into two parts, each comprising four chapters, with a rigorous and rich theoretical and practical content. The first part, titled "Security, a Perspective of Approach," presents the research methodology (first chapter), explicates the concept of security and its practical inductions for individual and collective implementation (second chapter), highlights the central role and fundamental importance of knowledge and information in achieving the "security equation" (third chapter), and provides a deep dive into defining fake news, while also showcasing its negative societal impact (fourth chapter).

The second part, titled "Fake News Information, a Hidden Threat," investigates the incidence of fake news in four different scenarios: in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (fifth chapter); in the context of the military crisis in Ukraine (sixth chapter); in the context of the economic contraction in the European space (seventh chapter); in the context of seismic movements in Northern Oltenia (eighth chapter).

The study has two main objectives (1. "Analyzing the level of understanding of the security concept by the surveyed population, from a doctrinal perspective and in terms of implementation" and 2. "Analyzing the impact of fake news on the population of Romania during recent crises", pp. 11-12) and four secondary objectives (1. "Assessing the population's awareness of the necessity to achieve human security through information and knowledge"; 2. "Assessing the population's awareness and perception regarding the impact of fake news in security contexts affecting Romanian society"; 3. "Examining the influence of considered socio-demographic factors on the population's perception regarding the significance of the security concept, in order to identify vulnerable groups"; 4. "Examining

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the influence of considered socio-demographic factors on the population's perception of the impact of fake news, in various security contexts in order to identify vulnerable groups", p. 12). These objectives are guided by six hypotheses judiciously adapted to the conducted research.

The zetetic methodology is of admirable correctness, scientific rigor, complemented by a healthy concern for ethics and academic integrity. The research was conducted in the period from July 1, 2023, to October 1, 2023, and "consisted of the application of a questionnaire, online, through the use of proprietary databases, the social network Facebook, and various websites, to individuals aged at least 18 years residing in Romania" (p. 12). Data regarding the identity of respondents were not collected. Their participation was "voluntary, anonymous, and unpaid, with respondents being informed about the institutional affiliation of the study's authors and the fact that the processed data would be used for scientific purposes in the development of this study. The questionnaire that forms the basis of the study was completed by a total of 822 respondents" (p. 12). Respondents could voluntarily fill out a specific questionnaire, which was built on the Google Forms platform and distributed via a dedicated web link. The questionnaire contained preliminary questions about being over 18 years old and about informed consent. The responses to the questionnaire questions were utilized for achieving the study's objectives, through measurements aimed at establishing the respondents' perception regarding the concept of security, general elements of information, and specific elements of fake news, especially for the four targeted security contexts (COVID-19 pandemic, the military crisis in Ukraine, the economic contraction in the European space, seismic movements in Northern Oltenia).

The data collected through the questionnaire were processed using an accredited statistical method. The "Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2021 and IBM SPSS Statistics 26 programs were run, installed on a computer equipped with the Windows 11 Professional operating system" (p. 16). After consolidating into an Excel file, "multiple linear regression was used to determine which of the independent variables (gender, place of residence, level of education, respondents' professional status) are significant predictors for the dependent variables analyzed, from the perspective of impact on respondents' perception and behavior" (p. 17).

Given that the fake news phenomenon has a negative impact on society, the conclusions of this extensive study could serve as a basis for improving public policies, of which the authors are fully aware. In this regard, they believe that the research results could contribute to the improvement of public policies "in the field of security, regarding the redefinition of Romania's security interests and objectives" (p. 20), "in the field of public communication (...) from the perspective of developing a security culture (p. 105)", "in the field of population health" (p. 182), "in the field of external relations" (p. 225), "in strategic communication, in the case of economic issues with a major impact on national security" (p. 280) and/or "in improving the efficiency and response of institutions with responsibilities in crisis management" (p. 374).

The highly relevant theme and the judiciously scientific organization of the study undoubtedly represent benchmarks that confer special quality on it. However, the substantial value of the book lies in its practical inductions and its radiations in the sphere of governance, administration, and societal management.