

Fake News

*The Transformation of Propaganda in the
Information Society*

By

George Pleios

Fake News: The Transformation of Propaganda in the Information Society

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This book first published 2026

Ethics International Press Ltd, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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Print Book ISBN: 978-1-83711-115-2

eBook ISBN: 978-1-83711-116-9

Contents

Foreword to the English Edition.....	ix
Foreword to the Greek Edition.....	xii
Introduction	xvii
Preamble I: Fake News and Propaganda.....	xxv
Preamble II: Notions of Fake News	xxxi

FIRST PART: EPISTEMOLOGY OF FAKE NEWS

Chapter 1: Fake News: A Form of Falsified/ Imitative News	1
1.1 A historical prologue.....	2
1.2 Fake news and its characteristics.....	4
1.3. Falsified news I: False news	10
1.4. Imitative news II: Fake news.....	16
Chapter 2: Fake News as a Social Process.....	19
2.1. The structure of fake news	19
2.2. Fake news: Stereotypes and prejudices in the form of news .	68
Chapter 3: The Structure of News as a Source of Fake News	100
3.1. News and reality.....	100
3.2. News and facts.....	122
3.3. The falsification of facts in the news	145

SECOND PART: SOCIOLOGY OF FAKE NEWS

Chapter 4: The Role of the Media and of the Mode of Communication in the Emergence of Fake News as a Social Phenomenon163

 4.1. The concept of “mode of communication”165

 4.2. Fake news and new media171

Chapter 5: Ideology, Narrative Structure, and Fake News202

 5.1 Changes in the interpretive framework of facts in the news 203

 5.2 The new news narrative structure and fake news.....237

Chapter 6: Politics, Economy, and Fake News250

 6.1 “Newsification” of political propaganda.....250

 6.2 Political polarization and fake news276

 6.3 From the neo-liberal logic to the dictatorship of clicks.....292

 6.4 From the doubt about the world to the paradox of newsified propaganda – and vice versa300

THIRD PART: APPLIED ANALYSIS OF FAKE NEWS

Chapter 7: Typology of Fake News.....309

 7.1 Types of fake news310

Chapter 8: Epilogue: Dealing With Fake News.....440

Bibliography449

Foreword to the English Edition

This book was first published in Greece in 2001 by the renowned Gutenberg publishing house. Gutenberg produced an especially careful and elegant edition. Since then, the book has undergone two reprints and is probably heading for a third. It has received particularly positive evaluations from both the academic audience and the journalists who read it. This English edition maintains the structure and analysis of the original Greek edition. However, I felt it was useful to make some updates and adjustments. Firstly, I updated the statistical data, as the data in the Greek edition only went up to 2020. Secondly, I enriched the analysis with academic papers on the subject published after my own book was published, to the extent that I considered necessary. Thirdly, in the seventh chapter of the book, where I present the typology of fake news, I use several examples from British and American experience to make the analysis more understandable to readers familiar with these countries and less familiar with Greece. Nevertheless, there are numerous examples from the Greek fake news sphere. Most of these are highly representative of the category I am examining. The expressive intensity of these fake news stories from Greece makes them highly indicative of the respective fake news category. However, to make even these cases from the Greek experience understandable to an English-speaking readership, they have been translated into English where possible. Where this was not possible, a translation is provided under each example.

When it comes to fake news today, we cannot overlook its use in the Russian-Ukrainian war and in the conflict in Gaza. In particular, the Russian-Ukrainian war is a remote war involving drones, missiles and bombings from an operational point of view, but from the perspective

of information operations and perception management, it is the first war in history in which social media and fake news play a fundamental role. This topic is not touched on in the English edition of the book neither of course in the Greek edition. Apart from the fact that I have already published relevant works in Greek, I believe that this topic requires a dedicated research paper, or at least one of the central topics in the book. However, readers should bear in mind that the book's relationship to the aforementioned conflicts is theoretically and methodologically covered by the role of crises in the rise of fake news, which I examine in the following pages.

To conclude the preface to the English edition, I would like to thank again those whom I thanked in the Greek edition, as well as a few more. I would like to thank the publishing house Ethics Press for agreeing to publish a relatively large book by an academic from another country who did not write it while living and researching in the United Kingdom, but in a Mediterranean country which, however, is a hotbed of fake news. I would also like to thank Gutenberg Publishing for granting me the right to publish the book in English in the United Kingdom. I would also like to thank the institutions that, after the publication of the book, gave me the opportunity to present it, but also to elaborate on its themes further. Among these institutions are the Postgraduate Program in Communication and the Social Media Laboratory of the Department of Journalism and Mass Media of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the National Center for Social Research in Greece, the Goethe Institute in Athens, the Harokopio University, the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), the Department of Primary Education at the University of Crete and the S.H.I.E.L.P.D. vs DISINFO program, the Open University at the Municipality of Peristeri in Attica, the UNHCR in Greece and the Region of Thessaly in Central Greece. Finally, I would like to thank those of my collaborators who helped to

translate the book into English and especially Mrs. Katerina Anastasopoulou who did the main part of this work.

Ex nihilo nihil fit

Foreword to the Greek Edition

My involvement with fake news began with a paper I presented at a conference marking the 60th anniversary of the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (RIK), about three months after the former US president Donald Trump first used the term *fake news*. However, I was already familiar with the subject, as I have been involved in media ideology, propaganda, news, and related topics for many years. Since then, I have given other presentations and speeches on the subject, studying material and papers created by others on the phenomenon, which even today most people in Greece refer to as “false news”, unless they use the English term “fake news”.

“False news” was my own translation of the term into Greek. For a long time, I used the term “falsified”. Over time, I realized that the term “falsified news” often refers to more forms of falsification of the “news” genre, as I describe them in the Preamble II. Fake news as a genre is or appears as news. This news is fake. And that is precisely the problem. That it is perceived as normal news, just like trustworthy news. In the course of my work on this volume, which started in mid-spring 2018, I encountered more terms. However, as the reader will notice, I preferred the term “fake” (translated as “distorted” into Greek) because its distinctive feature is that it distorts the facts it describes; it does not create them from scratch.

Invitations to presentations, lectures, announcements, etc., both in Greece and abroad, even in Malaysia gave me the opportunity to explore several aspects of the phenomenon. In the course of my study, I started with the multitude of aspects and uses of fake news, such as its relationship with falsehood and with various types of propaganda, the individual types of fake news, its political and commercial use, etc.

I eventually arrived at the *differentia specifica* that characterizes it as a type of discourse/content, which I present in the first chapter. This led me to engage with the epistemology of news in general, a topic with a long tradition in communication and journalism studies. The study of the epistemology of news helped me understand that the potential to distort facts on the news is structural, it is inherent in the composition of news as a genre. I then turned to studying how the structural potential for distortion of facts becomes a reality as a widespread practice today. In this way, I moved from epistemological analysis to the sociological analysis of fake news, to finally arrive at its relationship with propaganda. This relationship, practically the convergence of news and propaganda, can only be understood in the context of the information society.

The process of writing this book coincided with a period of long hours every day in various academic roles, such as Head of the Department of Communication and Media Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of (NKUA), member of the Board of Directors of the Greek National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV), President of the Hellenic Sociological Society, and Professor, which is why its completion was delayed by four months compared to the initial schedule. The impasse in time management was resolved, as if by divine intervention, by the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Working from home greatly increased the volume and time required for my work, under adverse conditions. Nevertheless, it gave me, as it did other colleagues, the opportunity to produce work that my daily professional commitments would not have allowed. These are our “Quarantine Notebooks”. Perhaps our work during this period reflects not only our research orientation and mindset, but also the climate of that period.

This study would not have been completed if I had not had the good fortune to collaborate in various ways (discussions, supervision of student work, etc.) with a number of colleagues and others, such as my colleagues in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece.

I would like to indicatively mention, N. Demertzis, S. Papathanasopoulos, N. Papanastasiou, as well as my then doctoral candidates A. Minotakis (with whom I co-authored a relevant publication in the past) and M. Tatsoglou, who now both work in various universities. I would also like to mention Mrs. Kostarella from the Department of Journalism and Mass Media Communications at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, who has also worked on this issue, and Ms. Panagiota Saflagioura for her contribution to the mathematical processing of the number of potential fake news. I must not forget the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (RIK) which gave me the opportunity to present my first work on the issue, the Delegation of EU in Greece for inviting me to speak at a relevant event it organized in March 2018 which triggered further my research interest in fake news, the review *Nomiki Bibliothiki*, the Greek National Council for Radio and Television, the *Efimerida ton Syntakton* newspaper, the KDU University in Malasia, the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, the Kadir Has University in Istanbul, and many other institutions, which, by inviting me to speak about fake news, gave me the opportunity and motivation to engage in research more and more.

I am also grateful to my son, Giannis Pleios, who has also explored the same issue through other paths, perspectives, and concepts, but which showed me the need to more systematically explore the aspect of this issue as a social phenomenon. All of this has come together in the book that the reader is now holding in their hands.

As long as I write books and other similar works, I will emphasize one thing. None of the people or body mentioned above bear any responsibility any the shortcomings of this work that the critical reader may detect. However, they have contributed to my interest in the subject and motivated me to pursue it.

I believe that this study will be of interest to those who, in one way or another, occasionally or more regularly deal with fake news. This includes those involved in communication studies, particularly media theory and sociology, propaganda and political communication studies, journalism, the internet, and social media. I also believe that it will be of interest to politicians and anyone else involved in politics, as well as journalists and media professionals.

I hope that this will contribute, even in a small way, to the understanding of this extremely relevant and important phenomenon.

"Hell is empty and all the devils are here"

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Introduction

A new world has been emerging for some years now in the information sphere. It is a world different from the one we knew until recently, forged over the long journey of modernity, the media, and news. It is a world that in the past was on the margins of information about current events and could only be encountered in specific communication activities such as psychological operations, deception, disinformation, etc. The use of lies or half-truths in these various forms of propaganda was typically a means of achieving a military or political goal. This new world of information is largely a deliberately distorted world, a world in which the information organized and presented as news is usually the product of deliberate falsification and distortion. This falsification takes various discursive forms, varying in scope or in specific aspects of events which, contrary to what the fake news reports describe, have actually happened – but in a different way than how they're portrayed in the fake news. In other words, it's a concoction of trustworthy and false information about events that have happened. This world is a world of fake news, where information about current events that have taken place is mixed with information about events or aspects of events that have not taken place but are instead the product of invention/fiction. Or information about real events may be organized in such a fictional way as to drag reality away from its throne.

The book you are holding in your hands is a study of (fake) news as a type of content, and discourse, and at the same time a sociological study of fake news as a communicative and social phenomenon. The basic idea that permeates it is that fake news is not false news, i.e., it does not describe an event that did not happen but distorts aspects of the way in which an event took place. Analyzing the purpose of

falsification, I, like others before me, have reached the conclusion that if information is not falsified to promote the person who published it or another person/entity, then it is falsified either because of the perspective of those who composed it or to encourage the public to take certain actions (or refrain from doing so). In other words, it is produced for propaganda purposes.

Fake news is the product of “newsifying” propaganda (and, conversely, “propagandizing” the news). This change cannot be understood without taking into account the social context in which propaganda is “newsified” and takes the form of news. On the contrary, it is a product of this context and of the gradual evolution of propaganda after World War II. For these reasons, although our study is not strictly limited to any particular discipline, I would say that it generally belongs to the theory and sociology of communication and the media, of new media, news, and propaganda. Sociological analysis, and in particular the analysis of the mode of communication, the mode of news production, political polarization, ideology, and the interpretive and narrative framework of news have contributed significantly to understanding the phenomenon of fake news and its relationship to propaganda, as well as its differences from other concepts such as misinformation, disinformation, etc.

In the course of completing this research, several problems had to be addressed, which required answers. One of the first questions that has been and continues to be addressed by those dealing with fake news in Greece is the translation of the term into Greek. I believe that foreign terms should be rendered (not simply translated), motivated not by any overt or covert ideological concept, but to (de)limit the range of possible meanings of these terms and thus give them semantic precision as the scientific analysis requires. This is a basic prerequisite for them to become a tool for scientific analysis.

Otherwise, terms become vehicles of polysemy, and thus “everyone” understands their content according to their education, biography, etc. The following analysis defines fake news both in itself and in relation to false news.

Other questions that arose during this research concerned the extent of fake news, the topics around which the majority of fake news is concentrated in each country, each time, etc., the role of the media, and in particular the internet and social media, in the production and reproduction of fake news and thus in shaping the phenomenon and so on. As the reader will see, I do not avoid these issues but, on the contrary, I have attempted to interpret them in the context of my own analysis and from my own perspective. I do not follow the journalistic, political, or academic views that are demonizing the internet nor do I adopt the triumphant discourse of contemporary exponents of technological determinism and neoliberalism.

I consider the issue of the typology of fake news, which I have attempted to develop, to be important both in terms of scope and academic significance. I believe that a complete and scientifically disciplined description of the various types of fake news requires a thorough understanding and a scientifically rigorous definition of fake news. The content of the issues that have concerned me in my analysis of the phenomenon is presented in eight chapters divided into three parts. In the first part, in which I go through part of my own contribution to the study of the phenomenon, the first three chapters are developed, in the second part the next three, while in the third part, which also attempts to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon, the remaining two are developed. The first part is devoted to the epistemology of fake news. In the second part, I attempt a sociological interpretation of the emergence of fake news as a social phenomenon. The third part describes the typology of fake

news at which I arrived during my study and analysis of the phenomenon. In this book, I examine the following issues in particular, as analyzed in each chapter.

In the first chapter, I analyze what fake news is according to my own approach. Unlike many other scholars in Greece and abroad, I consider fake news to be a degree of falsification of an event that has actually taken place. I distinguish fake news from false news, which constitutes the absolute degree of falsification. These two degrees are two different forms of falsified news, a relative and an absolute one. In my study, I critically examine some of the most important analyses in the literature that approach fake news differently, mainly perceiving it as false. In general, in my work I do not focus on all forms of falsification of news but mainly on fake news.

In the second chapter, I examine fake news as a social process, i.e., how it appears and functions in the communication practices of contemporary societies. In other words, I analyze – inevitably – the structure of fake news as a social process. Specifically, I consider fake news to be the product of three interrelated processes. First, the distorted representation of facts in news content. Second, the public's perception of events occurring in the real world that are distorted. Third, based on the latter, the way in which the public approaches the distorted representation of events and, ultimately, whether or not it considers it trustworthy. This is also a basic prerequisite for the process of producing and disseminating fake news to continue (whether on a larger scale or not). In my opinion, any effort to combat fake news must necessarily take into account the structure and complex nature of fake news as a social phenomenon. This is because fake news is a social phenomenon and not the result of the individual actions of certain journalists, politicians, businesspeople, police officers, religious leaders, or others.

In the third chapter, I examine the structure of news in general, as in the course of my work on the subject I have come to the conclusion that fake news is not the result of the alteration of the facts that make up the news or of external interference in the news production process, nor the distortion of some unalterable nature of the news. On the contrary, I consider that fake news arises from changing the structure of news from inside, which takes the form of a communicative and social phenomenon when favorable changes in the social environment are formed and contribute to this direction.

This analysis describes the composition of news as events and opinions, which can be achieved in two ways: a) as a description of events from the perspective of certain opinions, which is characteristic of journalism (and other media content) or b) as the promotion of certain opinions using events as a vehicle, which is characteristic of propaganda. However, crossing the line from news to propaganda as an extensive practice depends on the function of the media within the social environment (the economy, institutions, political relations, etc.).

In the fourth chapter, I examine the role played by changes in the broader mode of communication of late/hyper-modernity in the explosion of fake news as a social phenomenon. I analyze the structural relationship between the internet and the phenomenon, but I place greater emphasis on the role of social media and certain practices such as the high consumption of news from social media. I attempt to show that it is wrong to consider the internet, and social media in particular, as the cause of the phenomenon, as observed in numerous analyses both in Greece and internationally.

The fifth chapter analyzes the role of certain cultural changes that favor the transition from news to propaganda in the form of news. In particular, I examine the changes taking place in the nature of the

ideological and, more generally, interpretive framework of events, as it evolves in late modernity (or deep symbolic capitalism, in my approach), which is the decisive moment for journalists and the media to cross the Rubicon that separates news from propaganda. A key parameter of the change in the interpretive framework is the return of old and new prejudice, stereotypes, and pre-modern perceptions in the understanding of events taking place in the world of contemporary modernity.

In conjunction with changes in the ideological/ideational framework for interpreting events in the news, the transition from the narrative form of the story that characterized news before to new hybrid narrative forms is also examined. These forms favor the confusion of events and invention, which lies at the heart of fake news.

In the sixth chapter, I analyze the role that political and economic changes have played in the expansion and stabilization of the phenomenon of fake news, in a way that constitutes a structural element of deeply symbolic capitalism (or late/hyper-modernity, according to others). In particular, I analyze the process of the ever-increasing use of propaganda in the news, i.e., the newsification of propaganda (and, by extension, the propagandization of the news), which has been amplified and accelerated by international political conflict through events and processes such as the First and Second World Wars, the Cold War, etc. In this light, the differences between the fake news of the past and the contemporary newsified propaganda are examined, as well as the paradox of the newsified propaganda.

In addition to external political conflict, the role of internal political conflict, i.e., political polarization, in the proliferation of fake news is examined. Contemporary political polarization is indeed perceived as

internal political conflict, but one that is conducted in terms of external conflict. In this process, internal party competition is perceived and conducted as external political conflict with an enemy. Political polarization is analyzed as one of the main factors contributing to the explosion of fake news and the growth of the related social phenomenon. Both external and internal political conflict, as well as commercial competition, have contributed to the historical convergence of news and propaganda.

In conjunction with internal and external political processes, I also examine the commercialistic changes in the way the economy works, which are reflected in news production under the dictatorship of clicks, and which greatly favor the production of fake news.

In the seventh chapter, as a consequence of all the analysis conducted, I develop my view on the typology of fake news. To this end, I describe the possible ways in which news can be falsified and then use them to create an advanced typology of fake news, which includes a long list of at least 134,211,499 possible different kinds of fake news. Most of these have not yet been empirically recorded, but theoretically, they may exist.

The study concludes with an examination of the issue of countering fake news in the eighth and final chapter or epilogue of the study. I attempt to explain why tackling fake news requires more than fact-checking and “social engineering” measures. It requires organizational measures and deliberate social processes, but above all a reduction in social inequality. This is because social inequality is a key factor in creating social conditions that favor the transformation of the structural potential for falsifying events contained in the news into reality.

Preamble I: Fake News and Propaganda

The idea that fake news is closely related to propaganda is not a new one. Many scholars of communication studies, propaganda analysis, and journalism, among others, have taken such an approach.

First, it should be noted that fake and false news have been used in the past during wars, confrontations, and crises of various kinds. In these cases, as well as in many others, fake and false news were characterized as gray and black propaganda, respectively. Black propaganda is the dissemination of false information by an unknown or misleading source. "Black propaganda is credited to a false source and spreads lies, fabrications, and deceptions" (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1996, p. 13; see also Taylor, 2013, pp. 225–226).

Gray propaganda involves spreading inaccurate information (partially true and partially false), and the source is unclear. According to Jowett and O'Donnell (1996, p. 15), gray propaganda is propaganda where "the source may or may not be correctly identified, and the accuracy of the information is uncertain." In this book, we argue that fake news is similar to gray propaganda, while false news is similar to black propaganda.

However, we also argue that there are several quite essential differences between gray propaganda and fake news, as well as between false news and black propaganda.

First, like any other kind of propaganda, grey propaganda uses several types of discourse, not just news (Edelstein, 1997). Examples of films that use discursive forms of grey propaganda include *Battleship Potemkin*, *The Triumph of the Will*, *Red Nightmare*,

Anarchy U.S.A., Communists on Campus, Rambo, and Rocky IV, among many others (Scott, 2024; Taylor, 1998). Literature can also be used for propaganda purposes (Foulkes, 2013; Senn, 2015; Krutch, 1933). Works by Gérard de Villiers, Ian Fleming, and George Orwell (e.g., *Animal Farm*), Doctor Zhivago, and others are very indicative of this. Comic series such as *The Adventures of Tintin* and several Walt Disney productions (Chase, 2022) have also been extensively used as propaganda tools, as have posters. Similarly, popular prejudices in a given country about the people of another neighboring or distant country can be used as forms of gray propaganda (see also Part 6.2 of this book). However, when we refer to fake news, we refer only to news, not other discursive forms. In other words, in order to be labeled as true, false, or fake news, a story must be a news story.

Second, propaganda, disinformation, misinformation, etc., is a process. This means it must have a minimum duration in terms of time. It must also be an organization with financial and organizational resources that elaborates and spreads information to achieve a strategic objective. Fake news is just a message or piece of information. The production and dissemination of similar messages can take the form of propaganda, but not necessarily. Fake news can be used for propaganda purposes. However, they are not only produced and spread for propaganda purposes. It's a different term belonging to a different level on the conceptual scale.

Third, propaganda is closely related to fake news as a phenomenon (see Preamble II). However, propaganda has existed as a socially organized phenomenon since the beginning of modernity, especially since WWI, while grey and black propaganda (that may use fake news) has only recently become a socially organized phenomenon during wars and other severe crises. This may explain why Phillip

Taylor says, "Propaganda and war have been inextricably connected" (Taylor, 2003, p. 5; see also Sriver, 2015).

Many authors and researchers have investigated the relationship between fake news and propaganda. In our view, there are three perspectives on this topic. First, there are those who view this relationship as an external one, i.e., from the perspective of propaganda. These authors accept fake news as one of many tools for propaganda purposes. A second group accepts a more "internal" relationship between fake news and propaganda. Propaganda is recognized as an essential primary function of fake news, but technology—i.e., the internet and digital technologies—is recognized as the main reason for this. A third group, like us, searches for socio-cultural reasons for this relationship beyond technology. Thus, fake news is recognized as the dominant discursive form of propaganda because news has become the most popular and powerful type of content in the information society. Therefore, fake news has become a "normal" social and communication phenomenon only in the information society and late modernity.

In our view, the first approach is quite clearly reflected in the analysis of Plikynas, Rizgelienė, and Korve (2025) or similar. Fake news, or more accurately, disinformation, is one of many tools of propaganda. Barclay (2018) takes a similar approach. Several scholars, politicians, journalists, etc. (Brennen, 2017; Miller, 2004; Kropotov & Yarochkin, 2017; Andrejevic, 2020; Aro 2016; Zhdanova, & Orlova, 2017; Nagle, 2017) equate fake news with propaganda, considering it one of the forms through which propaganda is exercised. Some of them (Vamanu, 2019; Farkas & Neumayer, 2018; Levi, 2018) do not equate it with propaganda, but consider its main use to be propagandistic, and therefore its reason for creation and circulation to be propaganda. Others consider it to be something different from propaganda,

especially when they associate it with bad journalism, "fast journalism" (Waisbord, 2018), etc.

Dušan Aleksić and Ivana Stamenković (2021, p. 33) note that "many false stories that appear to be news spread on the internet or through other media. They are usually created to influence political views or as a joke." In the modern age, the relationship between the two terms becomes more apparent. They correctly point out that propaganda is a function of media content, especially of the media coverage of events. Thus, journalists sometimes impose a certain ideological "reading" of events, thereby becoming fake news makers. As we explain in chapter 3, this is correct in our view. In this way, fake news can be understood as one of many propaganda tools, especially nowadays. But what makes such a practice possible and so widespread and popular? What is the sociological explanation for this phenomenon?

In the realm of the second approach regarding the relation between fake news and propaganda, Garret Smith, whose analysis is closer to our view, yet differs significantly from it, underlines that "fake news is one aspect of a larger concept to manipulate public opinion, called propaganda in information operations" (Smith, 2018, p. 2). In our opinion, the link between propaganda and (fake) news is essential because we live in an information society where most of the messages we produce and consume, especially through the internet and digital technologies, are news or factual information. Thus, news dominates as a discursive form among all kinds of information produced and disseminated via the internet and all other media.

Mark Andrejevic's analysis is even closer to our point of view. He correctly points out that fake news is not a new phenomenon (Andrejevic, 202, p. 20), and he analyzes it as a contemporary form of

propaganda connected to the internet and its horizontal hierarchy. However, we acknowledge that the connection between fake news and propaganda lies in the discursive features of internet and digital discourse. These features lead to the dominance of news on the internet and beyond, making news the most powerful tool for propaganda purposes. In other words, anyone who wants to create propaganda today, whether political, commercial, religious, or interpersonal, must use news as a discursive vehicle.

Our approach is not at odds with similar views on the issue. However, it differs in the following respects. First, we consider fake news to be the result of the interaction between news as a type of media discourse or genre and the social environment. Or, in other words, fake news is a product of the transformation of news. This transformation arises from the structure of news as a genre, when historical changes in the social environment allow or even require it. At the same time, fake news becomes a key means of achieving these changes. We thus link the widespread presence and form of fake news with changes in the way we communicate, produce, dominate, but also in the way stories are told, as well as in the interpretive framework of the events described by the narratives, in the social environment of deeply symbolic capitalism and late modernity.

Secondly, the result of the change occurring in the structure of news is not only the emergence of fake news as a widespread social and communicative phenomenon, but also the convergence of news and propaganda. To be precise, fake news is the form taken by political, economic, religious, and other forms of propaganda, or more broadly, propagandistic discourse, in the information society. In other words, fake news constitutes the newsification of propaganda, but also the propagandization of news in a generalized form. What distinguishes our approach from others that connect fake news to propaganda is

that fake news becomes the main form of propaganda discourse in information societies because news is the most popular type of content produced, disseminated, and consumed in these societies due to the dominance of the internet and digital technologies among all media.

Unlike other scholars, we do not consider contemporary fake news to be news that is simply used to achieve propagandistic purposes. This has happened many times in the past and is probably why many consider the phenomenon of fake news to be timeless. In our view, as evidenced by our study of the phenomenon and as presented in this work, there is a convergence of news (as a type of discourse) and propaganda (also as another type of discourse). Fake news is not simply news that distorts facts to achieve certain goals, but something more than that. Fake news may constitute a new type of discourse. In other words, fake news is a large-scale adaptation of propaganda to the information society. From this point of view, fake news is not only a form of news evolution, but also a form of propaganda evolution.

Preamble II: Notions of Fake News

In order to facilitate the reader's understanding of our study, we considered it useful to include this preamble, which contains some clarifications that we believe to be useful.

The relationship between news and lies is a complex one. News that contains lies in a concrete form to an extent defined by each time is “falsified news”. Falsified news are a concept-genus that entails various genres. The main ones are (Figure 1):

First of all, news that can be untrue, inaccurate, etc., in terms of the discourse type that is being used. These are discursive compositions that appear in the form of news, while they are actually part of a different discursive genre, which is fictional (e.g., a movie that is presented as a news report) or substantiative. These are untrue news.

Secondly, news that is untrue, unreliable, etc., in terms of its content, i.e., in terms of the events it describes. These entail both news that originally

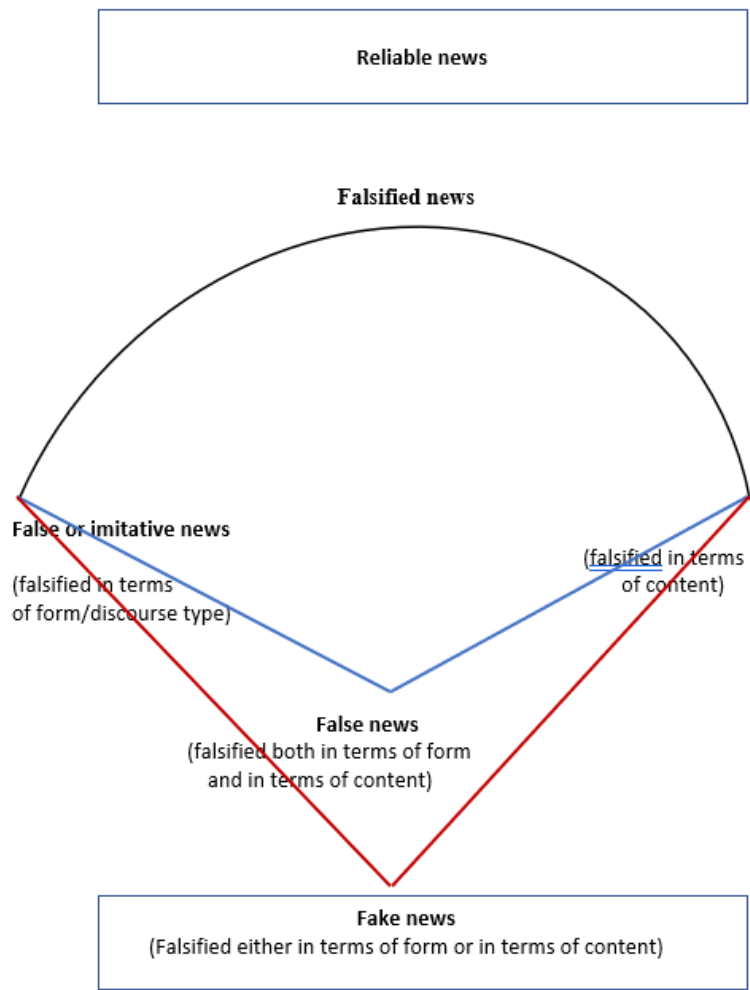


Figure 1: Falsified news

describes an event and news that alters an original report in a secondary report. This news is called “distortive”. The main feature of false and distortive news is that it distorts (either the discursive form in which the content appears or the content itself). These two types of news are called “fake” and this is the object of my study. News that is considered fake is mainly part of this group, and this is why the term “fake news” is also used in Greek. Thirdly, there is another type of untrue, unreliable, etc. news, where both the form and the content (factual events) are untrue. This is false news, and it is not part of the subject studied here.

As we already mentioned, for news to be fake, it must first and foremost be or appear as news. If it is not (or does not appear as) news, it cannot be fake news or any other type of news. Consequently, there is no such thing as fake news before the emergence of the genre or type of content as “news”, i.e., before the emergence of the first newspapers. However, modern fake news differs from its historical predecessor. On the one hand, modern fake news has different morphological (discursive) and ideological characteristics from the first instances of fake news. On the other hand, as an extensive and systematic phenomenon, fake news is relatively recent and, in our view, it is a product of the convergence of news and propaganda.

Fake news as a term has at least four meanings. First, consider fake news as individual pieces. We refer to these as “fake news” and to each piece as “fake news.” However, there is a second aspect to the issue that often remains unseen. Fake news is not just a random collection of cases; rather, it is a social and communication phenomenon. In our view, it is more than the sum of individual cases of misrepresentation of facts because it is systemic in nature in the modern communication landscape. In this work, we refer to this phenomenon as “fake information” or “the phenomenon of fake news.” Our work deals with

this phenomenon, not just the particular nature of fake news. However, to understand fake news as a phenomenon, one must first grasp its essence and particular characteristics. The first part of this work analyzes the essence of fake news. The second part examines fake information in relation to the social context that enables or causes it. Third, the term "fake news" is used as an accusation, similar to older uses of the term "propaganda." In the media and in many public debates, actors often use the term as a synonym for "lies." They say their opponents are spreading fake news instead of admitting that they are spreading lies. Fourth, fake news as perceived reality. In many cases, individuals believe that the amount of fake news spread by the media every day is higher than the actual extent of fake news as a phenomenon.

We believe that the framework within which our analysis will proceed has been clarified by these notes that we considered necessary. We also believe that this will help the reader understand the analysis that follows.

FIRST PART

EPISTEMOLOGY OF FAKE NEWS

Chapter 1

Fake News: A Form of Falsified/ Imitative News

The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words.

If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use them.

Philip K. Dick

In our view, there are four fundamental issues in the study of fake news. First, the relationship between the content of the news and the events/facts it describes. This concerns the epistemic aspect of fake news and its relationship to the validity, reliability, or accuracy of the events/facts it describes. One aspect of this question also concerns the relationship between fake news and other forms of distortion of facts, or, in other words, other related concepts. The second issue concerns the social factors outside the news that contribute to the creation and general development of the phenomenon. The third issue concerns the basic social functions of fake news, i.e., the reasons why it is maintained (including institutionally) as a widespread social practice, beyond the individual subjective motives of journalists or politicians. This issue has two sides: a) the *intended consequences* (to the extent that they exist) of its creators and distributors, and b), the *actual consequences* (functions) in areas beyond the fake news itself and the media through which it is disseminated. Finally, the fourth issue concerns the typology of fake news, i.e., the individual types into which it can be divided.