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Book review *Ne-pacea informațională. Cine pierde și cine câștigă în era hiperconectivității?* [Informational unrest. Who loses and who gains in the era of hyperconnectivity], by Alina Bârgăoanu, Editura Tritonic, 2024, 352 pages

The book *Ne-pacea informațională. Cine pierde și cine câștigă în era hiperconectivității?*, written by Alina Bârgăoanu, provides a critical reflection on the forces that shape today's digital landscape, and their influence over political stability, public health, or political and geopolitical relations. Alina Bârgăoanu is an expert in media studies and digital disinformation, who serves as Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations at The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Romania, and is a member of the advisory board of the European Digital Media Observatory.

Through 70 editorials published in the Romanian quality newspaper, *Gândul*, between 2019 and 2023, Bârgăoanu explores interconnected themes like the lessons of the pandemic, the "war of interpretation", and "Pax Technica". Based on the main arguments raised by the author, the central thesis is that „information peace” is not merely described by the absence of war but is created by a truth-oriented information environment. Thus, this is a book that not only pledges for media and digital literacy, but also provides keys to understanding current events and how they unfold in today's media landscape. The author does so in an accessible language, though not straining away from academic rigor and nuancing, that can be accessible both to a specialized public, and a non-academic one.

The book addresses several recent history contexts and events such as the Covid-19 Pandemic (as underlined by chapters like: "The Coronavirus Infodemic", "How the World Will Change After the Coronavirus Pandemic", or "Disinformation Severely Damages Health"), the 2020 U.S. presidential election (in chapters like: "The 2020 Presidential Elections: This Time Is Different?", "The Real Winners of the 2020 Elections"), France's institutional measures on disinformation (in chapters like: "France Takes Institutional Measures to Combat Disinformation"), or former U.S. president, Donald Trump's, social media conflicts ("Trump vs Twitter?"). Such an approach suggests that the book is not just one that tackles misinformation, the power of social media platforms, or regulatory responses to the raise of Big Tech, but anchors such discussions in current events and provides ways of understanding them.

There are several themes that emerge reading through the chapters of the book: digital information warfare, as the book discusses "viral wars", "propaganda 2.0" and the role algo-

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rhythms play in spreading misinformation; how misinformation erodes public trust and creates division in society; the role Big Tech companies play in spreading misinformation and enabling manipulation; the impact of the digital information landscape on political power and the democratic process; the role of digital platforms in creating and amplifying echo-chambers; the raise of artificial intelligence, ethical implications, and the need for regulation of such technologies; the impact of the digital environment over cultural, social, and political identities; or the impact of the digital landscape on democracy and national security.

The book is written in a playful tone full of political, philosophical, historical, and cultural references. Chapters such as “Huawei – A Kind of Nord Stream 2 for 5G Technology”, draw a parallel between the global technological infrastructure and the energy pipelines, thus suggesting how technology plays a central role in today’s world, impacting geopolitical relations. Chapters like “The Seasons of Our Discontent” or “Revolt Against Reason” make literary and philosophical references, describing the way today’s digital information infrastructure rewrite the way individuals, media, and political actors interact. The chapter “Sleep peacefully, the algorithm rages for you!” references a popular Romanian slogan from the 90’s, “Sleep tight, FNI watches over you!”, related to a local investing fund that went bankrupt unexpectedly, leaving many Romanians who invested their money to lose all their savings. It is also an allusion to how today’s digital media landscape is governed by algorithms that work behind the scenes to shape perceptions, influence choices, and amplify conflicts. The same theory is discussed as well by Poerksen (2022), who acknowledged that the way information circulates in the digital realm leads to a permanent state of excitement and conflict.

Bârgăoanu’s book offers a multidisciplinary examination of current world events by making use of popular and widely discussed theories in the academic literature such as fake news, echo-chambers, media literacy, misinformation, or tech regulation. The book contributes to the wider debate in the academic literature on topics such as: media studies theories (see Fuchs, 2014; Couldry & Hepp, 2016), geopolitics and global communications (Farell & Newman, 2019), echo-chambers (Pariser, 2011), the characteristics of the digital media infrastructure (Poerksen, 2022). The fact that it is written in Romanian and that the author balances real-world case studies, academic concepts, and an accessible language make the book valuable for communication and media students and scholars, political actors and regulators, political advisers, and the general public as well. The analytical and nuanced tone of voice of the book, the strong editorial voice of the author, the engaging and conversational language, the critical and thought-provoking approach, and the playful reference packed titles of the chapters make this book intellectually engaging and relevant to today’s world events.

While the language the book is written in, makes it inaccessible to a wider audience, the Romanian public needs such editorial titles that provide a roadmap to understanding local and international events and the role played by the digital media and the algorithms in guiding their perceptions and actions. Given the approach, with standalone pieces, the book might not have the continuity of a traditional monograph. However, each piece brings a mixture of critical analysis, external references, and academic concepts, that provide useful analysis schemata for current world events. Lastly, the contribution in this book offers a good starting point for long term reflections and implications as it takes inventory and analyzes recent events and the hidden forces that govern them.

Overall, the book’s message and main concept – the idea of informational peace – is a relevant and timely one, that surpasses episodic events and ties the pieces together into a reflection over the need for tech regulation, information accuracy and an ethical approach to the

spread of information on digital platforms. This approach subscribes to a larger ongoing debate in the specialized literature. As such, this book is likely to benefit readers interested in understanding the intricate impact of digital media on society, politics and interpersonal relations, the concept of media literacy, the idea of information integrity, and the ethical governance of technology.

References

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