



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY


МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ БЕЗОПАСНОСТЬ

DOI: 10.22363/2313-0660-2024-24-2-239-251

EDN: WJAPTI

Research article / Научная статья

Indonesian Agenda: Fake News About Russia's Special Military Operation on Social Media in Indonesia

Munadhil A. Muqsith¹  , Rizky R. Pratomo¹ , Valerii L. Muzykant² ¹University of Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia²RUDN University, Moscow, Russian Federationmunadhil@upnvj.ac.id

Abstract. One of the key events affecting international relations is Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. At the time of, Russia and Ukraine are in conflict. Russia started the military operation from a defensive point of view, standing against Ukraine joining NATO, which makes Russia's borders more vulnerable to threats. The confrontation between the parties is taking place in all spheres, including the information space. In this case, it involves spreading fake news. Therefore, the authors rely on the dynamics of fake news in Indonesia on the topic of the Russian military operation in Ukraine. To conduct a qualitative study, the authors are based on data from the information platform TurnBackHoax.ID. A total of 71 samples of fake news were successfully collected and examined, leading to three important discoveries. Firstly, *TikTok* is one of the sources of dissemination of fake news in addition to international social networks banned in the Russian Federation. Secondly, fake news about the Russian conflict with Ukraine is not as popular as information about COVID-19. The reason for the unpopularity of this fake news is the geographical distance of Indonesia from the conflict zone. Finally, news consumers are still trapped in subjective assumptions and are not as critical in verifying information. This discovery allows relevant stakeholders to become more aware of new sources of fake news and to develop and improve their critical thinking skills.

Key words: propaganda, information warfare, social media, Russia, Ukraine

Conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contributions. The authors made an equal contribution to the design, research and preparation of the final article's text.

For citation: Muqsith, M. A., Pratomo, R. R., & Muzykant, V. L. (2024). Indonesian agenda: Fake news about Russia's special military operation on social media in Indonesia. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 24(2), 239–251. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2024-24-2-239-251>

© Muqsith M.A., Pratomo R.R., & Muzykant V.L., 2024



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License


<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

Индонезийская повестка дня: фейковые новости о специальной военной операции РФ в социальных сетях Индонезии

М.А. Мукситх¹  , Р.Р. Пратомо¹ , В.Л. Музыкант² 

¹ Джакартский национальный университет развития «Ветеран», Джакарта, Индонезия

² Российский университет дружбы народов, Москва, Российская Федерация

munadhil@upnvj.ac.id

Аннотация. Одним из ключевых событий, оказывающих влияние на международные отношения, является специальная военная операция (СВО) РФ на Украине. На момент написания этой статьи Россия и Украина находятся в состоянии конфликта. Россия объясняет свои действия соображениями обороны, выступая против вступления Украины в НАТО, что сделало бы границы России более уязвимыми. Противостояние между сторонами ведется во всех сферах, в том числе и в информационном пространстве. В данном случае это противостояние предполагает распространение фейковых новостей. Авторы анализируют динамику распространения фейковых новостей в Индонезии по вопросу российской военной операции на Украине. Для проведения качественного исследования авторы используют данные, взятые с информационной платформы TurnBackHoax.ID. Всего был отобран и успешно рассмотрен 71 образец фейковых новостей. Авторы пришли к следующим выводам. Во-первых, *TikTok* оказался одним из основных источников распространения фейковых новостей о конфликте России и Украины. Во-вторых, фейковые новости о СВО не так популярны в Индонезии, как распространяемая в свое время информация о COVID-19, причиной чего является географическое удаление страны от основного места событий. В-третьих, потребители новостей все еще находятся в ловушке субъективных предположений и не столь критичны при проверке информации. Полученные результаты могут стать основой для дальнейших исследований фейковых новостей, а также способов борьбы с ними с опорой на навыки критического мышления.

Ключевые слова: пропаганда, информационная война, социальные сети, Россия, Украина

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов. Авторы внесли равнозначный вклад в разработку дизайна, проведение исследования и подготовку текста статьи.

Для цитирования: Мукситх М. А., Пратомо Р. Р., Музыкант В. Л. Индонезийская повестка дня: фейковые новости о специальной военной операции РФ в социальных сетях Индонезии // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2024. Т. 24, № 2. С. 239–251. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2024-24-2-239-251>

Introduction

From a geopolitical perspective, three factors can explain the causes of the modern conflict between Ukraine and Russia: Ukraine's geographical position, increased the European Union (EU) activity in Eastern Europe, and the pro-Western orientation of the government in Kiev (Götz, 2015).

Russia has an extensive border with Ukraine, with 1400 miles (2200 km) of the border, and Ukraine is less than 300 miles (480 km) from Moscow and close to the Volga region, the industrial and political heartland of the Russian Federation (Götz, 2015). With such

a position, Russia has good reasons to influence the political processes in Ukraine.

The second and third factors are interrelated. According to J. Mearsheimer, the United States and the European Union share responsibility for the conflict that occurred in Ukraine. There are two reasons for this: NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe to withdraw Ukraine from Russian influence, and the EU's expansion into Eastern Europe and Western support of the so-called pro-democracy movement in Ukraine in 2004.¹ Furthermore, the current president of

¹ Mearsheimer J. J. Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked

Ukraine — V.A. Zelensky, had more than close ties with the Western world, and Kiev intends to join NATO.

Not surprisingly, Ukraine's actions worry Russia. Russia's concerns are genuine because if Ukraine succeeds in joining NATO, it will be able to threaten Russia militarily. NATO is going to ensure the containment of the Russian Federation, which it naturally perceives as a threat. For many years, Russian President Vladimir Putin has stated that Russia will resist this, even by armed means.²

On February 21, 2022, Russia recognized the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. A few days later, on February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the start of a special military operation in Ukraine. The decision was made in response to a request for help from the People's Republics of Donbass, where about 14 thousand people have already died in eight years of armed confrontation with Kiev.³ The deployment of military forces became inevitable. Apart from involving military forces, the two countries are also involved in a war of narratives and information. Information warfare enables wars to be won without a shot being fired (Thornton, 2015).

Symbols, rhetoric, and misinformation have been used to gain an advantage by scaring or misleading the enemy (Jaitner & Mattsson, 2015). For example, in 550 A.D., after the Byzantine emperor Justinian died, Procopius of Caesarea wrote a book called the "Secret History" that discredited Justinian and his wife

Putin // Foreign Affairs. August 18, 2014. URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

² Suny R. Ukraine War Follows Decades of Warnings That NATO Expansion into Eastern Europe Could Provoke Russia // The Conversation. March 1, 2022. URL: <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-war-follows-decades-of-warnings-that-nato-expansion-into-eastern-europe-could-provoke-russia-177999> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

³ Address by the President of the Russian Federation // The President of Russia. February 24, 2022. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

(Burkhard, 2017, pp. 5–9). In the current era, in Zimbabwe, both the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party under Emmerson Mnangagwa and their nemesis, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Alliance under Nelson Chamisa, resorted to fake news and cyber-propaganda warfare (Ncube, 2019).

The difference between the previous and the current era of information warfare is the medium, where technology allows swift and massive deployment. During violent conflict, evaluating information sources often presents a complex challenge (Pasitselska, 2022). However, this is an opportunity to influence the audience by instilling narratives that benefit certain parties and harm others. That is what is called propaganda — in its big umbrella; it falls into the category of fake news. The dissemination of fake news has been facilitated by social media (Muqsith et al., 2021).

The advantages of social media in the speed of spread and reach make fake news widespread and consumed by the public. Moreover, enormous momentum, such as war and general elections, invite certain actors to spread fake news. Zhang and Ghorbani (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020) said that most fake news on social media focuses on current events and hot affairs to attract online users' attention. In other words, big momentums like this allow the spread of fake news to proliferate. The use and spread of viral fake news — fake news that is considered factual — is a global problem, accelerated by information and communication technologies that enable near-instant message delivery and can disguise the substance of the message itself (Guadagno & Guttieri, 2021).

Leveraging social media makes content easy to create and spread quickly, leading to much content to analyze (Zhang & Ghorbani, 2020). News distribution in the digital age makes conflicts more visible and allows regional media to share their interpretations with a global audience (Makhortykh & Bastian, 2022).

Apart from that, social media is also becoming more personalized, especially with artificial intelligence (AI). The development of warfighting AI is a simple continuation of this existing era of weaponized information technology (Payne, 2018b). Regarding this phenomenon, Payne (2018a) has stated that AI will be more useful across a spectrum of strengths and broader than the forces themselves, shaping all conflicts from the lowest to the highest intensity and from the smallest to the largest scale. Payne's opinion received justification from various studies on social media, bots, and information warfare. Smart (Smart et al., 2022) the use of this bot is seen when this conflict occurs.

Many countries disseminate information related to their national policies on social media. In addition to information about national policies, several countries disseminate propaganda that is detrimental to certain parties in conflict situations.

The fact is that distortion of facts is characterized by obvious bias, where a certain opinion is implicitly supported, distorting the true state of affairs. Users' polarization and confirmation bias are crucial in spreading misinformation on online social media (Del Vicario et al., 2019). Various actors, including state-sponsored ones, are weaponizing information on online social networks to run false-information campaigns with targeted manipulation of public opinion on specific topics (Zannetou et al., 2019). Therefore, the authors examine the spread of fake news in Indonesia which related to the Russian special military operation.

We use Baptista and Gradim's definition of fake news. They define fake news as "a type of online disinformation, with totally or partially false content, created intentionally to deceive and/or manipulate a specific audience, through a format that imitates a news or report (acquiring credibility), through false information that may or may not be associated with real events, with an opportunistic structure (title, image, content) to attract the readers'

attention and to persuade them to believe in falsehood, in order to obtain more clicks and shares, therefore, higher advertising revenue and/or ideological gain" (Baptista & Gradim, 2020).

Fake news has several very diverse typologies. For example, Duffy, Tandoc and Ling classify fake news into six types: fabricated news, photo manipulation, propaganda, advertising and public relations, satire, and parody (Duffy, Tandoc & Ling, 2020). Meanwhile, Wang, Rao and Sun made several typologies of fake news: clickbait, hearsay, subjective assumption, incorrect data news, user-generated content news, and alarmist talk (Wang, Rao & Sun, 2022). Their definition is comprehensive because it includes the form, intention, and effect that fake news wants to have.

For this study, the authors will combine the typologies of Duffy, Tandoc and Ling (Duffy, Tandoc & Ling, 2020) and Wang, Rao and Sun (Wang, Rao & Sun, 2022) to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

Methodology

The authors use a qualitative approach with content analysis method. The content analysis method can be used inductively or deductively (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

The authors take hoax data from the site, which was created by the Indonesian Anti-Defamation Society (MAFINDO) as a source of information about any news included in the hoax category.⁴ In this study, the authors took as many as 71 hoax news items related to the topic of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine. This includes the military, the two countries' leaders, and Ukraine's political situation. The authors limit the data collection until June 30, 2022. The reason is that on June, 28–30, 2022, Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited Ukraine and Russia to carry out mediation mission and dialogue.

⁴ Team Profile // TurnBackHoax.ID. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

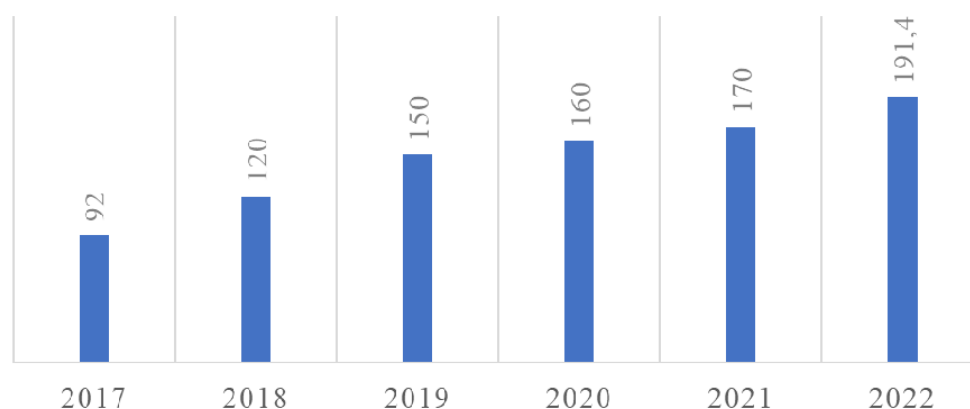


Figure 1. Social Media Usage in Indonesia in 2017–2022, millions of people

Source: The Changing World of Digital in 2023 // We Are Social and Hootsuite. January 26, 2023. URL: <https://wearesocial.com/id/blog/2023/01/the-changing-world-of-digital-in-2023-2/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

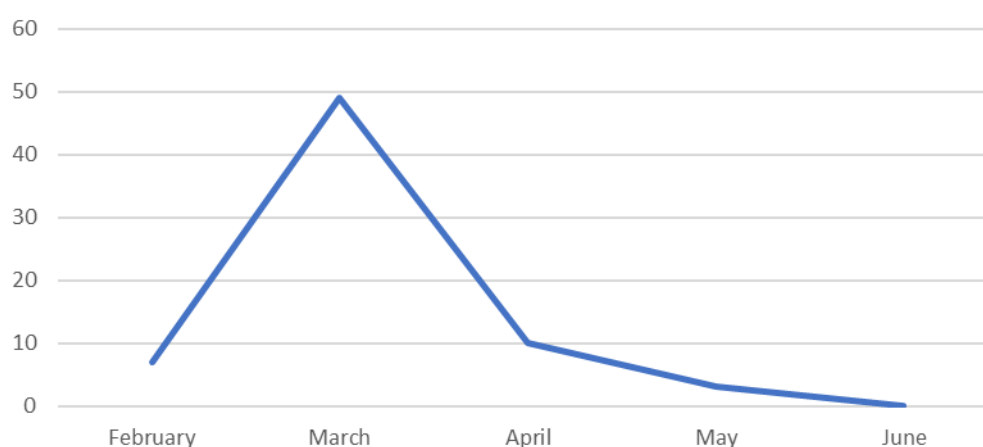


Figure 2. Russia — Ukraine Conflict Fake News Trend in Indonesia in February-June 2022

Source: compiled by the authors based on: Tahun: 2022 // TurnBackHoax.ID. 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2022/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

Fake News, Social Media and Information Warfare

The Internet has become increasingly important in terms of national security, economic development, and global leadership (Ramich & Piskunov, 2022). Moreover, almost all citizens use the Internet, including the optimization of social media services. During the development of fake news in recent years, social media has often become the main channel for someone to spread fake news. This development occurred in Indonesia, and social media users showed a steady development, as illustrated in the graph below (Figure 1).

From a military perspective, the Internet, especially social media, has become an area for ideological and narrative battles. The Internet

has transformed modern information warfare into a global multimedia forum where opposing voices struggle to be heard to impose hegemonic ideas and frame the conflict (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2020). Prier (2017) finds that state and non-state actors use a proven propaganda technique: capitalizing on an existing message and amplifying the message through automated “bot” network accounts to force social media platform algorithms to recognize the message as a hot topic.

In recent years, two phenomena have stirred up the global world: COVID-19 and Russia’s special military operation. Regarding the latter phenomenon, there is a trend that is quite surprising when we speak in the Indonesian context (Figure 2).

The attacks are intense in February and March and get coverage from various global media. Therefore, the news of the Russia and Ukraine conflict became a topic that was widely discussed by the public. The global media portrayed the Russian military operation with a gripping angle, which skewed the global opinion in favour of Ukraine. President V. Zelensky also often appears on various traditional and digital media channels. He asked for support from various parties and created an image of an invaded country. This invites sympathy from various circles, giving Ukraine much support from many parties.

In addition, netizens in Indonesia talk more about V. Putin than V. Zelensky. Indonesian netizens are more inclined to support Russia than Ukraine. According to Evello's digital monitoring and analysis platform research, the number of accounts talking about Putin is 71% higher than Zelensky.⁵ According to the founder of Evello, Dudy Rudianto, netizens have three attitudes regarding this conflict: netizens do not like NATO and the United States; netizens admire President Putin and sympathize with the Ukrainian people and Zelensky.⁶

However, little fake news was found about this from April to June. Then the intensity dropped drastically. The authors argue that of the main reasons is that fake news about the Russian and Ukrainian conflict is less 'sold' in society. The problem is about proximity. Indeed, Russia's conflict with Ukraine has impacted the global economy, and even Indonesia has felt it. However, the incident was very far from the community, making it less relatable to their condition. Furthermore, according to Saiful Mujani Research Consulting

(SMRC), in 2022, 23% of respondents blamed Western countries that are members of NATO for the outbreak of the Russia — Ukraine conflict.⁷

Therefore, the drastic decline of fake news about the Russian conflict with Ukraine is caused by proximity to the issue. Although the economic impact needs to be considered, it does not affect many aspects of people's lives. In essence, this phenomenon is only a temporary hype, but drowned in other issues that are more influential in society.

Social Networks as Source of Fake News

As social networks have become increasingly popular for sharing news, they have also provided fertile ground for the spread of fake news. False news reaches more people than the truth; the top 1% of false news cascades diffused to between 1000 and 100,000 people, whereas the truth is rarely diffused to more than 1000 people (Vosoughi, Roy & Aral, 2018). This fact certainly makes it difficult for many people to avoid fake news, and it also increases the likelihood that they will find fake news.

Not surprisingly, the average Indonesian spends over three hours daily on social media. We cannot ignore the huge positive impact of social media (Muzykant et al., 2023). Social media is a platform for meeting new people, sharing ideas with many people, providing opportunities for writers and bloggers to connect with clients, uniting many people to achieve certain goals, and uplifting society (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016).

However, we must also consider the negative effects, especially in the information

⁵ Perang di Ukraina: Mayoritas publik Indonesia kagumi Putin, pakar khawatir 'bangsa kita dicap hipokrit' [War in Ukraine: Majority of Indonesian Public Admires Putin, Experts Worry 'Our Nation Will Be Labeled Hypocritical'] // BBC Indonesia. March 24, 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-60737298> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Dihni V. A. Survei: Banyak Warga RI Salahkan NATO atas Perang Rusia-Ukraina [Survey: Many Indonesian Citizens Blame NATO for the Russo-Ukrainian War] // Katadata. April 20, 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/04/20/survei-banyak-warga-ri-salahkan-nato-atas-perang-rusia-ukraina> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

section. Moreover, the public can freely provide information on social media without curation; in other words, it is called citizen journalism. Citizen journalism holds excellent promise for democracy but tends to produce fake news with the ring of truth rather than simply promoting a better-informed citizenry (Dorf & Tarrow, 2017). Freedom allows fake news spreaders to spread it according to their interests.

In the context of the Russian conflict with Ukraine, social media has become a mouthpiece for spreading fake news. *Facebook*⁸ and *Twitter* (was renamed as *X*) are the most common social media in spreading fake news. The number of fake news based on the authors' data from *turnbackhoax.id* was 30, and then followed by *Twitter* with 22 fake news (Figure 3).

In addition, *Facebook* is the most accessed social media. According to research from the Indonesian Association of Internet Service Providers (APJII), in 2022, 68.38% of Indonesians use social media, including *Facebook*, followed by *YouTube*, with 63.02%.⁹ In addition, the Indonesian people are the largest population accessing *Facebook*, with 129.85 million.¹⁰

These statistics can at least answer why fake news spreads more on *Facebook* than any other social media. The authors argue that

fake news makers believe that the more demographics there are on social media, the more fertile the fields will be to reap the benefits of making fake news. They do not think about the impact of fake news on many people.

The authors view that the impact of fake news about the Russian conflict with Ukraine is not as bad as fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic (Muzykant et al., 2021). According to a study, 800 people died due to fake news in the early days of the pandemic (Islam et al., 2020). Therefore, the authors argue that the impact of fake news about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is insignificant because it does not immediately impact society. However, false information remains dangerous because it makes people wrongly perceive a phenomenon.

The most interesting is the emergence of *TikTok* as a new resource on social media. *TikTok* has recently become a very fast-growing social media. In 2022, *TikTok* users reached one billion.¹¹ Although not as many as *Facebook*, many agencies and organizations are starting to see *TikTok* as a new media that is profitable in the market.

Evidence shows that *TikTok* has become one of Indonesians' favorite social networks (Figure 4). In 2020, there were only 37 million *TikTok* users compared to *Facebook*'s 130 million. However, in 2021, more and more Indonesians use *TikTok*, where the total number is 92 million users.¹² *Facebook* also experienced an increase of 10 million, which makes *Facebook* used by 140 million people.

⁸ On March 21, 2022, the Tverskoy District Court of Moscow satisfied a lawsuit filed by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation and recognized the activity of the social network Instagram, owned by Meta, as extremist, banning its operation in Russia (*Editor's note*).

⁹ Survei: Facebook Juara Medsos di RI, Kaltara Paling Banyak Akses [Survey: Facebook Wins Social Media in RI, North Kalimantan with Most Access] // CNN Indonesia. June 14, 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/teknologi/20220614164431-192-808880/survei-facebook-juara-medsos-di-ri-kaltara-paling-banyak-akses> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

¹⁰ Annur C. M. Indonesia Masuk Daftar Pengguna Facebook Terbanyak, Urutan Berapa? [Indonesia Is on the List of Most Facebook Users. In What Order?] // Katadata. March 23, 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2022/03/23/indonesia-masuk-daftar-pengguna-facebook-terbanyak-urutan-berapa> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

¹¹ Buchholz K. The Rapid Rise of TikTok // Statista. October 7, 2022. URL: <https://www.statista.com/chart/28412/social-media-users-by-network-amo/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

¹² Ahmad S. A. Pengguna TikTok di Indonesia Mengalami Peningkatan Tiga Kali Lipat Selama Satu Tahun [TikTok Users in Indonesia Have Tripled in One Year] // Suara.com. October 23, 2021. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://bogor.suara.com/read/2021/10/23/110736/pengguna-tiktok-di-indonesia-mengalami-peningkatan-tiga-kali-lipat-selama-satu-tahun?page=all> (accessed: 17.11.2023).

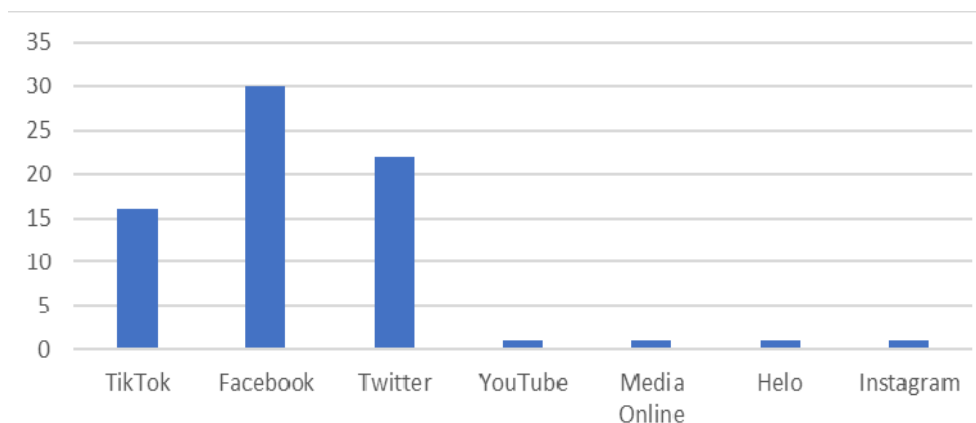


Figure 3. Fake News Distribution About the Russia — Ukraine Conflict in Social Media, February-June 2022

Source: compiled by the authors based on: Tahun: 2022 // TurnBackHoax.ID. 2022. (In Indonesian).

URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2022/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

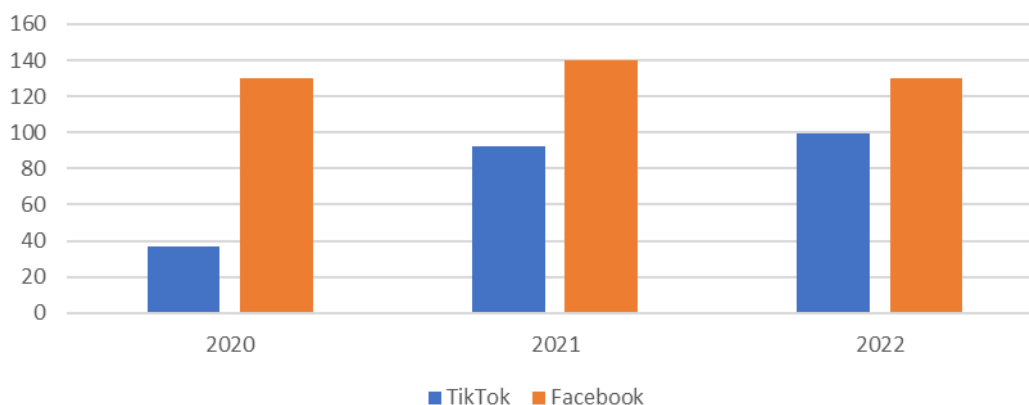


Figure 4. Number of *TikTok* and *Facebook* Users in Indonesia in 2020–2022, millions of people

Source: Digital 2020: Global Digital Overview // DataReportal. January 30, 2020.

URL: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-global-digital-overview> (accessed: 17.10.2023); Digital 2021: Global Digital Overview // DataReportal. January 27, 2021. URL: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-global-overview-report> (accessed: 17.10.2023); Digital 2022: Global Digital Overview // DataReportal. January 26, 2022.

URL: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-global-overview-report> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

However, in 2022, *TikTok* still performed positively by gaining 7 million new users. As a result, the total reached 99 million. Meanwhile, in the same year, *Facebook* experienced a trend in decreasing the total dynamic of users' growth.

Given the significant increase in the number of *TikTok* users, it is necessary to understand what makes *TikTok* so popular with so many people. Several factors motivate people to play *TikTok*: as a medium for social interaction and escapism motives, to relax and entertain, and to communicate with others about the videos they watched (Omar & Dequan,

2020). *TikTok* is more concerned with audiovisual, so the form of content is in the form of video.

One example of fake news on *TikTok* is a video about a Ukrainian flying ace, the so-called "Ghost of Kiev," which allegedly shot down Russian planes. From the screenshots, this video has been shared by 437 people, liked by 32,000, and commented on by 1,218 people.¹³ This shows how *TikTok* can become a new source of

¹³ [FALSE] The "Kutibombam! #ukraine" Video // Turnbackhoax.id. March 7, 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2022/03/07/false-the-kutibombam-ukraine-video/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

fake news beyond *Facebook* and *Twitter*. This is undoubtedly worrying, considering that many people use *TikTok*. In addition, *TikTok*'s content is in the form of video, which the authors find easier to expose using this form of content compared to text. The text makes people have to understand the context first, so they have room to criticize. As for the video, if it is packaged attractively, it will make it easier for people to believe that the video contains the truth. Moreover, many video editing applications can make videos more beautiful and disguise specific details so that a video looks original.

In short, the media and the ways are changing, but the intention to spread fake news remains.

Fake News and Subjective Assumption

One of the other essential things about fake news is that people are too quick to share news based on subjective assumptions. This makes

fake news widespread when the content is not criticized, primarily if the content supports their point of view. This makes fake news widespread when the content is not criticized, primarily if the content supports their point of view. People prefer to consume news or entertainment that reinforces what they already believe and is rooted in well-understood psychological phenomena such as confirmation bias — our tendency to see only the evidence that confirms our existing opinions and to ignore or forget anything that does not fit (Waldrop, 2017).

Based on the typology that the authors identified based on the data that has been collected, 40% of them are *subjective assumptions* (Figure 5). This means that people do not verify a story before sharing it with a large audience. Unfortunately, it also means that people do not read the entirety of the news and facts presented and only rely on their assumptions.

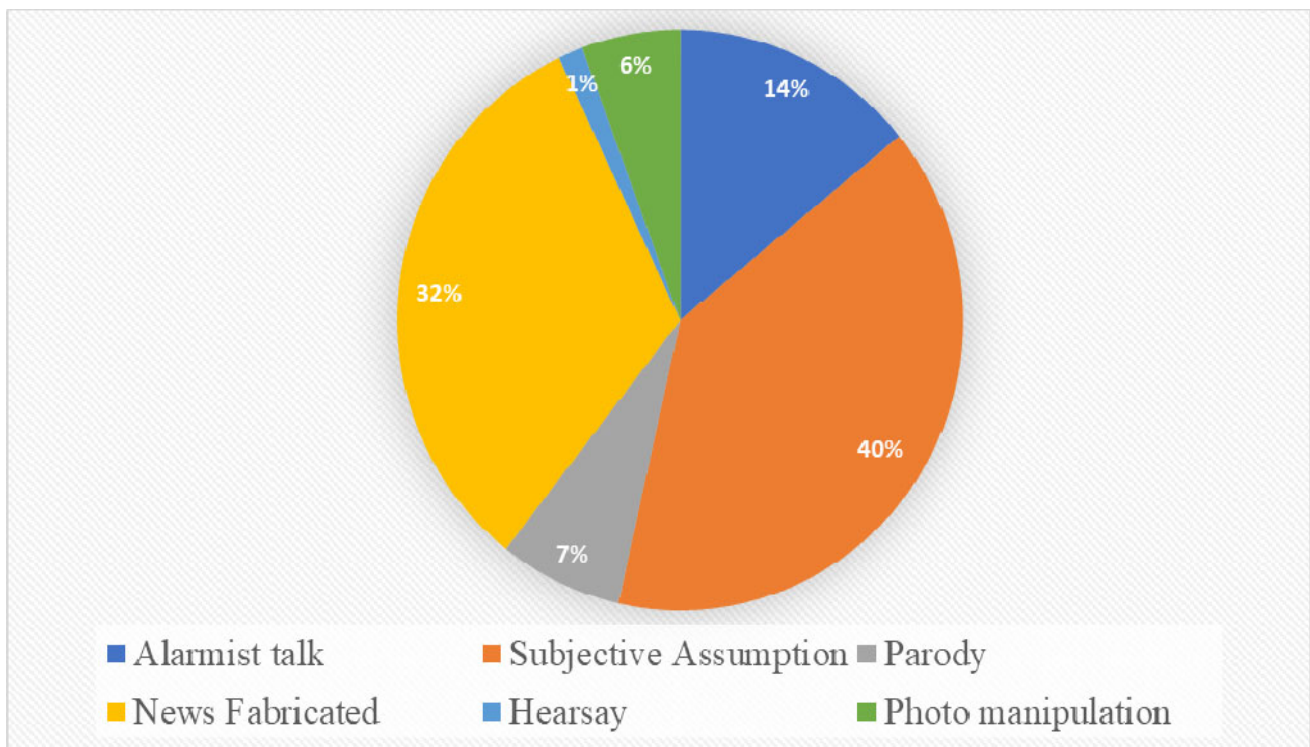


Figure 5. Fake News Typology

Source: compiled by the authors based on: Tahun: 2022 // TurnBackHoax.ID. 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2022/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

In addition to subjective assumptions, 32% of fake news is news fabricated, which means that the news is intentionally spread to lead people to a particular opinion. In this case, many opinions favour Ukraine over Russia. In this case, the opinion is formed in the manner preferred by Ukraine, ignoring the fact that a special military operation is a form of self-defence from the encirclement of the Western world, or, better said, NATO.

The category of *fabricated news* (32%) includes, for example, news about the burning of Ukrainian books by the Russian army. The official *Twitter* account of Carl Bildt, the former prime minister of Sweden, interpreted the image as if Russia had burned all the books to destroy Ukraine as a state.¹⁴ However, the photo has the wrong context, as it was used on a website in 2014. Nevertheless, this tweet has been shared and re-quoted 4,000 times and liked 9,120 times. Judging by this evidence, the credibility of a source that appears to be above suspicion, his addition as a news disseminator generally confirms the intention to share the information received from him as a statesman (Suntwal, Brown & Patton, 2020).

The next category included in the top three is *alarmist talk* (14%). This type is quite used to indicate the urgency and severity of a phenomenon.

Consider fake news, typologized by us as alarmist talk — the news is about V. Putin being angry because a Pertamina tanker carrying Russian oil was intercepted in Denmark.¹⁵ The

¹⁴ [SALAH] Foto Buku-buku Sejarah Ukraina yang Dibakar Tentara Rusia [[WRONG] Photo of Ukrainian History Books Burned by Russian Soldiers] // Turnbackhoax.id. May 28, 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2022/05/28/salah-foto-buku-buku-sejarah-ukraina-yang-dibakar-tentara-rusia/> (accessed: 17.10.2023).

¹⁵ [SALAH] Video “Vladimir Putin Marah Besar, Kapal Tanker Pertamina Yang Angkut Minyak Rusia, Dicegat Di Denmark” [[WRONG] Video “Vladimir Putin Is Furious, Pertamina Tanker Carrying Russian Oil Is Intercepted in Denmark”] // Turnbackhoax.id. April 8, 2022. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2022/04/08/salah-video-vladimir-putin-marah-besar-kapal->

word “angry” needs to be underlined because it shows negative emotions and makes people who read it warily. There have been enough people who have watched this video, as many as 14,218, plus 129 likes, and generated 35 comments. This speech is an edit, where the original version is V. Putin expresses concern that the Western world is trying to cancel Russian culture in order to isolate Russia.¹⁶

Parodies (7%), *photo manipulation* (6%) and *rumours* (1%) round out the list of fake news categories we categorized. Here we can highlight a tweet in which Ukrainian President V.A. Zelensky allegedly used cocaine before an interview with NBC News. This tweet from *The Daily Rabbit's* account was watched by 42,100 people, retweeted by 248 people, and liked by 346 users.¹⁷ This video turned out to be an excerpt from an interview in 2019. At that time, V. Zelensky was asked if he liked drugs. He answers that he does not like drugs, but does like coffee.¹⁸

From the top three categories, one of the common threads that we can take is people who still have not applied critical thinking. For the categories of top fakes highlighted above, the common denominator that needs to be paid attention to, we think, is the lack of critical thinking and low level media literacy among users of such news. These abilities enable individuals to approach media and content (Hossová, 2018). Critical thinking is vital in evaluating fake news (Lutzke et. al, 2019).

tanker-pertamina-yang-angkut-minyak-rusia-dicegat-di-denmark/ (accessed: 17.10.2023).

¹⁶ Putin Claims West Is Trying To Cancel Russia // Youtube. March 26, 2022. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyMWsMyNJ_A&ab_channel=NBCNews (accessed: 17.10.2023).

¹⁷ [SALAH] Presiden Zelenskyy Menggunakan Kokain Sebelum Wawancara [[WRONG] President Zelensky Used Cocaine Before Interview] // Turnbackhoax.id. March 11, 2024. (In Indonesian). URL: <https://turnbackhoax.id/2024/03/11/salah-presiden-zelenskyy-menggunakan-kokain-sebelum-wawancara/> (accessed: 17.02.2024).

¹⁸ “Don’t Attribute Kolomoiskyi to Me” — Volodymyr Zelensky // YouTube. (In Ukrainian). URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kd5ZBo8QCr&t=462s> (accessed: 17.02.2024).

A person can easily trust fake news if he does not have the energy to verify the news received. Unfortunately, misleading claims in the titles of fake news articles can lead to established beliefs that can be hard to change through reasoned arguments (Horne & Adali, 2017). This is really an obstacle to countering fakes. Fake news spreads to many users as well because people might be tired of their daily activities, so they do not have the energy to think about whether this news is authentic or fake.

Conclusion

Fake news about Russia's special military operation is not as massive as the news about COVID-19. Nevertheless, the closeness and connectedness of these issues with people's lives must attract much more attention in the international agenda. Apart from this, humanity still needs to develop countermeasures to

mitigate the impact of fake news. One piece of fake news can be fatal, and if it is spread, the negative impact will be more widespread. Fake news seems to have the ability to manipulate people's perception of reality, affecting their cognitive abilities. As a result of fabricated content, the global community may take an unbalanced position, representing only one side.

The fact is that *TikTok's* growing audience is becoming one more of the new sources as well as targets for the spread of fake news via so-called war-talk. This must make verifiers and *TikTok* users all over the world even more observant in detecting whether the video content they watch is fact or fictitious. As we can see, only critical thinking with media literacy is indeed essential factors in cracking down on fake news. We cannot yet completely eliminate fake news, but we can at least minimize its spread.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 31.08.2022

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 10.02.2024

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 23.04.2024

References

- Baptista, J. P., & Gradim, A. (2020). Understanding fake news consumption: A review. *Social Sciences*, 9(10), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9100185>
- Burkhard, J. M. (2017). Combating fake news in the digital age. *Library Technology Reports*, 53(8), 5–33. <https://doi.org/10.5860/ltr.53n8>
- Del Vicario, M., Quattrociocchi, W., Scala, A., & Zollo, F. (2019). Polarization and fake news: Early warning of potential misinformation targets. *ACM Transactions on the Web (TWEB)*, 13(2), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3316809>
- Dorf, M. C., & Tarrow, S. G. (2017). Stings and scams: Fake news, the first amendment, and the new activist journalism. *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law*, 20(1), 1–32. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2906444>
- Duffy, A., Tandoc, E., & Ling, R. (2020). Too good to be true, too good not to share: The social utility of fake news. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(13), 1965–1979. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1623904>
- Elo, S., & Kyngas, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(1), 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x>
- Götz, E. (2015). It's geopolitics, stupid: Explaining Russia's Ukraine policy. *Global Affairs*, 1(1), 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2015.960184>
- Guadagno, R. E., & Guttieri, K. (2021). Fake news and information warfare: An examination of the political and psychological processes from the digital sphere to the real world. In M. Khosrow-Pour (Ed.), *Research anthology on fake news, political warfare, and combatting the spread of misinformation* (pp. 218–242). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-7291-7.ch013>

- Horne, B. D., & Adali, S. (2017). This just in: Fake news packs a lot in title, uses simpler, repetitive content in text body, more similar to satire than real news. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 11(1), 759–766. <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v11i1.14976>
- Hossová, M. (2018). Fake news and disinformation: Phenomenons of post-factual society. *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 1(2), 27–35. Retrieved from: https://www.mlar.sk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/MLAR_2018_2_3_Fake-News-and-Disinformation-Phenomenons-of-Post-Factual-Society.pdf
- Islam, M. D., Sarkar, T., Khan, S. H., Kamal, A.-H. M., Hasan, & et al. (2020). COVID-19-related infodemic and its impact on public health: A global social media analysis. *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 103(4), 1621–1629. <https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.20-0812>
- Jaitner, M., & Mattsson, P. A. (2015). Russian information warfare in 2014. In M. Maybaum, A.-M. Osula & L. Lindström (Eds.), *7th International conference on cyber conflict: Architectures in cyberspace* (pp. 39–52). Tallinn: NATO CCD COE Publications.
- Khaldarova, I., & Pantti, M. (2020). Fake news: The narrative battle over the Ukrainian conflict. In S. Allan, C. Carter, S. Cushion, L. Dencik, I. Garcia-Blanco, J. Harris, R. Sambrook, K. Wahl-Jorgensen & A. Williams (Eds.), *The future of journalism: Risks, threats and opportunities* (pp. 228–238). London: Routledge.
- Lutzke, L., Drummond, C., Slovic, P., & Árvai, J. (2019). Priming critical thinking: Simple interventions limit the influence of fake news about climate change on Facebook. *Global Environmental Change*, 58, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2019.101964>
- Makhortykh, M., & Bastian, M. (2022). Personalizing the war: Perspectives for the adoption of news recommendation algorithms in the media coverage of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. *Media, War & Conflict*, 15(1), 25–45. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635220906254>
- Muqsith, M. A., Kuswanti, A., Pratomo, R. R., & Muzykant, V. L. (2021). Trump's Twitter propaganda during COVID-19. *Jurnal The Messenger*, 13(3), 223–237. <https://doi.org/10.26623/themessenger.v13i3.3991>
- Muzykant, V. L., Barabash, V. V., Shlykova, O. V., Barsukov, K. P., Muqsith, M. A., & Tayibnapis, R. G. (2023). Infrastructure and computation in a smart city as e-government contemporary competence. In A. K. Nagar, D. Singh Jat, D. K. Mishra & A. Joshi (Eds.), *Intelligent sustainable systems: Selected papers of WorldS4 2022* (Vol. 2, pp. 639–646). Singapore: Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7663-6_60
- Muzykant, V. L., Muqsith, M. A., Pratomo, R. R., & Barabash, V. V. (2021). Fake news on COVID-19 in Indonesia. In D. M. Berube (Ed.), *Pandemic communication and resilience* (pp. 363–378). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-77344-1_22
- Ncube, L. (2019). Digital media, fake news and pro-movement for democratic change (MDC) alliance cyber-propaganda during the 2018 Zimbabwe election. *African Journalism Studies*, 40(4), 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2019.1670225>
- Omar, B., & Dequan, W. (2020). Watch, share or create: The influence of personality traits and user motivation on TikTok mobile video usage. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 14(4), 121–137. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v14i04.12429>
- Pasitselska, O. (2022). Better ask your neighbor: Renegotiating media trust during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. *Human Communication Research*, 48(2), 179–202. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqac003>
- Payne, K. (2018a). Artificial intelligence: A revolution in strategic affairs? *Survival*, 60(5), 7–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1518374>
- Payne, K. (2018b). *Strategy, Evolution, and war: From apes to artificial intelligence*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvvngzd>
- Prier, J. (2017). Commanding the trend: Social media as information warfare. *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 11(4), 50–85. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26271634>
- Ramich, M. S., & Piskunov, D. A. (2022). The securitization of cyberspace: From rulemaking to establishing legal regimes. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 22(2), 238–255. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2022-22-2-238-255>; EDN: KSSXFK
- Siddiqui, S., & Singh, T. (2016). Social media its impact with positive and negative aspects. *International Journal of Computer Applications Technology and Research*, 5(2), 71–75. <https://doi.org/10.7753/IJCATR0502.1006>
- Smart, B., Watt, J., Benedetti, S., Mitchell, L., & Roughan, M. (2022). #IStandWithPutin versus #IStandWithUkraine: The interaction of bots and humans in discussion of the Russia/Ukraine war. In F. Hopfgartner, K. Jaidka, P. Mayr, J. Jose & J. Breitsohl (Eds.), *Social informatics: 13th International*

- conference, *SocInfo 2022, Glasgow, UK, October 19–21, 2022, proceedings* (pp. 34–53). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19097-1_3
- Suntwal, S., Brown, S. A., & Patton, M. W. (2020). How does information spread? An exploratory study of true and fake news. In T. X. Bui (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 53rd Hawaii International conference on system sciences HICSS 2020: Grand Wailea, Maui, Hawaii; January 7–10, 2020* (pp. 5893–5902). Honolulu: ScholarSpace.
- Thornton, R. (2015). The changing nature of modern warfare: Responding to Russian information warfare. *The RUSI Journal*, 160(4), 40–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2015.1079047>
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146–1151. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559>
- Waldrop, M. M. (2017). The genuine problem of fake news. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(48), 12631–12634. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1719005114>
- Wang, Min, Rao, Mingke, & Sun, Zhipeng. (2022). Typology, etiology, and fact-checking: A pathological study of top fake news in China. *Journalism Practice*, 16(4), 719–737. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1806723>
- Zannetou, S., Sirivianos, M., Blackburn, J., & Kourtellis, N. (2019). The web of false information: Rumors, fake news, hoaxes, clickbait, and various other shenanigans. *Journal of Data and Information Quality*, 11(3), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3309699>
- Zhang, Xichen, & Ghorbani, A. A. (2020). An overview of online fake news: Characterization, detection, and discussion. *Information Processing & Management*, 57(2), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2019.03.004>

About the authors:

Muqsith Munadhil Abdul — PhD (Philological Sciences), Associate Professor, Deputy Head, Department of Communication Science, University of Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jakarta; ORCID: 0000-0003-1525-0136; e-mail: munadhil@upnvj.ac.id

Pratomo Rizky Ridho — Assistant Researcher, Faculty of Political Science and Social Sciences, University of Pembangunan Nasional “Veteran” Jakarta; ORCID: 0000-0003-3077-9345; e-mail: rizkyridho0897@gmail.com

Muzykant Valerii Leonidovich — Dr. of Sc. (Sociology), Professor, Department of Mass Communication, RUDN University; eLibrary SPIN-code: 4071-1550; ORCID: 0000-0001-9422-351X; e-mail: muzykant_vl@pfur.ru