

The website of Swiss Policy Research, an anonymous, pseudo-scientific research group that claims to be exposing pro-NATO propaganda. The site has published false claims, including about COVID-19.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

Score: 17.5/100

Ownership and Financing

The site is owned by Swiss Policy Research (SPR), which, according to the site, is “an independent, nonpartisan and nonprofit research group investigating geopolitical propaganda in Swiss and international media.”

The site does not disclose any information about the group’s owners or members. “The members of the research group want to avoid personal defamation and professional sanctions and have therefore decided not to be named,” the site states.

SWPRS.org’s sources of funding are unclear. The site states on the About Us page that it “receives no external funding” and the Contact page states that SPR “doesn’t accept any donations.” The site does not run advertising.

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✓ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Content

The German-language site publishes critical reports about Swiss and international media — including the Neue Zürcher Zeitung, public service broadcasters SRF and ZDF, and news agencies Reuters, The Associated Press, and AFP — often accusing these outlets of spreading propaganda for NATO. Many of the reports are presented as self-conducted scientific studies, although their methodologies are not clear and conclusions are often not backed with evidence. In early 2020, the website started publishing information and reports on the COVID-19 virus.

SWPRS.org organizes content into categories including Studies (Studien), Analyses (Analysen), and Networks (Netzwerke). The Analyses section provides a “Media Navigator,” which classifies outlets by their political orientation and according to what the site calls their “NATO conformity.”

The Networks section focuses on the press in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and the U.S., which the site says are propaganda tools of NATO and other

western and global institutions, such as the United Nations and the Council on Foreign Relations.

While most of the site's content is provided in German, some articles and studies are also available in multiple other languages, including but not limited to English, Spanish, Russian, and French.

Credibility

Articles on SWPRS.org are often based on what the site presents as self-conducted studies, which however do not meet scientific standards and lack proper method and evidence to support conclusions. For example, a study on supposed propaganda spread by the Swiss public service broadcaster SRF, first published in 2016 but updated as recently as January 2020, used as a study sample only four SRF television segments broadcast all on the same day in 2016. The study was not peer-reviewed before it was published on SWPRS.org. In 2017, the Swiss media professor Stephan Ruß-Mohl told the fact-checking unit of the German broadcaster ARD, "I regard these studies themselves as propaganda, not as serious research on propaganda."

The site often draws on the reporting by other media, including Spiegel.de, WashingtonPost.com and NYTimes.com, but also KenFM.de and the Russian propaganda site SputnikNews — which NewsGuard has found to have published false information.

SWPRS.org itself has published false and misleading information. For example, a July 2020 article, titled "On the treatment of COVID-19" ("Zur Behandlung von COVID-19"), claimed that hydroxychloroquine — a remedy against malaria, lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis — could prevent the COVID-19 virus. "Zinc, HCQ [hydroxychloroquine], quercetin and bromhexin may also be used prophylactically for people at high risk or high exposure," the article said, citing a recommendation by the Indian Council of Medical Research, a government body. The article also claimed that, "The alleged or actual negative results with hydroxychloroquine in some studies were based on delayed use (intensive care patients), excessive doses (up to 2400mg per day), manipulated data sets (the Surgisphere scandal), or ignored contraindications (e.g., favism or heart disease)."

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “Studies show that hydroxychloroquine does not have clinical benefits in treating COVID-19,” and multiple randomized clinical trials have found that hydroxychloroquine failed to prevent or treat COVID-19. For example, in June 2020, U. K. researchers ended the use of hydroxychloroquine in a large trial that had involved 4,600 patients. “We have concluded that there is no beneficial effect of hydroxychloroquine in patients hospitalised with COVID-19,” according to a statement by researchers Martin Landray and Peter Horby of the RECOVERY (Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy) trial.

In July 2020, the FDA published a warning that hydroxychloroquine can cause “serious heart rhythm problems and other safety issues, including blood and lymph system disorders, kidney injuries, and liver problems and failure.” In addition, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said at a July 2020 congressional hearing, “Any and all of the randomized, placebo-controlled trials — which is the gold standard of determining if something is effective — none of them have found any efficacy for hydroxychloroquine.”

A March 2020 article that has continuously been updated since its first publication, titled “Facts about Covid-19” (“Fakten zu COVID-19”), claimed that, “Up to 30% of all additional deaths may have been caused not by COVID-19, but by the effects of the lockdown, panic and fear.” To back up this claim, the article cited a June 2020 analysis by the U.K. Office for National Statistics on increased numbers of deaths unrelated to COVID-19 in England and Wales.

The cited analysis, however, does not support the claim that deaths unrelated to COVID-19 occurred due to the effects of the lockdown, panic, or fear. In fact, the analysis concluded that higher death numbers occurred mostly in older age groups and that “undiagnosed COVID-19 could help explain the rise in these deaths.” It also noted that changes to how deaths are recorded during the pandemic “led to an increased number of death registrations made by doctors.” The analysis further concluded that, “There is not enough evidence to suggest the other theories investigated can explain much of the increase in non-COVID-19 death

registrations.” The other theories included the “increase in deaths caused by stress-related conditions,” which remains unsupported.

The same SWPRS.org article also stated that, “A 2019 WHO study on measures against pandemic influenza found that from a medical perspective, ‘contact tracing’ is ‘not recommended in any circumstances.’

Nevertheless, contact tracing apps have already become partially mandatory in several countries.” It claimed that “there is no evidence that [contact tracing apps] can make an epidemiologically relevant contribution.”

Although it is true that a 2019 WHO study did not recommend contact tracing in an influenza pandemic, the WHO explicitly recommends contact tracing for the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. “When systematically applied, contact tracing will break the chains of transmission of COVID-19 and is an essential public health tool for controlling the virus,” the WHO states on its website. A May 2020 report published by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control also notes that, “Contact tracing has been a key part of the response in several Asian countries that have successfully reduced case numbers.”

A March 2020 article, titled “The Syria Deception” (“Syrienkrieg: Geopolitik und Medien”), claimed that chemical attacks by the Russia-backed Syrian government on its own citizens were staged by western countries to justify military action against Syria. “[F]rom 2013 onwards, various poison gas attacks were staged in order to be able to deploy the NATO air force as part of a ‘humanitarian intervention’ similar to the earlier wars against Libya and Yugoslavia,” the article said. “Media-effective atrocity propaganda and mysterious ‘terrorist attacks’ in Europe and the US then offered the opportunity to intervene in Syria using the NATO air force even without a UN mandate – ostensibly to fight the ‘terrorists,’ but in reality still to conquer Syria and topple its government.”

There is no evidence that terrorist attacks that occurred at a higher frequency over the last five years in Europe, especially France and Germany, but also Belgium, the U.K., and Sweden, have been staged. Claims that chemical weapons attacks in Syria were staged have been contradicted for years by first-person accounts, photographs, and videos documenting the atrocity, as

well as reports from the United Nations, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the French government.

Because SWPRS.org has repeatedly published false or misleading claims, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content and that it does not gather and present information responsibly.

Headlines are generally not misleading and accurately reflect the content in articles.

On its Contact page, SWPRS.org describes itself as “politically and editorially independent.” However, articles and studies consistently criticize organizations such as NATO and the Council on Foreign Relations, as well as western established media organizations, and what the site calls “the transatlantic description and interpretation of geopolitical relevant topics.”

For example, a June 2019 article, titled “War and lie” (“Krieg und Lüge”) said, “Are all accounts by transatlantic media of geopolitical and contemporary events false? The short answer is essentially: Yes. The simple reason for that is the fact that imperial policy in general cannot be covered honestly, otherwise it would not be accepted by the population.”

A February 2020 article titled “US elections: Between democracy and imperium” (“US-Wahlen: Zwischen Demokratie und Imperium”) said, “The idea behind U.S. presidential elections is to let the population choose one of two candidates from the imperial Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). This allows the United States, uniquely, to be both a democracy and an empire.”

An article titled “Migration and Media” (“Migration und Medien”) first published in November 2018 but updated as recently as July 2020, said about the media coverage of immigration, “In the media, this geo-economically motivated, ‘historically unique experiment’ in societal transformation is framed by a humanitarian narrative, while objecting politicians who are oriented toward the ‘common people’ instead of the global strategy have become ‘populists.’”

Because articles on SWPRS.org frequently support an agenda that the site does not disclose, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

SWPRS.org does not articulate a corrections policy and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

SWPRS.org did not respond to two NewsGuard emails inquiring about the site's reporting practices, including its publishing of false information, false headlines, mixing of news and opinion, and approach to corrections.

Transparency

The site does not disclose any information about its owners, editors, or content creators. Articles do not typically name their author.

The site's Contact page provides a general contact form.

SWPRS.org does not run advertisements.

The site did not respond to two NewsGuard emails inquiring about the site's lack of disclosure about its owners, editorial leaders, and content creators.

History

According to its About Us page, SWPRS.org was launched in 2016. Until May 2020, the site was called Swiss Propaganda Research when its name changed to Swiss Policy Research.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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<https://swprs.org/kontakt/>

Content

<https://swprs.org/die-nzz-studie/>

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<https://swprs.org/logik-imperialer-kriege/>

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languages)

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Credibility

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Transparency

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History

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