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Analiza wpływu cyberprzestrzeni na rzeczywistość ukraińską : w kontekście wydarzeń na euromajdanie

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ANALIZA WPŁYWU CYBERPRZESTRZENI NA RZECZYWISTOŚĆ UKRAIŃSKĄ (W KONTEKŚCIE WYDARZEŃ NA EUROMAJDANIE)

Streszczenie: W artykule zbadano problem wpływu mediów, kształtujących myśl społeczną, zakładających fundamenty przekonań politycznych. Chodzi przede wszystkim o wpływy na rzeczywistość dziejowo-polityczną. Najważniejszą kwestią, umożliwiającą rządcom zarządzanie swoją działalnością oraz kontrolę tej działalności, jest istnienie wiarygodnych informacji. To, w dalszej kolejności, pozwala społeczeństwu aktywnie angażować się w zarządzanie krajem. W tym aspekcie ogromną rolę odegrał okres „Rewolucji Godności” na Euromajdanie 2013-2014, usuwający ówczesnego prezydenta Wiktora Janukowycza ze stanowiska. Można go potraktować jako formę rewolucji poprzez YouTube, Facebook i Twitter, co stanowi przykład ewolucji technologii współczesnych oraz mediów społecznych.

Słowa kluczowe: przestrzeń cybernetyczna, manipulacja mediami, wpływy, rządy, opinia publiczna, IT, Ukraina, Euromajdan, Internet, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, rewolucja

“Media manipulation currently shapes everything you read, hear and watch online. Everything” [Forbes magazine].

In the late 20th century the English historian E.H. Carr stated in his study of historiography ‘What Is History?’, “By and large, the historian will get the kind of fact she wants. History means interpretation.” It discusses history, facts, the bias of historians, science, morality, individuals and society, and moral judgments in history.

In the early 21st century new technologies make a new history. “In the information-communication civilization of the 21st century, creativity and mental excellence will become the ethical norm. The world will be too dynamic, complex, and diversified, too cross-linked by the global immediacies of modern (quantum) communication, for stability of thought or dependability of behaviour to be successful”

(an American writer, psychologist, and futurist Timothy Leary, 'Chaos & Cyber Culture'). By tradition, the term 'mass media' in mass communication was associated with things like television, radio, or newspapers. Today, it is also applied to various communication channels and processes that occur via the formats like Internet and other emerging new media – cyberspace.

The latest reality coined such new terms and concepts as e-government, e-democracy, e-library, e-learning, spin doctors, teleworkers, cyberspace (William Gibson), etc. Cyberspace is a fact of our daily life. Because of its ubiquitous nature and vast scale and scope, cyberspace – including the Internet and the hundreds of millions of computers the Internet connects, the institutions that enable it, and the experiences it enables – has become a fundamental feature of the world we live in and has created a new reality for almost everyone in the developed world and for rapidly growing numbers of people in the developing world [Choucri 2012, 311].

With the revolutionary changes that ICTs are bringing to our global society, governments worldwide continue to develop more sophisticated ways to digitize its routines and practices so that they can offer the public access to government services in more effective and efficient ways. Across the world, 173 of 190 countries use the Internet to deliver government services.

These activities are broadly referred to as digital government, which is an "umbrella" term that comprises all uses of information and telecommunication technologies in the public sector" [Garson 2006, 18]. The term e-governance characterizes efforts to use ICTs for political purposes and the organization of political activity in a country. The day-to-day business of government is built on information. Information is a critical resource that helps to ensure the accountability of government, enables governments to manage its operations, and allows the public to participate in the governance of their country [Electronic Government <http://...>].

The objective of our investigation is to discuss the problem of mass media authoritative impact on political reality, as it shapes public opinion, lays the grounds of political beliefs and transforms the course of history. Now and again, referred to as the *fourth branch of government* in democratic countries, the media play a crucial role during elections and in times of crucial change. Therefore, politicians and political parties are particularly sensitive towards their media presence and the media coverage of their public appearances.

In democratic countries, the freedom of press is guaranteed by law. The rapport between politics and the mass media is narrowly linked to the debate about

freedom of speech. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, article 19 reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers" [The Universal Declaration <http://...>].

Noteworthy, in democratic societies, the mass media play a particularly important role, as it is a communication channel which ensures the exchange of opinions and points of view between the people in power and the general public. In liberal democracy, the media facilitates the public discourse, informs the public, represents the public and acts as 'a watchdog of the branches of government'. Analysts highlight the role of the media in the support of true democratic society. German intellectual Juergen Habermas defines the media as a space for public discourse, which must guarantee universal access and rational debate in a society.

As a watchdog in the political world, media has the task of censuring decision-makers in society. Journalists can fulfill this task only if they are independent [Balkin <http://...>]. Simultaneously, dependency on powerful structures and financial resources can handicap the media's ability to be an effective watchdog in political life. Although in democratic society, governments and political parties do not put direct pressure on the media, the competition and the free market rules create different restrictions for journalists and their employers.

International organizations also seek to guarantee freedom of speech worldwide. Reporters Without Borders (RWB) is a NGO, aiming at preventing repression and harassment of journalists, state monopoly and censorship in the media. RWB, set up in France in 1985, established the International Freedom of Expression Exchange, which is a virtual network of NGOs that is tasked to defend journalists and identify beaches of freedom of speech.

The dominant medium of political communication in our age – and henceforth the dominant medium of political transparency – is television. To comprehend how television fakes transparency, we must realize how television shapes the information we see. When we use television to understand politics, we see things in the way that television allows them to be seen.

At the same time, television creates new forms of political reality that exist because they are seen on television. Hence coverage of public events, politics, and even law must eventually conform to the requirements of 'good television,' that is,

the kind of television that grabs and keeps viewers' attention by absorbing and entertaining them [Balkin 1998].

In a very short time the Internet has become an important medium of political communication that rivals television. Consequently, the Internet has shaped and enhanced the effects of television in different ways: the Internet curtails the news reporting, it makes mass spreading and disseminating of information relatively inexpensive, and makes possible new journalistic sources that compete with television coverage, and new journalistic practices that may occasionally affect the form and content of television coverage and the standards of television journalists.

Nonetheless, it's a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Re-search uncovered consumers using the Internet as their preferred venue for the exchange of ideas. Specifically, every single user surf the Internet as a primary source of information about current situation and political issues, and every second one uses TV.

Online news also ranks the most helpful political information source, calling it extremely useful. "Americans don't trust traditional media - or politicians - to provide unbiased information, which is why they are now taking matters into their own hands, going online to conduct their research and participate in civic discussions with their neighbors," (Chris Tolles, CEO of Topixa – platform for local influence, connecting people to the information and discussions that matter to them in every U.S. town and city) [<http://www.businesswire.com>].

Social networks launched by media, politics professionals as a means to manage institutional knowledge, disseminate peer to peer knowledge and high-light recent events, an increasing number of citizens turning to each other (versus one-to-many sources such as traditional news outlets) for guidance on key issues. The advantage of using such social networking site is that all the actors' activities are revealed, reaching a broader audience with interested and passionate users.

Users benefit by interacting with a like-minded community and finding a channel for their energy and giving. Throughout 10 years, a lot has drastically changed, including technologies. Today it is difficult to imagine, but in 2004 V Kontakte [Russia's largest social network] and Twitter didn't exist – it remained two years before they would appear.

Facebook at that time was a closed social network for students of some American colleges. The real tools of mobilizing were mass media and classic propaganda instruments – handouts, newspapers and merchandise with political symbols.

If the 2004 Orange Revolution that stopped Viktor Yanukovich from taking power in a rigged presidential election was the SMS text revolution, the 2013-2014

Euromaidan Revolution that sought to topple him (President) from power could be described as the *YouTube, Facebook and Twitter revolution* - reflecting the evolution of technology and social media [<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>].

The bright disclosure of above-said postulate is the latest humanitarian disaster in Ukraine – called ‘Revolution of Dignity’ was basically made and supported owing to boldness, bravery and heroism of the Ukrainians and the cyberspace (the Internet, TV channels, blogs, social networks) support.

We can boil down to the idea that “today the relative freedom of Internet can create an alternative system of informing and mobilizing, which is just impossible to fight with traditional methods like repressions,” the Editor-in-Chief of the Dozhd opposition TV channel in his column for *Vedomosti* [<http://www.russia-direct.org>].

An outcrying YouTube video called “I am a Ukrainian” (Feb. 21.) adds to the growing collection of videos, personal testimonials, songs, cartoons and other messages designed to support the pro-democracy aspirations of Euromaidan demonstrations. A young Ukrainian is appealing to Europe to support the Ukrainians in their struggle for freedom, “which the Ukrainians have inside their hearts, their minds”, hence, they want Europe to help build the freedom in the whole of Ukraine [<http://www.kyivpost.com>]¹.

Hopes for a settlement of Ukraine’s three-month crisis are evaporating in what is potentially its most serious escalation yet amid scenes of rioting, burning buildings, and the firing of police rubber bullets in Kiev. According to the latest statistics (26.02.2014), up to 100 protesters are reported dead (*the Heavenly 100*) and more than 800 seriously injured, facing a crackdown.

The Maidan violence was some of the worst since a government-opposition confrontation erupted in November 2013, and came after President Viktor Yanukovich, the main target of the protests, stalled on outlines of an agreement to appoint a new technocratic coalition government or to have his powers cutback.

Interestingly, the word ‘Maidan’ exists in Ukrainian because of its special implications. In origin it is just the Arabic word for “square,” a public place. But a Maidan now means in Ukrainian what the Greek word ‘agora’ means in English: not just a marketplace where people happen to meet, but a place *where people deliberately meet, precisely in order to express their opinion, to create a politically fair society, and to fight justice*.

Namely, this happened when the goal of Ukraine’s aspirations for European integration was not achieved (The Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement wasn’t concluded by the then President V. Yanukovich) and a solution needed to be

found. Noteworthy, during the protests the word Maidan has come to mean ideology and the act of public politics itself, consequently, people who used their cars to organize public actions and protect other protestors called themselves the Auto-maidan.

Currently, Maidan Nezalezhnosti – in the center of Kyiv has played an important role in the history of independent Ukraine. But its role went far beyond that. In the late 1980s, when the Soviet Union was collapsing, *the first free press was available* there. In 1990, the ‘granite’ student revolution for de-communization and the establishment of an independent Ukrainian state took place there.

À propos, it was Victor Yushchenko who put Ukraine on the map in 2004 and it was Victor Yanukovich who made Ukraine known to the globe in 2013-2014.

Symbolically, in 2004 the victorious Orange Revolution broke out there, and stopped Victor Yanukovich taking up the office at that time. Euromaidan is the buzz now in the center of Kyiv and in all big cities and small towns of Ukraine like Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv, Lutsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Luhansk, Odessa and Vinnytsia. What is more important, *in its first stage, it was mainly a student movement*.

Significantly, after the ebb and flow of skirmish in the course of V.Yanukovich and his close circle’s decomposition, their ultimate dodging and ousting, the Ukrainian mainstream media has launched ‘fishing expedition’ in search of evidence to sue over the high-rank officials’ activities, calling for all and sundry’s lustration.

The object of discussion is that for many demonstrators the opposition parties are merely a slightly less bad section of the country’s corrupt establishment.

Yet tens of thousands turn out every Sunday and listen to the leaders of those parties, who meet with the authorities, and with Western diplomats.

The protesters deplore the existing political framework, but they are working within it: they control the politicians, not the other way round. True, but not necessarily comforting: violence broke out on January 19th, despite opposition leaders’ calls for truce. Shortly afterwards, the politicians ramped up rhetoric themselves with threats to “go on the attack” [Ukraine’s protestors’ <http://...>].

Let’s draw our attention to some of the bright examples of the Internet disclosure of the developing course of the events in Ukraine (Nov.30-Feb.26, 2014): I dare give the straight links to be hit and twittered by a distinguished reader:

Ukrainian President Viktor F. Yanukovich's decision not to sign a far-reaching political and free trade agreement with the European Union, combined with the resulting crackdown on the large-scale opposition protests in response to this decision, has fueled a growing international debate about the future of Ukraine.

Russian and Western media have focused on Russia's influence in Ukraine as well as the long-term geopolitical consequences for Kiev. While there is consensus that Yanukovich's stance is bound to affect his image in the West and might increase anti-Russian sentiment, they disagree on the root causes and consequences of the protests.

While Russian media are hesitant about calling for the ouster of the current Ukrainian authorities, their foreign counterparts appear more confident and decisive about the impeachment of the government and some even call for political sanctions. Besides, some of the Russian politicians consider that US wages out a proxy war with Russia in such a way.

EU will not hesitate on measures against interests of persons associated with repression and violence in Ukraine. - Carl Bildt (@carlbildt) February 18, 2014

@Vitaliy_Klychko pleads for international community to intervene and stop this unprecedented for modern Ukraine bloodshed #Euromaidan — Maxim Eristavi (@MaximEristavi) February 18, 2014

Contact in Kiev tells me Petro Poroshechko's opposition friendly Channel 5 is off air. The worst sign people have been waiting for months — Roland Oliphant (@RolandOliphant) February 18, 2014

Columns of riot police sought to banish crowds of protesters from encroaching on the country's parliament, while demonstrators also partially ransacked offices of Yanukovich's political party.

Kiev Now. Europe's second largest state sliding into civil war. - Ben Judah (@benjudah). The worst-case scenario, as envisaged by Ben Judah, author of *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell In And Out Of Love With Vladimir Putin*. February 18, 2014.

John Herbst, a former US ambassador to Ukraine, says that there are two ways in which the crisis can be resolved - either by a major crackdown or by the government offering "real concessions". My sense is that he (Yanukovich) does not want to give up real power.

He would like to retain all the authorities he currently enjoys until the presidential election of 2015. On the other hand, it's not clear that he has the forces to

conduct a real crackdown and he understands that even if he does, such a crackdown would be very unpopular throughout the country, including in places that normally support his party.

“Although the situation seems to be out of control and another “Orange Revolution” might take place, the Ukrainian authorities have already taken all measures to prevent it, according to Alexander Rahr, a German journalist who wrote for Russia’s Internet media outlet.

“It’s important that the Ukrainian President and the Interior Minister formally apologized for the crackdown [of the opposition protesters] and pledged to punish all those who dispersed the protesters on Nov. 30,” he wrote. “... [It] indicates the authorities respond to the events and show this to the protesters”.

At the same time, Rahr does not rule out another revolution in Ukraine. “It is not ruled out, if the authorities make grave mistakes and refuse a dialogue with protesters,” he wrote. “Now the authorities try to avoid further confrontation”.

Foreign Affairs magazine is also cautious about Ukraine’s future and the implications of its U-turn toward Russia. “If Ukraine doesn’t sign it [the Association Agreement with the EU], Yanukovich may have to fashion himself as an anti-Western autocrat with a political future bound to Russia... [Ukraine] will be thrown into a geopolitical no man’s land between an indifferent EU (and NATO) and a Russia eager for Ukraine’s inclusion in the Moscow-led Customs Union,” Alexander Motyl, *Foreign Affairs* author, warned long before the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius [Rozin <http://...>].

Given *The Economist’s* series of articles on Ukraine, the forecast of *Foreign Affairs* seems to have come true. *The Economist* makes no bones about its disappointment with Yanukovich’s choice. It sees his stance on the integration with the EU as a selfish move of “hijacking Ukrainians’ European future”.

“Unwilling to launch economic reforms, cut spending or tame the appetite of his cronies, Mr. Yanukovich proceeded to trade the country’s most valuable asset: Ukraine’s geopolitical position,” *The Economist* states in an article with the colorful title – “Stealing Their Dream”.

The magazine is even blunter in its attitude to the Ukrainian government’s crackdown of the opposition protests. “Never in its 22 years as an independent country has Ukraine seen such violence. It was a cowardly and treacherous act by a government that behaved like an occupying force in its own capital,” reads another article of *The Economist* called “Battle for Ukraine”.

Likewise, the magazine's editorial is very tough on the Ukrainian authorities, viewing Yanukovich's decision as "a choice made more in his own interests than in his country." "History is often shaped by courage, zeal and evil of titanic leaders," the editorial reads. "Less famously, it is sometimes swayed by the venality and self-interest of pygmies. That is frequently the case in the countries of the former Soviet Union, and seemed this week to be the tawdry fate of Ukraine".

Simultaneously, *The Economist* tries to look at the problem from another perspective. "Yet for all the dismay he [Yanukovich] caused, this might prove a better outcome than it looks – if the Europeans stick to their guns," the article reads, calling for imposing political and economic sanctions, threatening and enacting "severe penalties if he uses force against protesters. Travel bans and frozen banks accounts have proved effective weapons against post-Soviet kleptocrats".

Forbes's contributor Greg Satell argues that the Ukrainian political turmoil matters - and not just because of what it bodes for the future of Europe and "an increasingly desperate Vladimir Putin, but [also] because this is a story that will continue to resonate in the years to come".

"So keep an eye on how the events unfold in Ukraine, because it will be a bellwether for the years to come. The question being debated really isn't about "spheres of influence" or geopolitical chessboards, but whether we truly live in a global marketplace of ideas that transcends the selfish presumptions of an earlier age," the *Forbes* article reads.

The role of social networks was especially of interest to attempting to influence the opinion of the world public. Several Ukrainian websites and TV channels such as *Hromadske TV*, *Espresso TV*, *112.SAY.TV* set off to tap into the power of the social networking model for social good. Numerous citizen journalists - and anyone with a smart phone and video camera -- have been chronicling the demonstrations that began on Nov. 21, along with the violent - and thus far unsuccessful - police attempts to break up the protests.

LB.ua launched a special section for the convenience of foreign readers, in which one can read about the main events in Ukraine in English. Every day they prepare a brief summary of the latest news about the Ukrainian realities.

The response of the people was immediate: the Ukrainian protesters came in ever greater numbers; the financial, medical, provisional (food, tires, and wood) aid was arriving from every corner of Ukraine. Protesters reacted with a bloody counterattack, as well they

might have. They simply, and amazingly, built their barricades, stood their ground and said they would give their lives for their freedom.

At this point, the world began to react - finally. The Polish and German foreign ministers arrived to negotiate the transition that many people had wanted for weeks: a weakening of the Yanukovych's power and accelerated elections [Snyde Timothy <http://...>].

Canada, Poland, Lithuania, GB, US and other states, concerning about political nuisance in Ukraine, vigorously grasped the Ukrainian democratic choice. And some of the European officials might realize, If we [Europeans] don't understand the revolution in Ukraine, then we miss something special and unusual: a chance to support democracy. What is most important – Poland and Lithuania, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary had expressed willingness to treat wounded Ukrainians.

Regrettably, present-day news discloses another challenge to be faced by Ukraine; the dangers of separatism of pro-Russian crowds in the Crimea. Therefore, Ukraine's new leader has made a desperate plea for unity as experts warn Russia might annex the increasingly tense region of Crimea. Addressing the country's parliament, Mr. Turchynov stated he would meet law enforcement agencies to discuss the separatism threat amid fears over large ethnic Russian populations [<http://www.dailymail.co.uk>].

East-West divide in Ukraine was vigorously responded by a plethora of the Ukrainians, striving to prevent Crimean's secession from Ukraine and calling for all nations to work together to bring stability to Ukraine and preserving its territorial integrity [<http://en.interfax.com.ua>].

We can boil down to the conclusion that is not the end by far. The Ukrainians are to do above and beyond to regain peace, stability and the reign of 'the rule of law' in Ukraine as the one worthy, united, nation-identity-oriented European state.

To sum it up, we can state that the onset of the information age has revolutionized the relationship between politics and the media, between people and their rulers. In the new media environment, shaped by social networks and blogs, the general public is no longer a passive observer, but an active player.

The communication between politicians and public is much more direct through the use of free-to-air broadcasting, blogs and micro-blogging tools. The technological development has given rise to the emergence of citizen journalism,

also referred to as participatory or street journalism (teleworkers). This trend describes the active role of the public in the dissemination, analysis and collection of information. Without mass media, openness and accountability are impossible in contemporary democracies. Nevertheless, mass media can hinder political transparency as well as help it. Politicians and political operatives can simulate the political virtues of transparency through rhetorical and media manipulation.

Afore-done research enables us to understand that the main meaning of the Euro-revolution in Ukraine is held in 'people's heads' and is about a real, not just a declared, belief in freedom and justice. For these reasons we witnessed media events impact on the behaviour of world community and their respond to the ongoing processes. Well-planned media events can displace other forms of reporting that take greater time and effort to produce. Due to the fact that politicians, and especially presidents, increasingly govern through media events, news organisations are to feel an obligation to cover them. Media events, in short, both divert political attention and supplement political reality.

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STUDIES OF CYBERSPACE IMPACT ON THE UKRAINIAN REALITY (WORLD-WIDE ATTENTION FOCUS ON EUROMAIDAN)

Abstrakt. The body of the article goes on to discuss the problem of cyberspace authoritative impact on political reality, as it shapes public opinion, lays the grounds of political beliefs and transforms the course of history. Broadly speaking, reliable information is a critical resource that helps to ensure the accountability of a government, enables a government to manage its operations, and allows the public to participate in the governance of their country. In particular, the 2013-2014 Euromaidan 'Revolution of Dignity', seeking to topple the then President V.Yanukovich from power, could be described as the YouTube, Facebook and Twitter revolution - reflecting the evolution of technology and social media.

Key words: cyberspace, media manipulation, impact, government, public opinion, IT, Ukraine, Euromaidan, the Internet, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook revolution.

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