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POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET AS A NEW DIMENSION OF POLITICAL RIVARLY

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political communication, media, democracy, Internet, political rivalry

Introduction

In this article an author wanted to expose that the Internet become a new dimension of political rivalry. To defend this thesis the author described role of the Internet in modern politics. Almost every notion was defended by appropriate statistics not only nowadays but also from the past. Facts used in the publication were aggregated to emphasize progressing transfer political rivalry to the Internet. The main hypothesis of this article was to answer for the question: Is, or whether can be, the Internet a leading medium in political rivalry and how it can affect on the democracy? The analysis was based on modern and available studies and surveys.

Political communication yesterday and today

Political communication as an object of systematic researches has started to exist in the early twenties of the twentieth century. The most important reasons which decided about the growing importance of this realm were: (a) experiences associated with the usage of propaganda during the First World War; (b) practice of functioning of propaganda in totalitarian states; (c) belief that another armed conflict is inevitable, and thus it was necessary to

develop effective methods to influence potential opponents[1]. Almost immediately political scientists began to expose mass media character of political communication. This features were also characterized by Umberto Eco who argued that film is applicable in the modern society because: (a) type of an industrial society is apparently quite uniform, but in fact it is full of differences and contrasts; (b) there are channels of communication, which allow communiqué to get not only to certain groups, but also to an unlimited mass of consumers from different points in social structure; (c) there are groups of producers, creating and broadcasting a specific communiqué by industrial means[2].

In conclusion, it must be noted that with the development of modern organizations direct communication is being replaced by different forms of indirect communication, including television. The setup:

broadcaster→ communiqué→ recipient→ effect

was substituted by the following:

broadcaster→ communiqué→ channel→ recipient→ effect[3].

Up till now, the described mechanism of functioning was the most complete in the situation of usage of resources and possibilities offered by TV. Currently also the Internet begins to incorporate it. The Internet's position has evolved since the late nineties. To demonstrate the growing potential of the new medium, it is essential to indicate its evolutionary involvement in politics. The Internet, as a new medium, appeared quite recently, at the end of the 20th century. In the beginning, however, politicians did not detect advantages which can flow from this new dimension of political rivalry. Some good impe-

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[1] M. Kolczyński, *Strategie komunikowania politycznego,* Katowice 2008, p.16.
[2] U. Eco, *The Absent Structure (polish edition),* Warsaw 1996, p. 399.
[3] M. Kolczyński, J. Sztumski, *Zarys socjologii organizacji,* Katowice 2003, p. 87.

tus was given by A. Gore. P. Hallam- Baker, a former member of the CERN Web development, said that the vice president was the person who transferred all American administration to the Internet[4]. In 2000, in the primaries of the Democratic Party of Arizona, voters could cast their votes also on the Internet. The effect seems to be clear – as compared to the primaries in '96, the voter turnout increased by 600%. On the election day in the United States in '96, the CBS website was visited by about 10 million Internet users. In the U.S. presidential election in 2008, the Internet was one of the most important media. C. Delany even said that without the Internet, B. Obama would still be a young Senator of Illinois, who would almost certainly lose, not only with his Republican opponent, but also would be crushed by the ability of an experienced candidate, like H. Clinton, who could raise money from big donors and lock up endorsements from elected officials and party activists[5]. One of the clearest evidences that global influence of the Internet in politics is on the rise was presidential elections in South Korea in December 2002, where service OhmyNews (whose founder created, as the first, the term "citizen journalist") influenced the election result contributing to the electoral victory of R. M. Hyun. He rewarded the web portal by granting it the first interview after his election[6]. The words of V. Creft, Founder of the Internet Society, seem to be a good conclusion: *If you want to know how the world would look in the 21st century, you should ask a member of the Internet community. He has already*

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[4] S. Rosenberg, *Did Gore invent the Internet?,*
 http://www.salon.com/2000/10/05/gore_internet/, 5.10.2000.
[5] The numbers speak for themselves: at Obama's own socknet, MyBO, 2 m profiles were created, 200.000 offline events were planned, 400.000 blog posts were written, 35.000 volunteer groups were created, people raised also 30 m $ for election purposes. Vide etiam, C. Delany, *Learning from Obama: Lessons for Online Communicators in 2009 and Beyond*, http://www.epolitics.com/learning-from-obama/, 8.08.2009.
[6] The leitmotif of the Ohmy News is: "Each citizen is a journalist". Currently only 20% of the articles is created by the editorial team amounting to 55 people. The biggest number is created by "citizen- journalists". The Ohry News claims that the overall number of them is 41 thousand. Authors of the best articles are rewarded 50 USD.

been living in these times[7]. Popularity of this medium seems to be steadily growing. It is advisable to interpret the results of researches carried out in '98 by E. C. Kamarck from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in a similar way. The researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis of the websites of candidates for governors and senators. The analysis included 34 electioneering to the Senate and governor elections in 36 states. The following data were obtained:

- 44% competing for the office of governor were active on the Internet, including 92% pretenders;
- among competing in the primaries for the office of governor, 35% of the candidates were active on the Internet;
- among independent and minority candidates in the election for governor 37% had websites.

E. C. Kamarck argued that due to fierce competition, a potential candidate cannot ignore any medium in the communication process between him and the voters. The scientist suggests that a low rate of private websites among the politicians was linked with the fact that those politicians had governor's and senator's official websites[8].

Similar studies conducted M. Cornfield from George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management. After reviewing 907 electioneering, the researcher gave the following conclusions:

- in 81% cases of acute rivalry (two candidates) in gubernatorial and senatorial elections, both competitors had their own websites;
- in the gubernatorial elections, 94% of candidates had private websites;

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[7] [after:] K. Głomb, J. Supel, G. Wiatr, *Internet w gminie. Poradnik dla wójta i burmistrza*, Warszawa 1998, p. 5.

[8] T. Zasępa, *Internet. Fenomen społeczeństwa informacyjnego*, Częstochowa 2001, p. 423.

• in the elections to the Senate 82% of candidates had their websites[9].

In this moment it is important to show that the Internet and web 2.0[10] sites are treated as a new dimension of political rivalry. It is said that web2.0 has changed the paradigm of interaction it the Internet. Currently users are creating contents what means that in politics voters can construct political ideas and transfer them to their representatives. Researchers were analyzing electoral web production practices in cross-national perspective. They said that the political actors in various countries are more likely to model their sites on those produced by similar political actors from other countries rather than modelling them on sites produced by other types of political actors within their own country[11]. It clearly shows that politicians in different countries treat Internet as a new dimension of political rivalry. They understand that they can't be similar to their opponents that why they are looking for some new patterns abroad. They also see advantages of using this medium in political rivalry, that's why they try to find other possibilities to contact with voters. It is important, however, to emphasize that the Internet communication can be a new dimension majorly among young people. Pew Research showed that B. Obama won 60% of the vote among those younger than 30[12].

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[9] Ibidem, p. 423.

[10] T. O'Reilly coined 7 the most important features of web 2.0: 1. free classification of information; 2. rich user experience; 3. user as a contributor; 4. long tail (what means lasting relationship between supplier, which can be e.g. deputy, and customer; 5. user participation; 6. basic trust (contents are available to reuse and share); 7.dispersion. See more, T O'Reilly, *7 key features of web 2.0, http://webapprater.com/general/7-key-features-of-web-2-0.html*, 29.06.2010.

[11] K. Foot, M. Xenos, S. Schneider, R. Kluvet, N. Jankowski, *Electoral web production practices in cross-national perspective: relative influence of national development, political culture, and web genre* [in:] A. Chadwick, P. Howard, *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics,* Abingdon 2009, p. 53.

[12] http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/26/young-voters-supported-obama-less-but-may-have-mattered-more/, 15.03.2014.

It is reasonable to ask about the phenomenon of a new communication channel and indicate its most important features. The most important features which decided that the Internet has gained its importance are:

1. Popularization – a tool available only to a small social groups is not able to cause a mass effect and thereby have an influence on policy making processes. The Internet has become a tool widely available;

2. Attractiveness – development of socknets, blogs, websites attracting attention of Internet users made mass access, as mentioned in point 1., concentrated in certain areas, which later evolved into a kind of opinion formers;

3. Effectiveness – Internet development made it attractive also for corporations. New communication channel enables creating websites, which is crucial in fast and comfortable familiarizing with the offer and making purchases, often at more favourable prices. An additional aspect is the possibility of buying advertising space in the most popular places on the Internet[13];

4. Speed and elimination of barriers – the development of the Internet in different places of the world modified existing classic concepts of borders and distance. Currently, an official statement in Poland can be quickly interpreted and transferred for example not only by a foreign correspondent to his country, but also to every country in the world. Quoting B. Barber, today's methods of communication have been changing our planet into a city connected to a common network, inhabited by potential neighbours[14].

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[13] P. Kotler, *Marketing Management (polish edition),* Poznan 2005, p. 35.

[14] A. Tomaszczyk, *Internet – nowa jakość komunikowania* [in:] I. Hofman, D. Kępa-Figura (ed.), *Współczesne media. Status, aksjologia, funkcjonowanie,* Lublin 2009, Volume II, p. 317.

The Internet, as a tool for communication, is a perfect picture of a new media. Its fairly strong point is the possibility of wide use of multimedia techniques, i.e. technical utensils affecting human senses. By means of involving different human senses, process of communication is greatly simplified. What is more, an influence of this process on the recipient is much more multiplied[15]. In addition, the Internet provides interactive communication, which is impossible in classic mass media. It gives an opportunity to establish contacts between a voter and a politician. Moreover, a variety of technical possibilities give the citizen an opportunity not only to express their own views, but also to do it in the most appropriate and convenient way, using for example text, graphics, animation, sound[16]. Additionally, Internet users are able to participate in a public debate from freely selected place, without any necessity to adjust to stressful etiquette associated with presence in a recording studio. The Internet also allows to ignore some linguistic correctness, which can be required by a particular broadcaster in case of television or radio. In addition, social media allow potential users to group themselves around some idea, ignoring traditionally perceived borders and barriers, which can support, in some cases, creation of a group which would be capable of lobbying for an idea. These features indicate that on the Internet each user is able to create his own image.

The Internet features, which were pointed out above, construct a new dimension of a political competition, which seems to correspond, in the author's view, with a liberal democracy paradigm of J. Habermas who perceived the public sphere as a space of mediation between state and society. He regarded it as a basic condition of existence of a liberal democracy. The phe-

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[15] J. Adamczyk, M. Gębarowski, M. Kandefer, *Internet na usługach marketingu,* Rzeszów 2004, p. 144.

[16] J. Biniewicz, *Nowa (?) Przestrzeń dyskursu politycznego (pragmatyka, struktura, język)* [in:] M. Jeziński (ed.), *Nowe media w systemie komunikowania: polityka*, Toruń 2011, p. 6-7.

nomenon of a public opinion is possible when individuals gather for a conversation, creating an audience and negotiating in public issues in an unaffected manner[17]. At first a place of such meetings were cafés and salons of Paris and London. However, later it was necessary to institute mass media. It seems that the Internet, with its technological capabilities, gives humanity an opportunity to return to the idea of J. Habermas, maybe not entirely, but to a large extent[18]. It will be possible only through free will of individuals and their communicating awareness. In a similar way L. Zacher's notion can be understood, who said that cyberspace is an opportunity for people to empower, organize and inform. Moreover, this space seems to be uncontrolled by political or business actors, which means that the space is autonomous. It is derivative of universality, cheapness, speed and availability that distinguishes the Internet[19]. The most important advantage of the Internet is principles of communicating strategies and possibility of fast response – impossible for TV or radio and unavailable for an ordinary citizen. R. Maćkowska indicates that it is an excellent tool in emergencies because it reduces the response time. In addition, it is possible to construct a precise, tightly targeted message, which prevents its reinterpretation[20]. Another advantage, associated with attributes which were

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[17] J. Jastrzębski, *Media i sfera publiczna* [in:] M. du Vall, A. Walecka-Rynduch (ed.), *>>Stare<< i >>nowe<< media w kontekście kampanii politycznych i sprawowania władzy*, Kraków 2010, p.13.

[18] It seems important that media's critique is on the rise. Butsch, basing on numerous researches, claimed that nowadays media are as dangerous for public opinion as the state is. They perceive an anonymous citizen in a commercial way. The most important goal for them is profit. Such an approach makes public discussion impossible. Vide etiam, R. Butsch, *Media and public spheres*,
 http://www.rider.edu/files/butsch_media_public_spheres.pdf, *13.11.2006.*

[19] L. Zacher, *Ideologia, polityka, władza a współczesna technika (wzajemne uwarunkowania i oddziaływania).* [in:] J. Golinowski, A. Laska (ed.), *Odsłony współczesnej polityki*, Bydgoszcz 2012, p. 18.

[20][after:] B. Brodzińska-Mirowska, *Internet w komunikowaniu politycznym* [in:] M. Jeziński, A. Seklecka, Ł. Wojtkowski (ed.), *Nowe media we współczesnym społeczeństwie*, Toruń 2011, p. 208.

mentioned above, is the possibility of conducting permanent promotional campaign combined with a constant interaction with the constituency. The possibility of creating up-to-date communicating process supports politicians in building relationships between them and their potential voters based on dialogue and trust[21]. It is associated with the process of creating interactive political message, the purpose of which is: (a) building relationships with voters based on dialogue; (b) mobilizing and encouraging political commitment; (c) systematic and reliable informing about undertaking political activities; (d) facilitating debate on the most important social and political issues through the Internet (chats, blogs, forums, interviews) and enlargement of the sense of participating in important discussions; (e) thoughtful usage of information technology (Facebook, Tweeter, newsletters, e-mails, designed web pages)[22]. An author's analysis of Ukrainian conflict shows that communication "over borders" is gaining more and more followers and supporters. At a bolg "War In Images", which authors have been publishing their films at YouTube, everyone can see material called "Ukraine-Kiev Maidan square the heart of the revolution" which was visited by 272 121 people[23]. Another, very drastic, film collected 56 192 people[24]. As it is shown currently, all of them are commenting and demanding some steps against the aggression. What is important, in author's opinion, this wide open communicating channel helped to change power elites at Ukraine[25]. As research shows, as well as the previously cited Obama's casus, the Internet becomes a tool which enables absorption of funds

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[21] This rule is widespread in free market relationships. See also: A. Mac, *E-przyjaciele. Zobacz, co media społecznościowe mogą zrobić dla Twojej firmy*, Gliwice 2010, p. 9-10.

[22] B. Brodzińska- Mirowska, *op. cit.,* p. 213-214.

[23] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmDqqZZceX0, 15.03.2014.

[24] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZUBbL-E184, 15.03.2014.

[25] The Arab spring had the same sources as well. In the document *How FaceBook Changed The World The Arab Spring,* everyone can see a unique photos and meet real people, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnPR90dJ3Gk, 15.03.2014.

for political purposes. The Pew Research Agency shows that in the American campaign of 2008, 9% of the Internet users supported materially, using an online method, one or more candidates, while 6% of total amount of users declared themselves as volunteers during the election campaign[26]. To conclude this part of the discussion, the Internet is characterized by ubiquity, multi-faceted deconcentration and flexibility[27]. Synonymous qualities are attributable to the political communication on the Internet with a very important assumption: a potential user must have the appropriate knowledge and skills to use all these possibilities. Who will be able to use the Internet more effectively, should in consequence gain greater social legitimacy or greater possibilities for action, e.g. in the form of raised funds or the multitude of willing collaborators. The Internet seems to have another advantage in comparison to the radio and TV. These two, up till recently the most popular tools, seem to be one-dimensional. The message, which was constructed, even though it was changing in conjunction with overall needs of the electorate, was based on a similar template. For example, in a newspaper every reader could find photographs documenting an event and various types of description of reality, such as essay or report etc. Television, in addition to these types, opened opportunities for creators of election spots, political ads, or information services. The Internet as a medium contains all of those possibilities additionally extending the offer with the possibility of individual participation of each person in the process of creating and sharing messages. It is an unprecedented multidimensionality. Except for encompassing in a single tool all mentioned above available instru-

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[26] A. Smith, *The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008*,
April 2009, s. 39,
http://web.pewinternet.org/~/media/Files/Reports/2009/The_Internets_Role_in_Campaign_2008.pdf, 15.03.2014.
[27] M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society:The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. I* [Polish Edition], Warsaw 2008, p. 361.

ments, the Internet, because of its availability for users, creates possibility to change the typical arrangement of forces which traditional media classified as the "fourth power". In this context, a blog[28] seems to be an interesting communication channel. It can be assumed that a journalist and a blogger have many features in common, but among them there are some fundamental differences. The first of these is the fact that the blogger does not need to accept a rigid framework for the creation of new materials – he can weekly write e.g. fives articles or nothing. Freedom in creativity can affect the quality of his products, because there is no time pressure. The second one is that the blogger is not constrained by specific theme frames – he can write about freely selected issues. It does not, however, necessarily translate into objectivity. It is important, however, to emphasize that the pattern, which was already sketched, was more suitable to the end of XX century. Nowadays, the blog's sphere is much more professionalized. For example The Huffington Post.

H. Kurtz presented in his article fact and figures associated with the portal. This group blog started in 2005, after only two years it had 3,5 million visitors per month[29]. Amount impossible to reach for many professional newspapers. A. Huffington, founder of the portal, said that she recruited over 1 000 volunteers for a related blog. The Huffington Post runs 70 to 80 posts a day, most of the authors are not famous journalists[30]. The blog has become a "road map" of what works on the Web. To underline that Internet and it's possibilities are new dimension in policy the author want to emphasize that in 2009 Forbes

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[28] It's important to emphasize that blog is not only some kind of an Internet diary. It is a wrap in which user can place various materials. See also: P. Kołodziejczyk, *Blog jako instrument komunikowania politycznego, czyli raport z sejmowej blogosfery.* [in:] M. Kolczyński, M. Mazur, S. Michalczyk, *Mediatyzacja kampanii politycznych*, Katowice 2009, p. 267-268.

[29] H. Kurtz, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/08/AR2007070801213_2.html, 15.03.2014.

[30] Ibidem, p.2.

Magazine described A. Huffington as 12 the most influential women in media, what can be possibly true because of hostile attitude to her flowing from some politicians. Such a powerful tool can't be ignored by politicians. What is more, the most creative of them can try not only to write some kind of Internet's diary but also to construct more compound device which can be used to conducting permanent campaign, building ideological front and even initiating some local ideas for example creating football club, cooperative for socially excluded. Some good example can be Great Britain ability to mix "old" and "new" media tools. D. Cameron created his own video blog, Webcameron. The predominance of television and old-style direct marketing, and its benefits for targeting undecided voters in key marginals, are shaping the adoption of the Internet campaigning[31]. This example clearly shows that the Internet engrosses bigger influence in politics, however "old" media, especially TV, have still an hegemonic position. A. Chadwick, who was analyzing British communicating patterns, showed that the Internet don't have dominant position but it has been influencing on traditional mass media[32].

The increasing role and importance of blogs also notes K. Wolny-Zmorzyński. He indicates that "the citizen journalism" is being developed by amateur journalists in the public interest[33]. The advantage of that kind is an ability to co-create interactive content by each user, mass distribution and virtual collaboration of journalists from around the world. D. Gillmor, an American journalist and supporter of blogging, described information websites cre-

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[31] A. Chadwick, N. Anstead, *Parties, election campaigning and the internet: toward a comparative institutional approach,* [in:] A. Chadwick, P. Howard, *Routledge Handbook of Internet Politics,* Abingdon 2009, p. 71.

[32] A. Chadwick, *The Political Information in a hybrid News System: The British Prime Minister and the "Bullygate" Affair, "*International Journal of Press/Politics", No. 1, vol. 16, January 2011.

[33] K. Wolny-Zmorzyński, *Gatunki dziennikarskie na przełomie XX i XXI wieku – próba charakterystyki* [in:] I. Hofman, D. Kępa-Figura (ed.), *Współczesne media. Status, aksjologia, funkcjonowanie*, Lublin 2009, Volume I, p. 357.

ated by amateurs as the "fifth power", which is able to control not only state authorities but also the traditional "fourth power", when it entangles in informal arrangements with the world of politics or business[34]. An interesting example is a digital platform, which is a hybrid of TV and the Internet, where the second one is a stimulus. It is possible, for example, to create political debates in which users are active participants on the Internet, or construct information programs, in which materials and information are contributed by the audience. The role of a moderator plays in both cases a professional journalist who selects participants of the debate and chooses information. The above remark shows that not only politicians, but also media recognize the potential benefits of the usage of the Internet.

All these qualities are undeniable advantages, but it is also essential to consider a possibility of implementation of those features. So far, very important cultural context was ignored. The described cases were mostly connected with the United States. This country is, however, a vanguard of communication in the world. Some commonly used solutions may be impossible to implement in other countries, or may require more time for their introduction. It is confirmed by M. Castells who stated that the rest of the world lagged behind North America and developed countries. Significant is the issue who and what had earlier access to the Internet, because consumers of contents are also producers. It means that an unequal time to enter the constellation of the Internet of different societies will have lasting consequences for the future of the world model of communication and culture[35]. M. Faracik-Nowak rightly said that in the Polish reality the potential of social media is not used due to

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[34] L. Olszański, *Dziennikarstwo internetowe*, Warszawa 2006, p. 51. J. Zieliński said that on the Internet politicians, journalists and ordinarily users have the same chances. It creates new motivations of participation in a public life. See also: J. Zieliński, *Marketing polityczny w Internecie*, Toruń 2013, p. 26.
[35] M. Castells, *op. cit.* p. 353-359.

the lack of knowledge, a low degree of socio-political consciousness of Poles, and a general aversion to the politics[36]. It is also inappropriate to overlook lobbying for the Internet technologies by large corporations in the U.S. which probably also had its impact on the popularity of this medium among the public[37]. All these observations seem to indicate that the advantages of political communication are relative and depend on the circumstances.

All those points do not exhaust possibilities that entail the use of the Internet or reasons for the fact that its popularity has increased dramatically within a few years. The author described only the most essential components, which caused that the innovative technology could not stay in a political emptiness. It should be noted that the Internet exposes its greatest potential in democratic countries. Such a point of view seems to fully correspond with an opinion of A. Bogdał-Brzezińska: *The idea of a global network is inextricably linked with the concepts of democracy. The idea was to create a place of free exchange of ideas, research results, non-commercial promotion of development*[38]. In this context, it is advisable to consider whether technological solutions, associated with the Internet, and all described characteristics of political communication on the Internet can be transferred into an environment system, for example by putting into practice the postulate of the direct democracy, and whether they are necessary and appropriate.

Teledemocracy - a renaissance of democracy?

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[36] M. Faracik-Nowak, *Kampanie wyborcze w dobie mediów społecznościowych.* [in:] M. Kolczyński (ed.), *Współczesne kampanie wyborcze w Polsce: koncepcje, dylematy i praktyka komunikowania politycznego*, Katowice 2013, p.20.

[37] In 1998 Microsoft Corporation spent on it 574 099 dollars. Other lobbyists: Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers – about 320 thousand dollars, EDS and Oracle – 280 thousand dollars. What is more, real investments in IT technologies (without telecommunication) between 1995- were doubled from 243 to 510 milliard dollars. See also: T. Zasępa, *op. cit.* p. 410., T. Zasępa, *Internet i nowe technologie – ku społeczeństwu przyszłości*, Częstochowa 2003, p. 421.

[38] P. Maj, *Internet i demokracja. Ewolucja systemu politycznego,* Rzeszów 2009, p. 25.

The most popular theoretical assumptions that relate to the concept of teledemocracy were created by M. Hagen. He pointed out that new technologies can combine time and space and be an impetus for creation of forms of political participation on an unimaginable scale. He added, moreover, that traditional forms of democracy seem not to be good enough in the age of information, so new technologies can be useful for local governments to cater for the needs of individuals[39]. This example is of course optimistic, however, is it possible not only to cater for the needs of citizens, but also to give them more authority?

In classical option, a traditional instrument of direct democracy is the institution of referendum. In the twenty-first century such a form of participation cannot exist due to a large surface area of modern countries. The exception on the political map is Switzerland[40]. However, it seems, that the present form, combined with IT technologies could exist on a mass scale leading to a full civic participation.

The common practice shows a skeptical refer to such demands. The main problem is the shortage of so-called "cognitive proficiency". J. A. Schumpeter pointed out that citizens do not recognize their incompetence in terms of knowledge on public issues, which results in stereotypical and associative decision-making process[41]. It should also be noted that the practice of Swiss model of democracy is not a remedy for all evils, but a concept that also has its weaknesses. W. Linder points out three main drawbacks: first, the possibility of buying voting results. Propaganda, preceding election, leads directly to the

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[39] M. Hagen, *A typology of Electronic Democracy*, http://www.martin-hagen.net/pub/typology.html, March 1997.

[40] See also: M. Musiał- Karg, *Instytucje demokracji bezpośredniej i partycypacja wyborcza w Szwajcarii.* [in:] A. Stlemach (ed.), *Czy upadek demokracji? Wymiar praktyczny*, Poznań 2007, p. 12-13.

[41] J.A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy,* New York 1950, p. 262.

imbalance "one person=one vote" by the introduction of uneven distribution of the power of money. Secondly, the general lack of public interest in an overall spectrum of public affairs seems to mean that an unlimited broadening of the scope of issues covered in the referendum makes no sense. Thirdly, globalization has systematically led to the exacerbation of political contrasts, such as between the city and rural areas or between employers and employees. It suggest a return to Maddison's concept, according to which the power elite must take responsibility of political process and lead it to unification of society and resist political populism from which electing people are often not free. At this point, it is important to emphasize the role of political parties. R. Herbut indicates that political parties act as an effective organizer of collective action[42]. It is a way of relieving citizens of too big amount of public affairs, which need to be sorted out by the state, as well as a specific mechanism which transforms a wide stream of different preferences into one decision.

It is also essential to raise A. Giddens' opinion who stated that the nature of modern institutions is closely related to mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, and especially trust in expert systems. The researcher indicates that the majority of people trust practices and social mechanisms, however the same people do not have any knowledge about it. Confidence in the system adopts form of anonymous commitments that sustain faith in knowledge largely inaccessible to a layman[43]. It creates a real threat of manipulation. Full anastomosis methods and techniques from sphere of political communication, with possibilities offered by the Internet, as well as replacing the representative democracy by direct participation, may pave a path of evolution difficult to determine, which also entails effects of impact on the system policy that are difficult to predict as a whole. It is due to the fact that both the Internet and

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[42] R. Herbut, *Teoria i praktyka funkcjonowania partii politycznych*, Wrocław 2002, p. 56.

[43] A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity (polish edition)*, Cracow 2008, p. 57-63.

political communication are developing very rapidly, and what is the most important, they have a high potential for progression. For this reason, it is difficult to indicate in which way this marriage will go and whether or not it will be a threat to democracy. Dangerous vision, which is currently indicated, is the development of the concept of virtual reality. This concept was defined for purposes of the social sciences by J. Steurer, who indicated that it is a real or simulated environment in which the viewer experiences telepresence, it means the presence of medium, mediated and simulated by the communication, which he uses[44]. Referring to L. Zacher's statement that since the beginning of human civilization the strength belonged to people who had the most powerful technique available[45], it is advisable to go back to G. Orwell's novel "1984" and, slightly extending and reinterpreting the vision of the English writer, demonstrate that the Internet after its subjugation by a specific group of people can become an instrument to control and enslave minds, making its great advantage, which is the possibility of constructing a separate announcement, the biggest threat consisting in alienation of individuals and their mental enslavement. The author of this publication is aware of the far-sightedness of his vision. He wants to emphasize that the development of specific communication tools is a kind of double-edged weapon. On the one hand, it is a convenient way of interaction between the electorate and politicians, on the other hand an opportunity for demagogues and populists to gain support and make losses in the system of political, economic and social state. The classic maxim of Cicero, *Historiam nescire hoc est semper esse puerum* is relevant at any time. J. Goebbels skillfully steered the image of both Adolf Hitler and the en-

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[44] See also: D. Mider, *Partycypacja polityczna w Internecie. Studium politologiczne,* Warszawa 2008, p. 348. See also: in a similar context, schedule of a game "Second Life", A. Mokrysz-Olszyńska, B. Targański, *Uwarunkowania prawne marketingu w społeczeństwie informacyjnym. Zagadnienia wybrane*, Warszawa 2012, p. 25-26.

[45] L. Zacher, *op. cit.*, s. 13.

tire state apparatus. Indirectly it contributed to the tragedy on a global scale. The imbalance of knowledge and means of communication at the same time creates danger and temptation to exploit the political system for one's own benefit. The sum up, all these characteristics of political communication on the Internet, along with big differentiation of knowledge and resources can lead to chaos and violation of stabilization of a parliamentary system, power state or in the extreme case - of transnational organizations. As A. Toffler said, *advantage of information or advantage in knowledge in the field can determine the fate of the war*[46]. A good example was a Dutch hacker's attack on the U.S. Department of Defense. Data from 34 computers were stolen. They contained information about Patriot missile capabilities, movements of the U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf region, as well as the movements of the U.S. military units. Hackers tried to sell those information to S. Hussein for million dollars. The dictator, however, treated the offer as a CIA trap and rejected it[47].

It is no wonder that M. McLuhan sees the process of introducing multimedia media as *powerful collective surgery carried out on the body of society without microbicides*[48]. W. Gogołek states that physical and information security will be a major part of the price to be paid by "networked" civilization[49].

The Internet seems to be an alternate reality. In the era of global turbulences, when an uncertainty about the future is a normality, prospects for personal development are more and more unstable and longing for self-realization and success seems to be even greater. The ability to create one's own image, or even an alternate reality, not corresponding with hard realities,

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[46] A. Toffler, H. Toffler, *War & Anti-War In 21St Century: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*? [Polish Ediotion], Poznan 2006, p. 184.

[47] A. Bógdał-Brzezińska, M. Gawrycki, *Cyberterroryzm i problemy bezpieczeństwa informacyjnego we współczesnym świecie*, Warszawa 2003, p. 78-79.

[48] W. Gogołek, *Technologie informacyjne mediów,* Warszawa 2006, p. 298.

[49] *Ibidem*, p. 298.

becomes very desirable. A. Augustynek points at the analogy that exists between the addiction to psychoactive substances, and addiction to the Internet. Furthermore, the researcher cites studies, whose conclusions are not optimistic. Particularly vulnerable to the Internet addiction are people affected by the syndrome of "reward deficiency". It concerns up to 25% of the human population. People suffering from this disease do not experience pleasure in everyday life. The reality seems cruel and unjust to them. Therefore, they try to escape to another, better world, such as a virtual one, or to the sphere of dreams[50]. C. Stoll appropriately shows that the Internet creates special freedom: "freedom to". Although, releasing of the computer the Internet user experiences different kind of freedom: "freedom from"[51]. Is it possible to spot it when a man is deeply immersed in a cyber reality?

Today at online auctions everyone can buy virtual points necessary to improve one's own figure in an online game. Of course, the transaction is executed in a currency from a real world. It seems that there is hidden the biggest threat of an online political communication. Would, in the extreme version, a vast number of people not be willing to replace their political rights for a better virtual reality?

Summary

The Internet is quite new dimension of political rivalry. Based on previously mentioned facts and figures the author thinks that this medium can be very profitable and tempting for politicians. They are able to gain electoral support using microblogs, creating new initiatives using social media channels,

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[50] A. Augustynek, *Uzależnienia komputerowe. Diagnoza, rozpowszechnienie, terapia*, Warszawa 2010, p. 59-62. Vide etiam, A. Andrzejewska, J. Bednarek, *Cyber świat. Możliwości i zagrożenia*, Warszawa 2009, p. 189-195.

[51] C. Stoll, *Silicon Snake Oil (polish edition)*, Poznan 2000, p. 172.

trying to raise funds (especially in the U.S.), conducting permanent interactive campaign. However they should remember that the Internet can not only build up their position but also destroy it.

The IT technologies has come to politics' world. This change can't be returned. The political party crisis and democracy crisis can be put back because of the web2.0 and other possibilities. Although, there must be a full co-operative between voters and politicians to build up a better tomorrow. All in all, even if the Internet is constantly less popular than TV, it would be irresponsible to ignore this medium.

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Abstract

In the article the most important characteristics of the Internet communication were exposed, seen not only from perspective of political actors, but also from voters' perspective. Emerging possibilities of the new medium were exposed in comparison to the radio, television and press. It helped to emphasize a new dimension of political competition. This procedure allowed to indicate an increasing role of the Internet in politics. Everything was supported by appropriate empirical data, conclusions of research and practical examples. The author of the article, at the same time, made an attempt to identify the impact that the communication channel could have on the democratic system. Special attention was paid to classic issue, focusing on the possibility and the need for implementation of the ideals of direct democracy. In this context, the author exposed some potential dangers that the Internet, considered as a tool, can carry.

KOMUNIKOWANIE POLITYCZNE W INTERNECIE JAKO NOWY WYMIAR RYWALIZACJI POLITYCZNEJ

Abstrakt

W artykule wyeksponowane zostały najistotniejsze, zdaniem autora, cechy komunikacyjne Internetu, widziane zarówno z perspektywy aktorów sceny politycznej, jak również wyborców. Powstające możliwości nowego medium przedstawiono na tle radia, telewizji i prasy, dzięki czemu podkreślony również został nowy wymiar rywalizacji politycznej. Taki zabieg umożliwił wskazanie, poparte praktycznymi przykładami, wzrastającej roli Internetu w świecie polityki, co zostało dodatkowo podbudowane stosownymi danymi empirycznymi i wnioskami badaczy. Autor publikacji podjął jednocześnie próbę wskazania wpływu, jaki omawiany środek komunikacyjny może mieć na system demokratyczny. Szczególną uwagą objęta została klasyczna problematyka, koncentrująca się tak na możliwościach, jak i potrzebie coraz pełniejszego wprowadzania w życie ideałów demokracji bezpośredniej. W tym kontekście nie zabrakło również rozważań mających na celu ukazanie potencjalnych zagrożeń, które Internet, traktowany jako narzędzie, może nieść w stosunku do jednostki.