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ПРОГНОСТИЧНА ФУНКЦІЯ АУДІОВІЗУАЛЬНОГО МЕДІА В АНАЛІЗІ МІЖНАРОДНОЇ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ

У статті викладено оригінальне дослідження аналізу аспектів міжнародної політичної комунікації за допомогою прогностичної функції аудіовізуального медіа. Розглядається певна, малодосліджена ефективність творчих підходів та "артистичного фільтру" у царині міжнародних політичних досліджень. Підкреслено проблеми та переваги використання художніх аудіовізуальних творів у якості додаткових емпіричних джерел у дослідженні міжнародних політичних процесів.

Ключові слова: *міжнародна політична комунікація, аудіовізуальні медіа, універсальний код кінематографу, дослідження політичної комунікації, емпіричні джерела, політичні дослідження.*

Prognostic function of audiovisual media in the analyses of international political communication

The article dwells upon the original research on the subject of analyses of aspects of international political communication employing the prognostic function of audiovisual media. Shown is certain, lesser-studied effectiveness of creative approaches and «artistic filter» in the field of international political studies. Underlined are the problems and advantages of the use of narrative fiction audiovisual works as additional empirical sources in the research of international political processes.

Keywords: *international political communication, audiovisual media, universal code of movie, political communication studies, empirical sources, political studies.*

The studies of specific aspects and objects of influence in political international communications are not as common as they logically should be

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considering that modern day globalized world brings even most specific situations to a brand new global level. Such studies are caught in the state of constant transformation, influenced by great changes of processes of communication (mainly due to technological advancements), which does not make things easier for a researcher in the field, who already encounters certain ambiguity as to what exactly should be researched. Introduction of Internet to larger areas of consumer-level use made previous studies of international political communication, if not purely retrospective then greatly restricted in their representation. Combined with the fact that audiovisual media is underresearched on its own we are greeted with an unfortunate situation: specific aspect severely understudied, but whole area is in need of newer approaches and could use more then a few larger researches to provide for a new model.

Audiovisual media never really caught the eye of political studies in international relations: merely researched as a result of international political communication, sometimes as an additional empirical source aiding scarce literature on the topic. Its logical maximum is often regarded as little less then a figment of "soft power", a larger, well-researched concept in which audiovisual media as a separate object of research effectively drowns, never quite giving a chance to shine as a topic on its own, despite in our opinion it is very much deserves attention in that respect. Subject of audiovisual media appears to be severely underresearched from the perspective of political studies. Sometimes researched in relation to "soft power", situation becomes especially blurred when it comes to movies and larger influence of cinema on a global political scale. The fact that movies become an elusive term prone to diffusion in the larger post-modernist and chaotic conglomerate known as "popular culture" is not really helping. Influence of audiovisual media is rarely linked to movies, especially works of fiction. It is not known, whether area of research appears fruitless to political studies or just underwhelming in terms of application, considering how complicated area is with artifacts of other disciplines: at this point in time, for example, it seems largely impossible not to use elements of cultural studies in research, which affects it.

The situation in the globalized world calls for inclusive researches, which might provide new aspects to the analyses of the ever-changing landscape of international politics. Such landscape nowadays changes in the most rapid ways due to how overwhelmingly influential Internet proved to be as both instrument and an autonomous factor of global politics. For some-

thing that largely exists on a global scale since 1990's (while it began in 1980's with origins that could be traced way back to 1960's, the network only became truly world-wide overtime). Internet already became as influential as every medium before it and provided for even more changes with the widespread of 2000's and early 2010's which also included significant expansion of streaming media platforms. Now having the power of audiovisual media Internet started to clash with television and eventually outperformed such on many levels, providing for a seamlessly combined text plus audiovisual approaches, such as embedding.

That new status of audiovisual media as an essential component of modern day international political landscape makes research of it through the prism of political studies in international relations adequately needed, but the answers to such needs only partially could be applied to necessary areas of practical use. The problem which arises and which this article attempts to touch upon is, if not vacuum, a great uncertainty towards studies in that area. Existing literature on audiovisual presence in politics on global scale is not only largely inconclusive regarding works of fiction and borderline cases (such as documentaries which still abide to laws of narrative fiction in how they are presented to audience) and examines such only if deemed necessary, on precedent basis. Failure to integrate known systematic approaches in the studies of audiovisual media appears to be caused by the fact that, despite movies are recognized as an information vessel, political studies simply can't decipher the emotional component as well as well as countless levels of specified information which, seemingly does not contain anything of value. Some works including a study by Y. Romanenko (Romanenko, 2004) try to establish that even what is usually considered subpar audiovisual media contain larger layers of information that what is usually perceived. Others like "Movies as Politics" by J. Rosenbaum (Rosenbaum, 2007) try to view media from a perspective of cultural studies, which due to aforementioned aspects proves to be, while of essential value, not entirely compatible analytically. Finally, some studies while useful in terms of studying the international communication in general, does not provide for any useful methods as to how a researcher could approach a situation and seek for results with real scientific value.

Our research on the subject, conducted since 2010 and caught within aforementioned near-vacuum of previous scientific results had to face a very different challenges compared to what was previously seen and covered and the literature. What we tried to on a level of student science was

to filter usable examples to pinpoint the exact amount of influence audio-visual media and especially narrative fiction cinema could have on international political studies. The first and foremost thing that could be out lined the research was eventually evaluated and upgraded to a full-time postgraduate one is that situation changes so rapidly that examples quickly deteriorate to retrospective ones within years. The goal of this article is not to present as much examples as possible on the subject, but to provide a sufficient amount of conclusive results to pinpoint how audiovisual media on its own might have elements of intuitive analytical work, which could be very much of use if provided with substantial scientific backing. Additionally, objectives of the article include establishing the need for new methods and terms in the research of specific aspects of political communications and establishing the difficulties of further research.

Retrospectively, audiovisual media had some influence over international political landscape right from the start as manipulation and documentation of information was very important for the medium and achieved even more importance when it was brought closer to audience in the form of television. However, despite evident larger effectiveness of such media in terms of multiple layers of information, it is hard to deny that its influence was largely under control in the XX century since distribution was expensive enough to filter a lot of potentially influential media and make it more "domestic". Soviet Union could serve as an example of such filtering employed pretty much universally to media both brought in and out of the country: as much as imported media should have been safe for the ideological doctrine and went through several levels of censorship, exported media should have reflected the Soviet values as attractive enough for foreign audiences (as a result, exported Soviet media often had inserts of what was usually censored in the imported productions, which is a topic on its own, hardly related to a subject of this article), something from the field of universal values.

Universal values are often addressed in conjunction with many scientific approaches in philosophy, political science, sociology and psychology. And yet, somehow the term seems to be rather vaguely described in all of them, leaving a lot to desire for those, who will address the concept in their theoretical and practical assignments. For some indiscriminant reason depiction of universal values in culture on a global scale rarely sparks the interest of political science, despite how global and overwhelming certain aspects of popular culture may be in the age of global networks and digital

revolution. Of course, «popular» and «universal» are not equal concepts and yet, there seems to be just a right amount of similarity in two of them to be very effective in combined efforts, as proven by massive popular mu sic concerts dedicated to global problems, which raise money to fight global problems and/or dedicated to spread awareness of such problems. An example of such concert was held by ANTIAIDS foundation on September 12, 2008 – a grandiose free concert by famed rock band Queen gathered an audience of 350,000 people on the central square of Kharkiv.

But the impact was doubled by the fact that on December 1, 2008 filmed version of the concert was released in cinemas all over Ukraine. As founder of ANTIAIDS Olena Pinchuk (known at the time as Elena Franchuk) put it: «We're trying to involve as many people as possible in the fight against AIDS in Ukraine. Our awareness projects were built on music, paintings and fashion. And now, it is time for cinema. It is vital for our work as Movie Theater is a place where young people spend their time, meaning that we can reach them there» (ANTIAIDS, 2008). Queen at the time were, of course, no strangers to audiovisual media themselves – often credited for single-handedly making music video a regular practice for record companies with 1975's «Bohemian Rhapsody»; they also extended their influence to feature films in 1980's, writing score for «Flash Gordon» (dir. Mike Hodges, written by Lorenzo Semple Jr. and Michael Allin, based on the characters created by Alex Raymond, Starling Films, Dino De Laurentiis Company, 1980) and, more commonly known, original songs for a cult film «Highlander» (dir. Russell Mulcahy, written by Gregory Widen, Peter Bellwood and Larry Ferguson from a story by Gregory Widen, Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment, Highlander Productions Limited, DavisPanzer Productions, 1986) (Internet Movie Database). It feels natural that this time their influence was protracted to an audio-visual form as well, but why was it so crucial to re-release the concert as a cinematic feature film? The answer is not something to be formulated easily, but it may be theorized that Queen's international appeal transcends well through a certain universal code of movies - certain components of audiovisual media which could be comprehended and de-ciphered regardless of language or cultural background. Such a quasi-concept may be combined well with universal values, itself a concept which feels underformulated.

While the term universal code of movies was coined by authors of this article as a temporary quasi-concept to illustrate the formulated axioms, including those of the article «Universality of Movies in the International

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Political Communication» (Yeromin, 2016: 63-68), universal values, on the other hand is a term that has been around for decades, and yet seems to thoroughly lack quite a few key defining moments, sparking a wide dis cussion in the scientific circles, usually used in philosophy and psychology. Political studies, while acknowledging existence of the term are visibly reluctant to use it, perhaps due to a severe lack of unified theoretical approach, which is much more tolerated in the afore-mentioned scientific disciplines, because it is usually connected with concepts of morals and morality. Never the less, in his lecture on global ethics delivered on December 12, 2003 in Tübingen University, Germany and named «Do We Still Have Universal Values?» then-Secretary-General of UN Kofi Annan stated that «values of peace, freedom, social progress, equal rights and human dignity, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are no less valid today than when, over half a century ago, those documents were drafted by representatives of many different nations and cultures» (Annan, 2003). The same year a second, paperback print of Francis Fukuyama's book «Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution» was published, which also argued that inability of isolation of any part of a human society in a modern world makes a certain set of universal values crucially needed for normal functioning (Fukuyama, 2003). What was stated by two key figures in the world of international politics in 2003 is still relevant thirteen years later. Certain concepts of political theories such as multiculturalism are trying to preserve variety of cultural and social systems by also reaching some universal elements. In other words they're attempting to combine humanity through the means of complex values which should be understood anywhere.

The purpose of this article, however, is not to show how reflection of universal values in movies influences international political communication (including through the means of universal code of movies). What we are implying to achieve with it is to pinpoint how research of international political communication rarely brings up major points which sterns its own difficulty, while we also want to bring to attention the facts of audio-visual media actually being of importance to international political communication. The difficulty of research in international communication was recognized in the published works way back in 1950's, albeit since then situation changed even more drastically with the arrival of Internet – a revolutionizing platform which brought communication to a whole new

level and made some of the more specific communities and their musings recognizable on an international level. Status quo on the international scale changed as a result, providing audience member with means of their own to reflect on any global situation and actually partially influence the outcome. Later advancements in social networking proved that even the slightest shift of people's judgment might affect politics on international level with as little as small amount of information needed.

A situation of fakes spreading all over the news, unfortunately, is very common in the modern world. It is a much rare occasion when something was actually right and is yet still disregarded as fake, which is an occurrence evidenced lately in Post-Soviet countries (and, mainly, Russia) regarding a situation on whether popular satirical cartoon show «The Simpsons» (Created by Matt Groening, developed by James L. Brooks and Sam Simon, Gracie Films in association with 20th Century Fox, 1989-Present) predicted Trump's presidency or not. As an example of such news item being «debunked» there is a blog post by Russian 2X2 TV channel (which airs «The Simpsons» officially in Russia) which directly states in the headline «The Simpsons» had not predicted Trump's win in 2000" and yet manages to directly contradict that in the statement itself saying that "In 2000 The Simpsons had actually predicted Trump's win". While the article also dwells upon the fact that popular illustration of «prediction» shared through social network was actually taken from 2015's special Trumptastic Voyage (dir. David Silverman, written by Al Jean, Gracie Films), it is also obvious that the headline contradicts the meaning of a statement, even if, as stated in the post, «Overall, that picture is 80% fake». (2X2, 2016) Episode in question is the seventeenth episode of the eleventh season of the show, named Bart to the Future (dir. Michael Marcantel, written by Dan Greany) in which one of the show's protagonists, Bart Simpson gets a glimpse into the future, specifically in 2030. In that variant of the show's future (which is not, by the way, considered canon in the lore) Trump becomes a president of the United States at an unspecified point prior to this year and leaves country with a «budget crunch». (Meduza, 2016) Longtime producer and writer of the show, Al Jean addressed the fact in a recent interview and explained that prediction was actually a joke with a logical basis, as in 2000 Trump was talking about running for president as a reform party candidate. What is interesting that media attention to the fact, while not reaching it's peak was still there prior to elections, as actual writer of the Bart to the Future episode, Dan Greany was also asked about

the prediction in an interview for The Hollywood Reporter, dated March 16, 2016. In it he stated that «The Simpsons has always kind of embraced the over-the-top side of American culture … and [Trump] is just the fulfillment of that.» (Parker, 2016)

But even that was not the earliest known addressing of the fact, as British newspaper Metro did an article on the fact back on July 30, 2015. (Lee, 2015) It is of interest that at the time world was all about comparing predictions from audiovisual media to real life, as on October 21, 2015 a cult science fiction movie Back to the Future Part II (dir. Robert Zemeckis, written by Bob Gale and Robert Zemeckis, Universal Pictures, Amblin Entertainment, U-Turn Productions, 1989) was literally back to the future as said date was a destination time of the time travel from 1985 in the movie. As it was the case with The Simpsons, writer Bob Gale was also interviewed about certain predictions, including the one about, of all people, Donald Trump. Gale confirmed that similarities noted by audience between the latter and one of the main antagonists of the movie, Buford "Biff" Tannen (from alternative timeline of 1985) were in fact deliberate. (Collins, 2015) Although, at the time portions of Tannen's personality that were based on Trump were his 27-floor casino (In 1984 Trump built a 37-floor Trump Plaza Hotel), operations in real estate and, partially, looks and personality (including advocacy of plastic surgery), there is another portion which is considered a prediction – Tannen used his wealth to influence the Republican Party before assuming some political powers on his own, isolating the town of Hill Valley as an autonomous zone, every citizen of which is encouraged to call him "America's greatest living folk hero", effectively fulfilling the same «over-the-top side of American culture» as Trump. (Wayt, 2015).

What is interesting about both predictions about Trump from 1989 and 2000 is that they are actually culturally interconnected – episode Bart to the Future is not only named after Back to the Future franchise, it is also directly visually and plot-wise influenced by it. So, in short, what we have here is that two connected audiovisual media ventures that had fictionalized characters based on Donald Trump (one of which is eponymous) predicting a really close approximation (especially if combined) of an actual political event from 2016. Of course "prediction" is a loose term. For example, statistically, being world's longest running current TV show on its 28th season in 2016, The Simpsons were nearly bound to get a few things right – and they did it more then once. It could be considered a part of

phenomenon which even has a name in pop culture, amusingly applied after an episode of the rival satirical cartoon show, South Park (Created by Trey Parker and Matt Stone, developed by Brian Graden, Comedy Central, Braniff, Comedy Partners, South Park Studios, 1997-Present), «The Simpsons Already Did It» (dir. Trey Parker, written by Trey Parker, David R. Goodman, Kyle McCulloch, Glasgow Phillips, Tim Talbot, 2002). (Know Your Meme, 2015) Still, the fact that writers of an animated show predicted someone's presidency 16 ears prior to elections, while countless analysts and sociologists failed to do so immediately before such, provides for a food for thoughts. What was done through the "artistic filter" here is actually very similar to precognitive analyses and/or logical-analytical analyses. Both approaches are far from conspirology and pseudoscience and are implemented successfully in a lot of humanitarian scientific disciplines, including political studies in the international relations. (Yeromin, 2016: 63-68)

It is obvious at this point that methodology of media research in the international political relations still has something left out, underestimating crucial concepts of audiovisual media appeal and not concentrating enough on fiction media, which at times tend to predict and even shape political situations. It is further demonstrated by the fact that United States of America, world's largest and most experienced provider of popular culture content is at times as puzzled as anyone else when audiovisual media tends to predict something in "life imitates art" way. Being one of the youngest but also more popular art forms, audiovisual media are harder to predict in their own development due to lack of centuries of development literature, music and fine arts have, which allows to predict tendencies comparing similarities between time periods. In 2000, the same year when The Simpsons predicted Trump's presidency no one was able to tell that Internet will be able to rival television in terms of audiovisual content… Apart from audiovisual content itself. And nowadays we have internet community proclaiming Trump's win as it's own due to overwhelming influence of Internet meme culture on Trump's political image. It was even specifically noted by some of the internet users that Trump winning the elections as a victory of memes, an assortment of entertaining internet products regarding any possible topics which are pre-dominantly based and shaped by audiovisual media such as TV series, movies, cartoon shows, anime, video games, etc. (Ohlheiser, 2016)

Of course, controlling the audiovisual media via standard "problem

solvers" such as censorship would not help in modern-day society. In order to make situation more effective and controllable it's not a restriction of artists and entertainers which is required, but a way should be found to take into a consideration such thing as an "artistic filter", as a very important and influential layer of international information, while also what is needed to be found is what exactly influences events on a political scale. Such an understanding is impossible without certain universal codes, as we can't understand outline of specific cases without knowing the specs on how the system of audiovisual media entertainment works. That also requires taking into a consideration the fact that nowadays market of such re-shapes rapidly, providing massive abilities for independent media outlets to be as influential as news media and big-time Hollywood studios. For political studies in the international relations, audiovisual media, while not exactly being terra incognita, is a place of only a certain level familiarity, which could and should be enriched by further research, as security of the situation pretty much depends on intricate processes of international communication witnessed in a conglomerate of social media and audiovisual media, sometimes taking a form of interactive new media.

Disregarding a whole level of information is what evidenced through the drawn examples. Scarce coordination between a vast array of cultural studies and political studies prevents us from noticing relevant information which could have been used for actual and very serious forecasting of events. Considering that nowadays popular culture grows on a plain new international interactive level, influence of media of which audiovisual one is one of the most effective and dominant could not be ignored in the political studies of international relations.

Ignoring the aspects that are influencing the field but are usually dismissed and considered a manipulation or, at best, a minor side of using the soft power in the globalized world of today might be a seriously worrying omission in political studies. So far underestimation of how much audiovisual content influences political decisions and underlying events which have their effect on a global scale, as well as whole layers of information such media might provide for both retrospective and current studies of the situation left us behind on any possible level, each time providing for a surprise in the situation when we definitely should seen something coming. Leaving out anything from the studies in the post-post-modern world results in situation as odd and obstructive as "post-post-modern world" formulation itself: lack of better terms. Coming up with authored terms

such as universal code of movies is a natural solution for studies which are, if far from inception, are still only entering the formal scientific doctrine.

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