

**LIBERAL DEMOCRACY: FROM THE MASS SOCIETY BROAD
UNIVERSALISM TOWARD THE NETWORK SOCIETY DEEP
SOVEREIGNTY**

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***Abstract.** The paper deals to analyze the transformation of liberal democracy from universalism to sovereignty in terms of changes in political communication that are caused by the emergence of a new form of social interaction defined as a networked society. The author examines the formation and relationship of such basic categories of humanism as sovereignty, liberalism, and democracy. He reveals the role of the media in ensuring the stability of liberal democratic regimes and shows how the dominance of the media controlled by transnational corporations or by the government leads to the universalization of the mass society and the loss of an individual's sovereignty. The author concludes that the formation of a networked society entails a deepening of sovereignty at the individual, group, and state levels and highlights its main directions: the personalization of politics, the formation of autonomous communication clusters based on the principle of common moral values, and the glocalization of the cultural space. The article highlights the problems associated with the deployment of sovereignization processes at all of these levels.*

***Keywords:** media, Internet, network individualism, personalization, echo chamber, bubble democracy, nation-state.*

***Анотація.** Стаття присвячена аналізу трансформації ліберальної демократії від універсалізму до суверенітету з точки зору змін у політичній комунікації, спричинених появою нової форми соціальної взаємодії, що визначається як мережеве суспільство. Автор досліджує формування та взаємозв'язок таких основних категорій гуманізму, як суверенітет, лібералізм*

та демократія. Він розкриває роль засобів масової інформації у забезпеченні стабільності ліберально-демократичних режимів та показує, як домінування ЗМІ, які контролюються транснаціональними корпораціями або урядом, призводить до універсалізації масового суспільства та до втрати особистого суверенітету. Автор робить висновок, що формування мережевого суспільства тягне за собою поглиблення суверенітету на індивідуальному, груповому та державному рівнях та висвітлює його основні напрями: персоналізація політики; формування автономних кластерних комунікацій, заснованих на принципі спільних моральних цінностей; глобалізація культурного простору. У статті висвітлено проблеми, пов'язані з розгортанням процесів суверенізації на всіх цих рівнях.

Ключові слова: ЗМІ, Інтернет, мережевий індивідуалізм, персоналізація, ехокамера, бульбашкова демократія, національна держава.

Анотація. В статье анализируется трансформация либеральной демократии от универсализма к суверенитету с точки зрения изменений в политической коммуникации, вызванных появлением новой формы социального взаимодействия, определяемой как сетевое общество. Автор исследует формирование и взаимосвязь таких базовых категорий гуманизма как суверенитет, либерализм и демократия. Он раскрывает роль средств массовой информации в обеспечении стабильности либерально-демократических режимов и показывает, как доминирование средств массовой информации, контролируемых транснациональными корпорациями или правительством, ведет к универсализации массового общества и потере индивидуального суверенитета. Автор приходит к выводу, что формирование сетевого общества влечет за собой углубление суверенитета на индивидуальном, групповом и государственном уровнях, и выделяет его основные направления: персонализацию политики; формирование автономных коммуникативных кластеров, основанных на принципе общих моральных ценностей; глокализация культурного пространства. В статье освещены

проблемы, связанные с разворачиванием процессов суверенизации на всех этих уровнях.

Ключевые слова: СМИ, Интернет, сетевой индивидуализм, персонализация, эхо-камера, пузырьковая демократия, национальное государство.

Introduction

Discussions about the crisis of the liberal-democratic model as a universal global socio-economic and political pattern have been gaining momentum in public and academic circles since 2008 when the world plunged into the abyss of the economic crisis. And the rapid economic growth of communist China, which became a member of the WTO in 2001, coupled with neo-imperialist policies of Russia, which began to «rise from its knees» and position itself as a ‘sovereign democracy’, finally shattered Fukuyama’s futurological prediction of the “end of history” as a result of the worldwide liberal democracy victory (Fukuyama 1992). However, the real despair befell the apologists of this globalist model in 2016 after the Brexit referendum in Great Britain and Trump’s victory in the US presidential election. Both events showed that the political pendulum swung towards sovereignty. And the development of political processes in Poland, Hungary, and other countries only confirmed this trend.

Joe Biden’s victory in the November 2020 US presidential election appears to have brought optimism back to the ranks of the global liberal democratic model. In his article ‘Why America Must Lead Again. Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy After Trump’, the future President states that democracies – paralyzed by hyperpartisanship, hobbled by corruption, weighed down by extreme inequality – are having a harder time delivering for their people. Biden indicates authoritarianism, nationalism, and illiberalism as the main obstacles. And he names Trump and demagogues around the world, China’s abusive behaviors and human rights violations, and President Vladimir Putin’s kleptocratic authoritarian system as the

main enemies. Based on this, the American leader outlined his program for democratic renewing (Biden 2020).

However, a diagnosis that does not reveal the cause of the disease is unlikely to cure the patient. And the subjectivation of negative factors that lie on the surface leads public and academic discourses away from considering those tectonic shifts that change the entire social structure in general and the order of liberal and democratic principles functioning, in particular.

Without ignoring the presence of geopolitical and geo-economic reasons for the crisis that affects Western democracies, or the origins of the sovereigntization that has arisen around the world, this article aims to analyze the transformation of liberal democracy from universalism to sovereignty in terms of changes in political communication that are caused by the emergence of a new form of social interaction defined as a networked society¹, and to adapt the concept and methods of liberal democracy to the changing socio-political realities.

Sovereignty, Liberalism and Democracy: the Enlightenment's Triplets

It should be noted that some globalists interpret sovereignty as the antithesis of liberalism and democracy and try to directly associate it with authoritarianism and nationalism. This view reflects a misguided attitude toward liberal democracy not as a political theory but as a geopolitical ideology somewhat similar to communism and Nazism in their pursuit of world domination. From this point of view, Trump's steps toward US sovereignty in the context of the globalization project seem similar to how Russia declared its independence within the USSR under Yeltsin. Then this act gave rise to the parade of sovereignties of the Soviet republics, which eventually led to the destruction of the USSR and the entire socialist camp. Those who seek to implement the project of the Great West can not allow a repeat of a similar scenario.

However, returning from geopolitics to political science turns out that the genesis of the concept of 'liberalism' and 'sovereignty' – are the fruits of one tree. From a legal point of view, they trace their origins to the Treaty of Westphalia

¹ The network society, in the simplest terms, is a social structure based on networks operated by information and communication technologies based in microelectronics and digital computer networks that generate, process, and distribute information based on the knowledge accumulated in the nodes of the networks (Castells 2005: 3).

(1648), which ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe. The provisions of the treaty "*cujus regio, ejus religio*" laid the foundations both for the consolidation of state sovereignty in international law and for the formulation of the principle of freedom of conscience as the first stone in the foundation of the universal concept of human rights and freedoms.

The Great French Revolution, which became a real torch of freedom, developed the principle of sovereignty from its feudal interpretation as the power of an overlord, to its understanding as to the power of a people. Thus, at the end of the eighteenth century, France emerged as the first democratic state in the modern sense. It should be noted that exactly three words of the humanistic slogan of the Enlightenment "*Liberté. Égalité. Fraternité*", which fluttered on the banner of this revolution, became the seeds from which liberalism, socialism, and nationalism have sprouted later. Yuval Noah Harari points out that it was the split of humanism that gave rise to these conflicting currents (Harari 2017: 291).

The difference between the proponents of these currents is only in terms of the sovereignty of which entity they give priority to. For nationalism, the nation (in its ethnic primordial interpretation) is above all! For communists, the interests of one social class, the proletariat, determine not only political goals but also moral norms. Liberalism proclaims the highest value of individual freedom and upholds the principles according to which in politics, economics, art – everywhere the priority belongs to the human will in comparison with the interests of the state or religious guidelines.

Thus, the tradition of liberalism and democratic norms require that, in the debate on sovereignty, the sovereignty of the individual have to be taken as a starting point, and not the sovereignty of the state. In this case, the concept of deep sovereignty is based on the understanding of sovereignty as the full right and power of a governing body over itself, without any interference from outside sources or bodies. Democracy is based on the concept of popular sovereignty (Wikipedia 2020). Communism and Nazism are essentially ideologies of universalism because universalism is an ethical worldview opposite to individualism (Brockhaus & Efron

1902: 745). And only liberalism essentially postulates the sovereignty of the individual.

In politics, this postulate gives rise to the belief that the voter knows best, which is the first pillar of the free election procedure. But the question arises: if power comes from the will of the individual, then how to resolve the contradictions between the desires of different individuals? To rid liberalism of this internal controversy, Western policy has adopted the principle of democratic majority known since ancient times. In the democratic classics, this meant that most people were more likely to be right, and therefore it was taken as the only common decision. This is how the goal of rationalism is achieved by the establishment of a single truth. The correctness of this method based on mathematical analysis was proved by Frank Galton in an article entitled “Vox Populi”, which was published in 1907 in the journal *Nature* (Tomayko 2006). But the liberal principle of the supremacy of the individual and the democratic principle of the correctness of the majority do not always coexist.

Yascha Mounk shows, how liberal democracies can falter in two important ways:

The first is by turning into illiberal democracies – a phrase used many times by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to describe modern-day Hungary – in which the will of the people, suitably channeled by a charismatic leader, overrules liberal, independent institutions, for example by bridling media or universities, and the same rights for minorities and immigrants as for the people. The other way, which has been mentioned by many in the US, the UK, France, and Italy, is undemocratic liberalism, where rights continue to be guaranteed but public elections seem to not affect – that is, the popular will, even if identified and supported by one or other party, is seldom effectively translated into policy change (Mounk 2018: 50-58).

Thus, the categories of sovereignty, liberalism, and democracy have common roots in the humanistic principles of the Enlightenment. But while liberalism emphasizes the sovereignty of the individual, democratic norms determine the order of the functioning of sovereignty as the expression of the popular will. This

difference in interpretation is the root of the internal tension between liberalism and democracy, which manifests itself in different ways in modern states.

Mass media as the Third Pillar of Liberal Democracy

Thus, the structure that rests on two supports is quite shaky. Analyzing this problem, Yuval Noah Harari notes:

A person recognizes the results of democratic elections only when he or she has something in common with the majority of voters. If the experience and feelings of other voters are unfamiliar to me and if I am sure that they do not understand my feelings and neglect my vital interests, and even if there are at least a hundred votes against my vote, I have absolutely no reason to accept such a verdict. Democratic elections only work in societies that have been united in the beginning by something like religious beliefs or national myths. They are a way to overcome the friction between people who already have common views on many things (Harari 2017: 294).

Therefore, to add stability to the construction of liberal democracy, a third pillar is needed – the institution of ideological consolidation of society. Mounk defines that the availability of mass communications that operate under the control of financial and state elites is one of the three main prerequisites for the stability of liberal democracy as a political system that is both liberal and democratic – protects the rights of the individual, and translates public views in public policy (Mounk 2018: 36).

It should be added that the model of interaction between the political and media systems largely determines the nature of the political regime (Kostyrev 2002: 134). As Lance Bennett and Barbara Pfetsch argue, political communication and related areas of press/politics have been defined historically by the interplay of social conditions that define audiences, the communication processes that send messages to them, and the effects of those processes (Bennett, Pfetsch 2018: 245).

In the age of industrial society, the press was the leading media. Under the liberal model, the press played the role of ‘watchdog of democracy’, and under the totalitarian model, it was ‘a collective organizer, agitator, and propagandist’. But in

both the first and the second case, the activity of the press was regulated by national law. Thus, it fell under the rule of state sovereignty and was aimed at consolidating the nation around certain values – democratic or communist. Of course, radio stations were able to cross borders that successfully made ‘enemy voices’ in the USSR and Eastern Europe. However, in essence, they all functioned as state-funded propaganda projects.

The situation has changed dramatically with the advent and spread of satellite television. The world, in the words of Marshall McLuhan, has become a “global village” (McLuhan 1962: 45). The information revolution has radically transformed the nature and scale of social interaction, forming global social structures that have formed a new type of society called the «information society». The formation of the information society and globalization went hand in hand. The global progress of liberal democracy is impossible to imagine without global media empires. They caused the waves of information tsunami which easily crushed the walls of state information sovereignty. Generated by the information revolution “third wave of democratization” (Toffler 1984) destroyed such a colossus as the Soviet Union. At this stage, the media, and especially television, played the role of cement, which bonded individuals, social groups, and nation-states into a joint global liberal-democratic integrity.

But since the mid-1970s, researchers have drawn attention to the negative trends in media development that have threatened democracy. Herbert Schiller identified four negative trends in the development of the media operating under market liberalism:

1. Monopolization, which leads to the continuous domination of media empires and the actual disappearance of competition in the information environment.
2. Internationalization (globalization), the reverse side of which is “information imperialism” and “information colonialism”, because the so-called “free flow” legitimizes the activities of transnational media corporations, despite the national sovereignty of countries.
3. Unification, which erases the diversity of the information environment.

Television channels and other media are less and less different in content and political position. Most TV channels prefer a variety of entertainment programs that only copy standardized global scenarios at the national level. Such unification leads to a narrowing of the pluralism of discourses in civil society. 4. Commercialization, which leads to the fact that the media, funded by advertising, lose their freedom and become dependent on corporations. Corporate advertising imposes an undemocratic view on everyone as if the consumer way of life is real life (Schiller 1975).

Schiller noted with concern that all these trends led to the fact that many people in the world who do not have a privileged position in public life are less and less concerned with political and cultural media reports. Such people withdraw from political life and become completely apolitical. They can easily be manipulated by various media-owned power because such people are not connected to information networks and do not use other channels as a source of knowledge to obtain political information and participate in political discussions. McLuhan predicted that future overlords would not need to apply repressive measures in cases of discontent and unrest among the plebs – it would be enough to change television programs (McLuhan 1962: 183).

In the early 1990s, John Keane drew attention to the dangers of globalization for the ideals of liberal democracy:

The seeds of despotism there are at the heart of all democratic regimes today. The historical transformation of former absolutist states into modern constitutional parliamentary states (which has not been fully completed) has now ceased, as all Western democracies, today face an increasingly serious problem: years of an almost uncontrolled drift towards an informal community of interconnected states, non-democratic decision-making structures are becoming multilevel, almost multinational, and are armed with mechanisms of powerful influence on information flows and the formation of public opinion in their societies (Keane 1991: 67-68, 94).

Thus, the goals of geopolitics and the tools of massification turned the ideas of liberalism and democracy into their opposite – universalism and information despotism.

The Internet and online networks, which began their rapid development at the turn of the centuries, were initially seen as new tools for the development of a global liberal-democratic open society, the idea of which is actively promoted, in particular, by George Soros. In the process of implementing those technologies of transit from dictatorship to democracy, which was presented by Gene Sharp at the beginning of the 21st century (Sharp 2012), online networks were often used by the Liberal Democrats as tools to «erode» state sovereignty. At the same time, the online content did not contradict the information mainstream, which was presented by CNN as the truth in the last resort. The universalist ‘truth’ of neoliberalism triumphed in the global information space even when Democrats supported clearly nationalist and right-wing forces outside the United States in the name of implementing the global project of the Great West (Brzezinski 2013). According to Olivier Jutel, the post-politics of progressive neoliberalism tried to realize in online communication the previous «fantasy of social integrity and the end of history» (Jutel 2019: 435).

But the course of events once again did not meet the hopes of Westernization believers. At the turn of the second decade of the 21st century, the period of decline of neoliberalism begins. As Thomas Cooper and Jem Thomas state, “worryingly, faith in liberal democracy itself has collapsed as well – and more quickly in countries where democracy has been functioning effectively for longer” (Cooper & Thomas 2019: 16). Lance Bennett and Steven Livingston reveal the manifestations of this destructive crisis:

We suggest that public spheres in many nations have become divided and disrupted as growing challenges confront the democratic centering principles of (a) authoritative information, (b) emanating from social and political institutions that (c) engage trusting and credulous public. At the core of our argument is the breakdown of trust in democratic institutions of

press and politics (along with educational and civil society institutions in more advanced cases) (Bennett, & Livingston 2018: 127-128).

Obviously, in this analysis, the statement of the fact that the third pillar of liberal democracy has been shaken is in the first place. Old apologists for the universal norms of liberal democracy, who for a quarter of a century have become accustomed to global domination, did not hesitate to label the motivation that went out of their control as populism. And they dubbed the communication space of the network society as «post-truth», which is interpreted mainly in aggressive tones of disinformation. For example, Deen Freelon and Chris Wells called their introduction to a special issue of the journal *Political Communication* “Disinformation as Political Communication” (Freelon, & Wells 2020). Laudatory democratic odes to social media have been replaced by claims that “social media stole an election” (Porotsky 2018). However, over time, politically unbiased and deeper assessments have emerged in the academic environment. Damiano Palano states:

From 2016, following the double shock of the outcome of the Brexit referendum and Donald Trump’s electoral victory, many observers have argued that one of the greatest dangers for Western democracies comes from ‘fake news’, ‘post-truth’, or the systematic falsification of reality, to which certain ‘anti-establishment’ political forces resort. In this sense, therefore, it is naive to think that the use of ‘fake news’ is a novelty introduced by Donald Trump, or by agencies through which Russia exerts its ‘sharp power’. The novelty must be sought rather not only in the ‘content’ manipulated by ‘fake news’, but also in the communicative and social context in which the ‘fake news’ is used and in the decline in the monopoly of ‘regimes of truth’ provoked by the processes of disintermediation (Palano 2019: 39-40).

Thus, one of the reasons for the crisis of the global liberal-democratic model is that the political elites and the establishment continue to focus on the needs of the mass society of the age of traditional media, while the network society of the Internet age puts new patterns on the agenda.

Sovereignization as a New Scenario for Liberal Democracy

Obviously, the real reason for the crisis of universalism lies in the fact that the network society communication space is fundamentally different from the information space of traditional media in its properties. Manuel Castells says that it is necessary to abandon the concept of «information society» and define society in the light of what will really be new in the modern era, namely through the network of information technology (Castells 2000). Correspondingly, network political communication reforms the norms of political interaction of social actors that have developed in the old days of mass communication, including the usual norms of democracy.

The new scenario, and, in particular, the widespread use of social media, favor very different dynamics, not only from those of the old ‘party democracy’, the protagonist of a significant part of the twentieth century but also from those of the ‘audience democracy’, whose distinctive features were identified by Bernard Manin almost a quarter of a century ago (Palano 2019: 39-40).

Among the main factors that determine this new liberal democratic scenario, I single out personalization, fragmentation, and glocalization. Further, the effect of these factors will be considered in order – at the individual, group, and state level.

Personalization of Politics as a Consequence of Network Individualism

The founders of the concept of network society identify individualism as a basic marker of the network society as a specific type of social structure. Barry Wellman argues:

The technological development of computer-communications networks and the societal flourish of social networks are now affording the rise of «networked individualism». This is a time for individuals and their networks, and not for groups. The broadly-embracing collectivity, nurturing and controlling, has become a fragmented, variegated, and personalized social network. Autonomy, opportunity, and uncertainty are the rule (Wellman 2002: 11).

From all the signs given by Wellman, it is obvious that this argument is about the sovereignty of the individual. Wellman's concept was developed and matured in the works of Manuel Castells. He summarizes the essence of what scholarly research has found in various social contexts. Starting with the economy, Castells defines the network economy as an ability to work autonomously and be an active component of a network that becomes paramount in the new economy. And he has conceptualized it as self-programmable labor. The network society is also manifested in the transformation of sociability. As Castells stresses, there is a major change in sociability, not a consequence of the Internet or new communication technologies, but a change that is fully supported by the logic embedded in the communication networks. This is the emergence of networked individualism, as social structure and historical evolution induce the emergence of individualism as the dominant culture of our societies, and the new communication technologies perfectly fit into the mode of building sociability along with self-selected communication networks, on or off depending on the needs and moods of each individual. So, the network society is a society of networked individuals (Castells 2005:12).

A central feature of the network society is the transformation of the realm of communication, including the media. So, as Castells claims, digital communication becomes less centrally organized, but absorbs into its logic an increasing share of social communication. As the network society diffuses, and new communication technologies expand their networks, there is an explosion of horizontal networks of communication, quite independent from media business and governments (Castells 2005:13). It also is self-generated in content, self-directed in emission, and self-selected in reception by many who communicate with many. (Castells 2010: xxx).

This process represents the sovereignty of the individual deeper than it was provided by the principle of freedom of speech during the Enlightenment. Because in the network communication space «everyone has the right not only to their opinion but also to their own facts» (Van Aelst et al. 2017: 18). And it has the potential to make possible unlimited diversity and autonomous production of most of the communication flows that construct meaning in people's minds (Castells 2010: xxxi).

As a result, CNN's mono-truth that fastened the liberal-democratic universalism is disintegrating, and many group and individual truths are being born online. Agenda-setting for public discourse is complicated by the creation of issues that have become «completely independent of the voice of traditional media, officials and professional journalism» (Neuman, Guggenheim, Mo Jang, & Bae, 2014: 211).

However, the main point is not that «the spread of social and digital media has increased the spread and cacophony of public voices» (Dahlgren 2005: 151), but that «people formerly known as the audience can actively engage in the production and consumption of iterative frames through social networks, breaking the paradigmatic assumptions about the causal relationship between the source and the recipient» (Bennett, & Pfetsch 2018: 248). The interactivity of the participants in political communication becomes its distinctive feature in the networked society. In this society, people see themselves as sovereign subjects of building the information flow, and «the distinction between individual and collective forms of political activity is becoming increasingly blurred» (Kaun, Kyriakidou, & Uldam 2016: 6). Thus, the individualization of the economic, social, and communication spheres leads to the personalization of politics, which is a manifestation of the deep sovereignty of a person in a networked society.

Network action is an expression of “personalized politics”, according to Bennett, because it is conducted within a personal framework of action that embraces diversity and inclusion, lowers barriers to identification with cause, and reaffirms personal emotions (Bennett 2012: 22-23). This approach is underlined by the assumption that self-expression on online platforms is a political act and can become a tool of resistance. Communicative autonomy afforded on digital media, Castells argues, directly fosters “social and political autonomy”, themselves key factors of social change (Castells 2010: 414). Bennett stresses that the major characteristic of such forms of action is the emergence of the individual as an important catalyst of collective action through the mobilization of his/her social networks, itself enabled through the use of social media (Bennett 2012: 22). Changes in the communication space – variability, differentiation, demassification, and individualization of

communication links, due to the development of the Internet and especially web networks – have profound social consequences.

The centripetal regime of massification is giving way to the centrifugal regime of individualization. As Toffler noted in his latest book:

With the advent of advanced communication technologies, a «demassification» of the media is observed. After that, consciousness is also demassified. Today, it is not the masses of people who receive the same information, but small groups of the population exchange images they have created themselves. Thoughts are becoming less and less uniform, which means the end of the masses age (Toffler 2007: 188).

The decline of the masses' age naturally leads to an exacerbation of contradictions in the perception of liberal-democratic values as universal. On the one hand, the right to individuality and self-expression, which social media provides to a greater extent, is the foundation of liberalism. On the other hand, it seems that individualization and self-communication, which provide the possibility of self-isolation from the majority opinion in the online space, violate classical democratic principles.

A catastrophic drop of trust in the liberal democratic institutions of power represented in the establishment and in the traditional media is one of the manifestations of this process. Declining citizen confidence in institutions undermines the credibility of official information in the news and opens the public to alternative information sources (Bennett, Livingston, 2018: 122). And it raises the problem of sovereignty not in its classical statist interpretation, but as a problem of personal moral responsibility for political decision-making.

Value Identity as a Factor of Network Society Political Space Fragmentation

The modality of the network society is an environment of many informational influences. Describing it, Jay Blumler suggests that we have entered the fourth century of political communication, defined by even greater complexity and abundance of information. During this period, the civic mission of public television

has declined, politicians reach audiences without journalistic interference, and greater diversification of content, voices, and audiences are shaping public communication (Blumler 2013, 2015).

The plurality of productions, perceptions, and interpretations, which is a marker of political communication in a networked society, creates a new problem – the problem of information overload. As Cooper and Thomas note, one of the major changes that have taken place in just the last ten years is the shift from an environment of information scarcity to information overload (Cooper, & Thomas 2019: 28). However, the possibilities of the human brain are not limitless. Under the pressure of information flows falling on him or her, a person falls into a state of stress. Losing the ability for rational analysis, the brain compensates for it in a way, which is inherent in any stressful situation, and transfers intellectual reflection to the level of emotions and subconscious reflexes. Rosanna Guadagno and Karen Guttieri cite research results that prove that people using communication via the Internet suffer from information overload and, therefore, are more likely to process information received on the Internet, not centrally, but peripherally. This means that people do not focus on the quality of arguments, but use subconscious clues to make decisions or cognitive heuristics to assess the merits of a persuasive appeal and are influenced by these factors. (Guadagno, & Guttieri 2019: 178).

Based on the data of these studies, I can state that the effect of the irrationality of political communication in the space of social media does take place indeed and it is a natural result of the brain's reactions to a stressful situation laid down by millennia of biological evolution. The novelty of the situation lies in the fact that this stress is caused not by a lack, but by a critical overabundance of information.

However, contrary to popular belief, researches show that in the Internet space a person does not dissolve in the infinite entropy of opinions, but, on the contrary, becomes stronger in his convictions, which form the inner core of his/her personality. And the availability of alternative sources of information allows him/her to escape from the captivity of manipulation by the media, which are controlled by governments or corporations. As Cass Sunstein suggests,

While the increasing variety of information available on the Internet has allowed us to discover a wide range of different points of view, the real result proves that it allows people to open themselves to those perspectives that fit and rarely challenge their existing views more selectively (Sunstein 2007: 234).

An overabundance of information requires not looking for sources of information, but choosing the ones which man need from a variety of offers and cutting off unnecessary ones. Thus, the ease of access to a variety of information “allows people to personalize their sources in a way that fits their prejudices” (Bartlett, 2018: 45). These changes in the perception of information predetermined a gradual departure from those universalist values that, since the days of Cartesianism, have been based on rational arguments.

As the researches of George Lakoff, Elisabeth Wehling, Jonathan Haidt, and some other scientists show, the moral foundations of people significantly affect their political positions (Lakoff, & Wehling 2012; Haidt 2013). And since, as evidenced by Cooper and Thomas suggests, our moral beliefs are unconscious and immediate (this has also been empirically tested), we generally cannot consciously determine why we arrive at one moral judgment or another. Thus, making political decisions in conditions of an information overabundance a person is increasingly guided by personal inner convictions, which are often based on ideals and trust perceived at the subconscious level. As Matthew Feinberg and Elisabeth Wehling figuratively note, “family ideals directly influence political judgments” (Feinberg, 7 Wehling 2018: 1). In this case, the news reported by a ‘friend’ may be considered ‘more trustworthy’ than that reported by an authoritative source, whose trustworthiness is guaranteed by institutional mechanisms (Lorusso 2018).

This factor determines the tendency to homophily in communicative exchanges. According to the hypothesis of the ‘echo chamber’, each and every one of us builds his or her own ‘bubble’, because each individual, at least in terms of social media exchanges, tends to interact mainly, and more frequently, with those who have similar opinions, reducing to a minimum exchange with those who think differently

(Palano 2019: 47). Pariser observed that each of us, for this reason, tends to live ever-increasingly inside a 'bubble', in which we see a 'personalized' world that is constructed, so to speak, in our own image and likeness. Everything that does not conform to our orientations, and, more properly, our past choices, simply ends up disappearing from view, held back by the filter surrounding our personal bubbles (Pariser 2011: 124).

Then, by turning to sources ever closer to our own opinions, or interacting with 'friends' that share our own preferences, we enclose ourselves more and more every day in an echo chamber in which the same watchwords continuously rebound off its walls (Iyengar, & Westwood 2014). From this point of view, the proliferation of 'bubbles' therefore constitutes a sort of 'tribalization' (Bartlett, 2018).

At the same time, people who are in one moral matrix find it very difficult to understand what is important for those who are in another one (Haidt, 2013: 186). The misunderstanding leads to such a phenomenon as polarization. This characteristic is a feature of the network society communication space. It distinguishes this space from the homogeneous space of unified truth in traditional media, which structures society around a single information mainstream. Contrary to the widespread prejudice about the openness of the virtual space, researchers show that on social media at least, even those rare few of us who want to hear the other side's views may simply not be able to. We will, moreover, get the impression that our side is the only one making news (Cooper, Thomas: 2019: 29).

It is important to focus on the fact that personal beliefs and associated emotions and experiences have always played an important role in political structuring, but only in a network society, an individual gets the opportunity to ensure effective social interaction in an integral communication space created by himself. Thus, the sovereignty of the individual leads to group sovereignty, which is based on perceived subconscious trust and commonality of moral values.

Therefore, as Palano notes, the same 'audience' is broken down into a myriad of bubbles, or into the ephemeral structure of the swarm... Palano defines such emerging construction as an alternative to the constructions of 'party democracy' and

‘audience democracy’, which he calls «bubble democracy». Bubble democracy is a new «ideal type» of network society political structure, in which the generalist audience is fragmented, and by virtue of the self-referential tendency that tends to mark the segments into which the ‘audience’ is divided. A significant aspect of the ‘bubble democracy’ puzzle comes from the fragmentation of the ‘audience’ caused by structural changes in the offer of communications, and by individual strategies for managing ‘information overload’ (Palano 2019: 45-46).

Having analyzed the ‘filtration bubble effect’, Cooper and Thomas come to a conclusion characterizing the emotional component of political communication:

Each side of the discussion is so closed in its own bubble that objective truth, which in principle can be discovered and agreed upon by all people, is increasingly being questioned as a concept ...With polarization at a high and facilitated by the ease of communication with in-group members and without the need to listen to opposing arguments, is it any wonder that there has been a return of hate speech? In many cases, we have crossed the line from disagreement to hate (Cooper, Thomas: 30, 29).

However, the widespread prejudice that the priority of emotions as guidelines for social behavior is the reason for the formation of extremely isolated groups of poorly educated marginalized people who determine the agenda in the communication online networks space did not withstand experimental verification. Conversely, research has shown that persons with higher levels of scientific knowledge and experience are more likely to form isolated groups that are in line with their political and cultural beliefs (Golman et al. 2016).

In social networks, cultural differences are standardized within a specific group, which reinforces clustering in the nationwide network field. And the Internet only speeds up this process and expands its location.

Glocalization in the Space of Cultures

In fact, filtration bubbles, or echo chambers, are similar to those «little boxes» that Wellman wrote about twenty years ago:

The 'little boxes' metaphor (from Malvena Reynolds' 1963 song) connotes people socially and cognitively encapsulated by homogeneous, broadly-embracing groups (Wellman 2001: 11).

But then Wellman argued that much social organization no longer fits the little-boxes model. In networked societies, boundaries are more permeable, interactions are with diverse others (ibid: 12). Based on these observations, he substantiated the concept of glocalization ('glocalization' is a neologism meaning the combination of intense local and extensive global interaction):

The Internet both provides a ramp onto the global information highway and strengthens local links within neighborhoods and households. For all its global access, the Internet reinforces stay-at-homes. Glocalization occurs, both because the Internet makes it easy to contact many neighbors, and because fixed, wired Internet connections tether users to home and office desks (ibid).

Obviously, Wellman was right when he stated: "If 'community' is defined socially rather than spatially, then it is clear that contemporary communities rarely are limited to neighborhoods, and they are communities of shared interest rather than communities of shared kinship or locality» (ibid: 13). But, then in the early 2000s, Wellman did not notice that by destroying some 'little boxes', social networks create others. And now these «little boxes» are created not based on a commonplace of residence or work, but based on common value beliefs and experiences (often subconscious).

Developing the concept of glocalization in parallel with Wellman, Castells introduces the category of flow into the theory of network society. By flows, Castells means purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchanges and interactions between physically separated positions occupied by social factors in economic, political, and symbolic structures of society. Castells argues that modern society is constructed around flows of capital, information, technology, organizational interaction, symbols [ibid: xxxii]. Although there are places in the space of flows and flows in the space of places, cultural and social meaning is defined in place terms,

while functionality, wealth, and power are defined in terms of flows. According to Castells, this is the most fundamental contradiction emerging in our globalized, urbanized, networked world: in a world constructed around the logic of the space of flows, people make their living in the space of places. [ibid: xxxix].

The above arguments prove that the early concept of glocalization, which consists of two main elements: space of places and space of flows, must be supplemented by a third element – the space of value beliefs and emotional experiences, which can be summarized as a space of cultures. In the current network society, people live in the space of places, work in the space of flows, and communicate in the space of moral values and related prejudices, which form their identity.

Communication ‘bubbles’ can have different scales depending on their valuable content and teleological orientation. Digital information and communication technologies make it possible to create both the «little boxes» that Wellman wrote about and transnational networking communities. The independence of online communication from spatial and temporal factors makes it possible to inflate the ‘bubbles’ to a global scale really. As an example, Castells cites modern metropolis and networks of metropolises.

This is the undefined metropolitan region where 20 million people work, live, commute, and communicate by using a network of freeways, media coverage, cable networks, and wireline and wireless telecommunication networks, while retrenching in the polity of the localities of a fragmented territory and identifying their diverse cultures in terms of ethnicity, age, and self-defined social networks. The key feature is the diffusion and networking of population and activities in the metropolitan region, together with the growth of different centers interconnected according to a hierarchy of specialized functions. The points of connection in this global architecture of networks are the points that attract wealth, power, culture, innovation, and people, innovative or not, to these places. For these places

to become nodes of the global networks they need to rely on a multidimensional infrastructure of connectivity (ibid: xxxv).

However, in the context of considering the problem of sovereignty, it should be noted that the so-called Southland, in the terminology of the local media, does have a functional and economic unity, but no institutional or cultural identity (ibid: xxxiv). Thus, even homogeneous in their functional and economic purposes, large network communication bubbles are heterogeneous in value perception. Thus, the unfolding of value glocalization processes has dramatic consequences for the social structures that have developed in the age of mass society. In particular, the mismatch of the boundaries of communication ‘bubbles’ with state borders poses new problems for the modern world order.

Firstly, the contradictory relationship between power and meaning is manifested by a growing disassociation between the globalized center culture and the regions’ cultures, between a culture of globalized elites and cultures of localized masses, ultimately threatens the integrity of states.

Every country has its major(s) node(s) that connect the country to strategic global networks. These nodes underlie the formation of metropolitan regions that determine the local/global spatial structure of each country through their internal, multilayered networking. Outside the landing places of networked value creation lie the spaces of exclusion, or “landscapes of despair”, borrowing the concept from Dear and Wolch, either intra-metropolitan or rural (ibid: xxxvi).

It is these processes of cultural disintegration that have become one of the causes of separatism in Ukraine.

Secondly, according to Castells’ concept, in the modern world individuality prevails over «sense of community», but individualism is not reduced to social isolation, and people living in nation-states strive for a global community, for the search for “identity for the future” (ibid: xlii). This aspiration leads to the formation of «communication bubbles», which consist of people who do not have national self-identification and consider themselves as ‘citizens of the world’. This social stratum

is especially large among the so-called Generation Z – children of the modern Internet, who have never known the world without instant access to information and fast service and practically do not watch television. They form their own virtual transnational subculture. And they were the social base of the protest movements in Russia and Belarus.

Thirdly, depending on the degree of national states homogeneity, various more or less closed ‘bubbles’ may exist within them. As the tragic events, 2013-2014 in Ukraine and the Black Lives Matter protests 2020 in the United States have shown, the existence of polarized social clusters that are formed on ethnic or racial grounds can pose a threat to national security and state unity. Isolationism and polarization in the structure of the network society naturally lead to the radicalization of political culture.

In the ‘bubble democracy’, the ‘audience’ is fragmented into a series of distinct segments, each of which is addressed by information flow-oriented to be ‘partisan’, precisely because political leaders turn to specific niches with the goal not of ‘convincing’ voters with moderate arguments, but rather of mobilizing them to vote by focusing on more rooted identities and radical issues capable of feeding into or exploiting the polarization mechanisms in echo chambers (Palano 2019: 48-49).

One consequence of such radicalization has been that “in a number of cases, liberalism has merged with age-old feelings of tribal identity, giving rise to modern nationalism” (Harari 2017: 294). These processes return to the public discourse the interpretation of national sovereignty in its primordial meaning:

A community of people who claim the right of self-determination based on a common ethnicity, history, and culture might seek to establish sovereignty over a region, thus creating a nation-state as an autonomous area rather than as a fully sovereign, independent political and economic formation. The nation-state is an ideal in which cultural boundaries match up with political boundaries, and the state incorporates people of a single ethnic stock and cultural traditions (Kazancigil & Dogan 1986: 188).

Under such conditions, universalist norms inevitably collide with what Charles Louis Montesquieu defined as “the spirit of the laws” during the Enlightenment. It is known that Montesquieu argued that political institutions needed, for their success, to reflect the social, cultural, and geographical aspects of the particular community (Montesquieu [1748] 2018). At the same time, the global nature of the network society denies the existence of such a form of information sovereignty, for which retrogrades from culture continue to fight against outside interference through various senseless prohibitions. Nation-states increasingly share sovereignty while still proudly branding their flags (Castells 2005: 15).

Even despite the changes that have taken place in the world in recent years, in particular the clear trend towards isolationism during the COVID-19 pandemic, I generally agree with Castells’ assertion that there is an even deeper transformation of political institutions in the network society: the rise of a new form of state that gradually replaces the nation-states of the industrial age [ibid]. At the same time, in discussing the problem of sovereignty, I want to give priority to his remarks that it has to engage in a process of global governance but without a global government. Simply put, neither current political actors nor people at large want a world government, so it will not happen [ibid].

Besides, I want to emphasize that the patterns of the filtration bubble and echo chamber operate in the global geopolitical mega-network too. And these patterns cause fragmentation in terms of values and cultural characteristics. These processes represent a new network reincarnation of Samuel Huntington’s predictions about the clash of civilizations. Therefore, new Biden’s project to create a ‘democratic international’ under the leadership of the United States will have limited capabilities as another variation on the theme of world government and will be just a «big bubble» in the segmented global network space. The futurological scenario at the global level is a modernized version of the Castells forecast: governance will be operating in several networks of political institutions “that share sovereignty in various degrees and reconfigure itself in a variable geopolitical geometry” [ibid] following their own cultural and civilizational identity.

Conclusions

The tradition of liberalism and democratic norms require that, in the debate on sovereignty, the sovereignty of the individual have to be taken as a starting point, and not the sovereignty of the state. But to add stability to the construction of liberal democracy, a mass media that operate under the control of financial and state elites is needed. In the condition of mass society the media, and especially television, played the role of cement, which bonded individuals, social groups, and nation-states into a joint global liberal-democratic integrity. Thus, the goals of geopolitics and the tools of massification turned the ideas of liberalism and democracy into their opposite – universalism and information despotism.

The transit from a mass society to a networked society, which is due to the development of the Internet and especially online networks, leads to a change in the paradigm of liberal democracy from broad global universalism to deep sovereignty. The process of sovereignization takes place at three levels – individual, group, and state. At the first level, the change lies in the personalization of politics, which is a consequence of the development of self-communication and interactivity of online network participants. At the second level, society is fragmented into separate segments, which are called ‘filtration bubbles’ or ‘echo chambers’. The formation of communication ‘bubbles’ is associated with the identification of people primarily concerning moral values and experiences. The appeal to deep inner beliefs, often subconscious, is in turn determined by the stress caused by an overabundance of rational information. Such fragmentation leads to the formation of a new type of democratic system – ‘bubble democracy’. But communication ‘bubbles’ reach a high degree of isolation and self-sufficiency, which affects the polarization of society. At the third level, there is a further enlargement of communication bubbles based on cultural and civilizational identity. Such enlargement contributes to the sovereignty of states, in cases when the boundaries of the bubbles coincide with the state borders. But it threatens sovereignty and territorial integrity if several large polarized clusters are formed within the state, or clusters that extend beyond the state have extra-state or anti-state political ties. These contradictions reflect the dialectical nature of

glocalization, which is especially acute in the space of ethnic, racial, and cultural-civilizational identities. Thus, the sovereignty of the individual leads to group sovereignty, which is based on perceived subconscious trust and commonality of moral values, and then goes to the subnational, national, and supranational levels. If the global liberal-democratic order of the traditional mass media society was characterized by the formula “Unity in Diversity”, then the order of the global network society is described by the formula “Diversity in Unity”.

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