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Olesya Venger

GLOBALIZATION: AID OR CONSTRAINT TO THE DEMOCRATIC FUNCTION OF THE MEDIA? REVOLUTIONS IN SERBIA AND UKRAINE

The problems of the impact of globalization on the world and the Ukrainian media as well as on the Ukrainian national identity, in the context of media activities during the revolution, are addressed in the article. The democratic functions of the media provide a theoretical platform needed to describe the inadequacies of the world media coverage during conflicts. The comparison of different situations faced by the media during revolutions in Serbia and Ukraine is offered. The chronological pattern is used to analyze the issues faced by the media.

Abstract

Little has been done to assess the impact of the global media on the Ukrainian Orange revolution so far. The world's perception of Ukraine has changed. The definition of Ukraine was transformed from 'the country sandwiched somewhere between Russia and the eastern borders of the European Union' to 'the country of democratic and peaceful revolution' the images of which were widely broadcast by the world's major TV-channels, dominating headline news for some time in late 2004. Still, the real impact of these reports on the media in Ukraine has not been studied seriously. This paper will try not only to answer some of the questions that may be posed about the Ukrainian media in times of the Orange revolution, but also to compare the situation that was faced by the Serbian and Ukrainian media during revolutionary times in the context of media globalization.

Mass media and globalizing force: the good and the bad

As much as globalization can be seen as a great good as well as a great evil, it can also be a constraint as well as an aid to the democratic functions of the media.

"For me globalization began with the fall of a bomb on my balcony",- said one Serbian journalist. Unfortunately, not only the above-mentioned balcony has fallen victim to the globalizing force in Serbia. At the time, one of the major concerns in Serbia was the unconditional freedom given to mass media right after the Tito regime came to an end; the freedom that awoke the media from a sleep and allowed mass media organizations to disseminate the seeds of hatred among the Serbian and Albanian peoples. If we move forward about 13 years and move north-east to pre-Maidan

Ukraine, we will see a similar picture in a sense that some media made clear attempts to incite hatred between the Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking populations. But there were additional factors. The internet, new communication technologies, and the uniform attention of the world media to the development of events in Ukraine made the opinion of ordinary Ukrainians known and the actions of all parties scrupulously analyzed. Intellectual discussions were all over the place, making the internet the main distributor of information that helped the world understand the real intentions of the Ukrainian people. This was arguably the time when the pressure of responsibility on all Ukrainian media due to the world reaction was at its peak.

To understand the phenomenon of media globalization one should not forget the past of media functioning, especially the communist media of the former USSR and Yugoslavia. Nobody was bothered then by the question: what the effect might be of altering the entire system of communication, of changing a basic variable: the reclusive existence of the media within the national boundaries of a given state? From the point of view of international relations, media were seen as components of the domestic order, relating to national politics and public opinion. Before the death of Yugoslav president Tito, during the 'velvet dictatorship' of 1945-1980, everybody was satisfied with the media situation in Yugoslavia. The long forgotten ethnic divisions were gradually gaining strength during 1968-1981 in a state of general praise and obliviousness to the growing snowball of intolerance. The conflict started to surface in the early 1980th, long before 1991, when the old post World War Two problems heated up. With the universal turmoil caused by the break up of communist Yugoslavia, media outlets, whether half privatized or still state-owned, were forced to alter their strategies. After a few unsuccessful attempts to maintain old style control over the media in the 1990s they saw new possibilities that opened new horizons. New programs appeared on the screens immediately, many issues were opened to public discussion. Along with the good effects of the new era for mass media, the industry confronted some major problems. Mass media were flooded with foreign products, often of inferior quality: movies, talk-show programs - which left no chance of success for national production. Those were the very first effects of globalization in the former communist republics. This process has been slowed down in Ukraine and the rest of the post-USSR due to a significantly lower degree of openness in their societies compared to Yugoslavia.

Ukraine and Serbia: why did the revolution happen?

With newly obtained media freedom and nationalistic moods on the rise in Serbia, the moment was calling for the rise of a dictator. Milosevic was a figure who appeared at the right time and in the right place in Serbian politics. The situation became more gruesome after the infamous Martinovic case in 1985. Serbian nationalists were calling for revenge, for protection of those Serbs who were unable to defend themselves and who were offended by the Albanians (like Martinovic). While in Serbia the nationalistic motives were the ones leading the dictatorship to power, in Ukraine the reasons have been quite different. Mounting public dissatisfaction with shady deals in the highest echelons of power and resulting intellectual discussions in some media as early as 2001 were the early symptoms of the credibility gap that ultimately led Ukraine towards the Orange revolution. At this stage, the internet developed itself not only as an arena for those journalists who were not afraid to be critical of the authorities and who were willing to give the public an alternative account of events, but also as a transmitter of uncensored information. It did not take long for a political satire genre to be reborn and reinvented; the publicist genre was renovated and brought to the pages of the World Wide Web.

It should be mentioned that though the effects of globalization may in the short term be benign or positive, in the long run it threatens 'democratic politics' (Street, 2001). Indeed, after a period of relative freedom of the media in Yugoslavia, one could see the appearance of the media conglomerates, whose aim was to report facts in favour of their political interests or in the interests of their owners. Before the 1990s the media succeeded in igniting the conflicts further, separating the peoples in Yugoslav society. On the one hand, the media played a discursive role in society, but, on the other hand, they were responsible for growing fear, nationalist extremism and hatred. Media duels became popular: RTS vs HTV, Politika vs Vjesnik, Nin vs Danas. In the Ukrainian context, the media created a picture of division in Ukrainian society during the Orange revolution as well; here the East confronted the West. The oppositional 5th channel confronted the TRK Ukraine channel, the mouthpiece of the authorities, and fought the ignorance and, what they called, 'a betrayal of professional principles' of most of their colleagues from other TV channels. Examples from various parts of the world show that the media can both facilitate and obstruct intercultural dialogue in multicultural societies (Abdelnasser, 2003). Media catering to

specific ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious groups have created or reinforced an image of categorization', according to which individuals develop a strong identification with their own ethnicity, culture, language or religion and an antagonism towards the 'other'. In both cases, in Ukraine and in Serbia, this idea was exploited by opposing parties far too well: smear campaigns against Yushenko in Ukraine, portraying him as a fascist and supporter of a division of Ukrainians into three sorts of people; anti-Albanian cases in the Serbian media and vice versa led to the creation of a conflict which may not be solved for many years to come.

The media was used as a perfect tool for shaping consumers' attitudes in times of change; the media in Serbia, similarly to some Ukrainian media, served as a platform for spin doctors herding the masses and trying to blend them into a desirable state. In some cases they were successful in achieving this goal.

The Serbian revolution during the 1990s:
How did it happen?

To this day, Serbia remains one of several countries which, whenever they are mentioned in the media, leave the reader with the impression that something must be done about the internal or external conflicts in society. Cuba, Libya, North Korea, Iran are some other names in this category.

The conflict in Kosovo began with increasing tensions between the Serbs and the Kosovars, which were fuelled by the Serbian, Albanian, and, to some extent, western media. Nevertheless, during a short period of time, namely in 1990, there was a chance: the Yugoslav economy was able to form its civil society option. But this phenomenon could not last long. The second phase of the media clash did not allow anyone to relax and the media were involved in war propaganda overtures. At the same time Milosevic used his power to facilitate his policy, control the police, the army and the media. Despite all these events, with the anti-Milosevic block getting stronger and the independent media getting more widespread and influential, Serbia has found itself involved in a decade-long revolutionary struggle. The late 1990s were the golden days for the Serbian organisation *Otpor*, which brought down the dictatorship of Serbian President Milosevic in 2000. But war rhetoric and war propaganda played its role. The confusion about the real situation in Belgrade caused by the inability to assess 'rights' and 'wrongs' by the western media accelerated the NATO decision to deploy troops in Yugoslavia.

The unwillingness to cooperate with the UN was one of the key reasons to invade Kosovo. Even after

the invasion, the western media continued to play the role of spin doctors, portraying the things the way they needed to. For example, when the Serb and the Russian position prevailed, it was the Russians and Serbs who were portrayed as shifting their positions, when it was NATO that had actually backed down. In this way myths supported by western media were created. The journalistic process was captive to the art of spin-doctoring. This was made, first, to maintain the guilt of the victim and the rightness of the community's action in murdering, and second, to revisit and re-enact the violent event which the community now described as its birth. In other words, ritual and religion emerged to keep the story going (Hunt 2000)

We live in societies in which the scapegoat mechanism continues to provide the basis for most of our cultural institutions. We should not be surprised to discover that it provides the basis for the institution of journalism as well. And the implication of this is that our reporting will unconsciously serve the maintenance of that culture, unless we develop the anthropological insights to move beyond.

The best examples of how globalization may enhance the democratic functions of the media.

One of the emerging issues in the age of globalized communication is whether new information technologies such as the internet have an impact on democratization. The ways the media frame the issues and render their sympathies will affect the balance of power in a public debate. Essentially, the media represent resources that can be mobilized to demote or promote democracy. Internet outlets were the first to disseminate information among opinion leaders in the time of revolution in Ukraine. The basic democratic functions of the media are as follows:

- to help spread democratic ideals;
- to reflect the voices of contending parties;
- to provide the public with quality and relevant information;
- to articulate the social choices;
- to facilitate public deliberation.

If the media fails all these functions, democracy will be undermined. In such a case, the media will do a society a disservice by supporting and justifying the actions of the power center, marginalizing the contending voices, diluting critical information, precluding genuine options, shortening public debates, and demobilizing collective behaviours. As Chan notes:

"The international media... can undermine the governing elite's monopoly of information in authoritarian systems. A good illustration is the sig-

nificant impact of Western films, literature on the collapse of Eastern Europe... The influence was particularly strong when the Soviet Union's withdrawal had left a 'widespread ideological, media, and cultural vacuum.' (Chan, 2002)

Indeed, after the collapse of the USSR national mass media were virtually inactive because they did not know how to behave, what to transmit, and what to be. The situation changed gradually, the communist party elite transformed into the country's elite. They were no longer communists because they threw away their party tickets, but they were still in power. During the Soviet regime almost all opposition was eradicated by the authorities in the USSR. That is why the seeds of corruption and communist party habits were once again planted in the ground that was ready to accept the seeds of democratic changes in the society. These actions could not suppress the emergence of young leaders of such countries and home grown opposition was born. The forgotten nationalist tradition was reincarnated by the people at the front line of the revolutions. And part of the media followed their example.

People are inspired by events that happen far away. It is no coincidence that one country after another was baptized by democracy in the 1990s (Chan, 2002). In fact, the global communication network is a network that helps foster global diffusion of democracy. Contemporary media indeed provide an efficient link among the elites around the world. People power, as practised in Georgia, was a source of motivation for many that struggled for democracy in Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kyrgyzstan.

The Orange revolution. How did it happen in Ukraine?

Ukrainian nationalism and yearning for freedom inspired the country to peaceful revolution. Global media also helped. From the first moment of the protests on the main Ukrainian square the world was receiving information about the Orange revolution. The pictures were more informative than the words: if the officials said that there were no more than 50 000 people, the pictures showed the real scale of the events.

The internet became the arena for the expression of the views of professional journalists and opinion leaders during the Ukrainian Orange revolution. It so happened that the intellectuals did not have the mentality or the courage to make their views known after 1991. During the rule of 'two Leonids' (from 1991 till 2004), the Ukrainian intellectual elite was also dormant. The occasionally disgruntled with the regime people were expressing their outrage on the streets of the Ukrainian capital, but the majority of Ukrainians were just passers-by. Such an attitude was common among Ukrainians before 2004, before the Orange Revolution, when

a series of protests and political events took place throughout the country, and the real Ukraine spoke.

The Orange revolution can be seen as a direct democracy. In fact, the people barricaded offices of corrupt officials, so that they were unable to get to their work places. The opposition adopted the very same tactics of non-violent resistance and intimidation that proved to be so successful first in Belgrade and then in Tbilisi. The core force in the Ukrainian revolution were the *Pora* squads. Styled after the Serbian *Otpor* and Georgian *Khmara*, the movement dominated by Western-Ukrainians prepared itself intensively, and displayed wonderful discipline and control. Orange revolution slogans were the slogans of the Ukrainian renaissance; therefore, the Orange revolution had its roots in Ukrainian nationalism. The nation was organized facing the threat of being outwitted by those in power.

There were difficult times, when as a result of a media war during the election campaign, the two parts of the country were brainwashed in different ways. Before the elections the media was divided into ruling party and opposition followers. All of the main state owned channels, including private channels owned by corrupt politicians, were reporting biased information about the country's leadership. Only a few oppositional media were functioning. Internet journalism, including blogs, became the main source for unbiased and professionally written journalistic information. As soon as most opinion leaders among the Ukrainians had access to it - they were informed about the latest events and related this information to the people. The most important thing was that there was absolutely no possibility to pressure the internet web sites to favour one political party or another. That is why the internet played an important role during the Orange revolution. The triumph of the opposition on the internet, and, consequently, among those in search of unbiased information, as well as opinion leaders, was overwhelming.

Conclusion: The era of velvet revolutions. What were the consequences?

In the era of globalization, it is important to understand that events half way around the world are capable of influencing your country's future. Mass media are the main means of acquiring and disseminating such information. The Ukrainian Orange revolution was supported by the revolution in the media.

In fact, the media war in the context of the revolution was evident because both oppositional and ruling party supporters had their own media representatives. The coverage of the events on the channels that were ruling party sympathizers was unbalanced and subjective. But the situation changed even before the change

of the regime. The journalists of the TV channels that previously favoured the ruling party decided to be with the revolution, to report the facts in an unbiased way. The question of journalist ethics arose and the journalistic standards prevailed.

Though in Ukraine the problem of the split between mostly Russian-speaking Eastern and Ukrainian-speaking Western Ukraine was created artificially, the consequences of such misrepresentation could have been bad enough for the success of the revolution. The public relations campaigners compared the developed East with the undeveloped West, which resulted in reiteration of the old Soviet style attempts to disintegrate Ukrainian society into 'us' and the Others'.

On the other hand, nowadays, in Kosovo the situation worsened to the point where you could be killed only for speaking a language, which is similar to Serbian. This is what happened to the Bulgarian official from the UN mission. As it was explained, he and two of his drivers were killed because of his Slavic origin in the region supposedly controlled by UN peacekeeping forces.

Eventually, the truth becomes inevitable: there is absolutely no way of resolving ethnic conflict by means brought in by outsiders. There are many projects aimed at the reconciliation of the people from for-

mer Yugoslavia, but this conflict still has a long way to go before it is resolved. The Kosovars want the UN troops removed from the region and demand independence for their region. Serbia wants to continue talks on the status of Kosovo, while many Serbians still continue talking about Kosovo as a Serbian part of the country. The nationalist ideals of Serbia took a new turn, now showing the world another ethnic truth of Kosovo: the wish to be independent from Serbia, free from military presence, able to determine its fate by itself.

What was the core component of the Ukrainian Orange revolution? Western observers admitted its non-violent character, as well as the high political culture of Ukrainian society. The Ukrainian nation realized its right to live a life worth of respect in an independent country. While being a grand social venue, the Ukrainian Orange revolution also became a precedent. It gave an impetus to the never ending process of national self-perfection for the sake of prosperity and a rise of national ideals; it was a wake-up call as well as a call to continue the fight that was fought for centuries. The fight for the freedom of the nation, for the right to be told the truth and not to become blinded by refined and exquisite lies.

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Олеся Венгер

ГЛОБАЛІЗАЦІЯ: СТИМУЛ ЧИ ПЕРЕШКОДА ДЕМОКРАТИЧНИМ ФУНКЦІЯМ МАС-МЕДІА? РЕВОЛЮЦІЇ В СЕРБІЇ ТА УКРАЇНІ

Проблеми впливу глобалізаційних процесів на світові та українські мас-медіа і на українську національну свідомість в контексті діяльності медіа протягом революції, є центральними питаннями цього дослідження. Демократичні функції мас-медіа забезпечують теоретичну основу для опису неадекватного висвітлення світовими медіа-подій під час конфліктів. У статті розглянуто різні ситуації функціонування медіа в Україні та Сербії під час революцій.