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## FRAME ANALYSIS OF THE NEW YORK TIMES COVERAGE OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND THE "ORANGE" REVOLUTION IN UKRAINE IN 2004

*Before the Orange revolution, Ukraine did not enjoy much world media attention. Although the situation changed with the outbreak of the revolution, only a few attempts to analyze its media coverage in the foreign mass media were made. This study focuses on the New York Times coverage of the presidential elections and the Orange revolution in Ukraine and compares the differences in portraying various parties of the conflict. Frame analysis provides methodological background for the study and critical theory serves as a theoretical framework.*

### Introduction

At the end of 2004 the world witnessed events which are now known as the Ukrainian "Orange Revolution." Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians poured on the streets to protest the fraud in the second round of presidential elections which were held on November 21, 2004. The protests lasted for two weeks, and, as a result; a parliamentary vote and a ruling by the Supreme Court denounced round two and refused to legitimize it. The rerun of the second round was ordered by the Supreme Court to be held on December 26. This unprecedented 'third round' was won by the opposition candidate, and on January 22, 2005 Viktor Yuschenko was inaugurated as a President of Ukraine (Kuzio, 2005).

During the elections crisis in Ukraine the world witnessed the serious deterioration of the relations between Russia and the West. Russia endorsed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych who was seen as a pro-Russian candidate, while the West supported Viktor Yuschenko who was seen as a pro-Western reformist. Russian president Vladimir Putin congratulated Viktor Yanukovych with his 'victory' even before the official results were announced. In contrast, the Western leaders and mass media were mostly sympathetic to Viktor Yuschenko and his supporters.

In fact, the presidential campaign in Ukraine was not paid much attention on the pages of the New York Times and Western press overall until the protests broke. However, after the Orange Revolution started Ukraine became the place of special interest both in the United States. Probably never in its modern history was Ukraine covered so intensively in

the American press. The Western media provided the great variety of opinions and characteristics of Ukrainian events. This study will focus on the New York Times coverage of the presidential elections and Orange Revolution' in Ukraine and the researcher will employ the frame analysis as his methodology and critical theory as theoretical framework.

Critical theory is inspired by Marxist political economy analysis, but has been updated with a new reading. It was especially influenced by Antonio Gramsci and his conception of hegemony. Hegemony implied that the dominance of certain formations was secured, not by ideological compulsion, but by cultural leadership. Thus, media (and other signifying institutions) not only reflect and sustain the consensus in society, but also help to produce the consensus and manufacture consent (Hall, 1982).

Carragee and Roefs (2004) study framing analysis in connection with the media's ideological role. They argue that "the media hegemony thesis directly connects the framing process to considerations of power and to examinations of the relationship between the news media and political change." Therefore, studying the framing process within the context of the production, distribution, and interpretation of hegemonic meanings allows researchers to find the relationship between news and the distribution of power in American society. "Frames, as imprints of power, are central to the production of hegemonic meanings" (Carragee & Roefs, 2004, p. 222).

Overall, the Gramscian concept of hegemony argues that the dominant class will use any means to

spread its ideology through society, and mass media is an extremely important instrument in this struggle. In any society the media are used to bring the political message of the government to the population, and the foreign policy is not an exception.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it will be one of the first studies of the media coverage of the modern-day "velvet revolutions" which happened in several post-Socialist countries in recent years (Serbia 2001, Georgia 2003, Ukraine 2004, and Kyrgyzstan 2005). These revolutions are new phenomena, and their international news coverage has rarely been studied. Second, this research will address important questions regarding the ideological role of the mass media. It will probe whether the propaganda model is still relevant in the United States.

This paper will consist of four chapters. Chapter One introduced the subject and purpose of the study, provided the theoretical framework, and justified the research task. Chapter Two will outline the research questions and explain the methodology of the study (frame analysis), sampling, data collection and analysis, and limitations. Chapter Three will report the results of the analysis and their interpretation. Chapter Four will provide the general summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

### Methodology

The main focus of this study is to analyze the New York Times coverage of the political crisis, which happened in 2004 in Ukraine. The specific research question is: How were the presidential elections and the Orange Revolution framed in the New York Times? Frame analysis will be employed as a method of this study. Framing research originates from the sociological research of Goffman (1974) and the media sociology of Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin. One of the most common definitions of what is meant by "to frame" is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1991).

In general, frame analysis is a type of narrative/content analysis in which the researcher explores text to identify the frame in order to pinpoint the rhetoric of the writer and/or the news organization. More specifically, frame analysis assesses whether or not journalistic text plays a political role. Ideally, framing research examines how frames are sponsored by political actors, how journalists employ

frames in the construction of news stories, how these stories articulate frames, and how audience members interpret these frames (Carragee & Roefs, 2004).

Frame analysis examines reasoning devices used to explain the news event and framing devices used to characterize the event. Reasoning devices provide justifications or reason for a general position; these are: roots (causal interpretations of issues), consequences, and appeals to principle (Carragee and Roefs, 2004, p. 223). Framing devices include: sources (all people directly quoted in the text); keywords (words that appear in a headline and are then repeated in the text, words that appear frequently in the body of stories, or words that have particular salience due to their placement within the text or their cultural resonance for the news audience); metaphors (the figures of speech in which a word for one idea or thing is used in place of another to suggest likeness between them); agency (the person or group identified as causing or solving the problem; the causal force that created the newsworthy act). In course of analysis each story is read to determine specific patterns found in the coverage, focusing systematically on dimensions that have been identified in previous studies as framing devices: sources, keywords, metaphors and agency (Entman, 1991; Wall, 1997).

This study analyzes the coverage of Ukraine's 2004 presidential campaign in the American daily the New York Times. The time period of the analysis is from October 12, 2004 (the start of campaign coverage in the Times) till the announcing of the re-run of the second round by Supreme Court that is seen by many experts as an actual end of the 'Orange Revolution' (December 4, 2004). The New York Times was chosen because this daily is known in the USA as the leading publication (elite press) paying special attention to the international news. The New York Times is one of the oldest newspapers in the USA (founded in 1851), and has one of the highest circulations in the country - 1,121,057 in September 2004 (Circulation, 2005).

The data from the New York Times was accessed through the Lexis-Nexis database using keyword research (keyword "Ukraine"). All news articles longer than 100 words focused on the topic of Ukrainian elections and Orange Revolution were included in the analysis. As a result, a total of 38 articles from the New York Times were downloaded.

All the stories were be read first for comprehension. On the second time the researcher open-coded each story. The sample codesheet (see Appendix) included four 'technical' questions (name of publication; date and year; length, location, and type of

the story; title and author) and five theme questions. The themes include the campaigning and voting process; the mass demonstrations; the main candidates (Yuschenko and Yanukovych), their programs and their popular support; difference between Ukrainian East and West; and the foreign actions/attitudes (namely world leaders, the USA, Russia, the European Union, West). These questions will be applied to the articles, and the codesheet for each article will be filled with supporting examples and observations.

In the next stage, the researcher reviewed the codesheets, and summaries will be written for each theme (Altheide, 1996). Afterward the researcher compared the findings, probed for particular framing devices, determined which words and images are the components of the frame and discovered the consisted patterns of the overall frame (Entman, 1993; Wall, 1997). Finally, the findings with the researcher's interpretation and key concepts were integrated in another draft.

Reliability, validity, and credibility. Reliability measures the consistency of observations: whether a research instrument will produce the same results every time it is applied. As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest, "reliability is not so much of a consideration in qualitative research because, first of all, "if [a] measurement is composed of a single, nonrepeated operation, there can be no measure of reliability" " (p. 239). On the other hand, validity deals with the truth value of observation: whether a research instrument is accurately reporting the nature of the object of study in its behavior (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002). Qualitative researchers seek to produce and demonstrate credible and trustworthy data.

The credibility and trustworthiness of this research was guaranteed in three ways. First, the researcher provided rich and thick description using the numerous examples from original texts to illustrate and provide specific support for arguments (Creswell, 1998). And, second, the researcher's background secures his deep understanding of Ukrainian political, economical and cultural issues. He is of a half Ukrainian and half Russian origin, was raised in Ukraine. The researcher is fluent in English and has the native knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian languages. His academic background includes degrees in Political Science and Journalism.

This study is limited to its own data and analysis, and its results cannot be generalized. The researcher analyzed only one newspaper - the New York Times (USA). Thus, it cannot represent the American print

media as a whole. The sample included not all stories, but only those more than 100 words long.

## Results and discussions

In this chapter, first, the findings of each thematic question will be presented, and then, the problem, cause, solution, and moral claims, as well as their interpretation will be discussed.

### *Campaigning and voting*

In its coverage the New York Times portrayed presidential campaign in Ukraine as "passionate", but "fierce and increasingly nasty" ("a fierce fight over the country's future", "a dead heat"). The campaign was seen as "biased and marred by widespread irregularities" and "flagrant violations." The voting was portrayed by such words as "abuse," "pressure," "blocking," "bias," and "fraud".

Overall, the election was called "disputed" (also "rigged" or "botched") and the official results "fraudulent". The situation after the protests begun was depicted by such words as "stalemate," "impasse," "deadlock," but as protests continued the military vocabulary came into use: "struggle," "fight," "battle," "battleground".

### *Mass demonstrations*

Mass demonstrations ("protests," "rally," "crowds") which caused the Orange Revolution' were depicted by the New York Times' journalists sympathetically. The people who took part in them were called "protesters," "supporters of the opposition candidate," "demonstrators." Nevertheless, there were the disturbing signs in the reports, as well: "thus-far peaceful demonstrators," "unrest growing on the streets," "public rebellion," "growing revolt".

Sometimes the military terminology was used for depicting the protestors' actions: [they] "overwhelmed Kiev," "immediately occupied Kreschatik Street," "occupied the capital," "opened a new front." As protests grew, the journalists started to emphasize their extent: "enormous protests," "huge protest demonstrations," "round-the-clock protests." However, the peaceful and joyful character of the protests was also reflected in the articles: "singing, chanting and freezing for Ukrainian democracy," "opposition demonstrations feel like huge, cappuccino-charged dance parties," "the feel of a rock concert." In one case there was a critical suggestion that the demonstrations "carry a dollop of an unsavory form of nationalism."

### *Main candidates, political platforms, popular support*

In the New York Times' portrayal of the main candidates - Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych and opposition leader Viktor Yuschenko - the dichoto-

mization is obvious. Yanukovych is seen as a candidate "promising to follow [the departing president] Kuchma's course", while Yushchenko "promising to steer the country toward a more open and democratic path, more closely allied with Europe".

In the first article about the presidential campaign in Ukraine which appeared in the New York Times on October 12, 2004 such characteristics of the candidates may be found:

"Mr. Yushchenko, who appears to hold a slight lead in the polls, has promised to steer Ukraine toward a more open and democratic society, ending what he calls the cronyism and corruption of Mr. Kuchma's 10 years in power. He vows to improve economic and political relations with the European Union and NATO, while withdrawing Ukraine's 1,600 troops from Iraq. Like many here, he argues that Mr. Kuchma dispatched the force largely to improve tattered ties with the Bush administration.

Mr. Yanukovich's economic and social pledges echo his opponent's, but in his view Ukraine's future depends on closer relations with Russia, the country's largest trading partner. He remains more reserved about Europe and the United States, but has said he would not withdraw Ukrainian troops from Iraq until democratic elections are held there".

Yanukovych's name in the coverage is almost always connected with the former president of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma: "Mr.Kuchma's choice," "personally selected successor of Mr.Kuchma," "Kuchma's personally selected choice," "Kuchma's handpicked successor," "chosen successor," "openly supported by the outgoing president," "government's candidate," "the state-supported candidate." The support enjoyed by Yanukovych from the Russian president is also often reflected in the articles: "the candidate favored by Mr.Putin," "Moscow-backed prime minister," "Kremlin's favorite", "Kremlin-backed candidate," "Mr.Putin's choice."

On the other hand, Yushchenko was shown as "a Western-leaning reformer (challenger)," "liberal, democratic reformer eager to break the power of the state as it turns to Europe." Overall, the geopolitical choice of the candidates was shown as their crucial difference: "the candidate who promised to strengthen bonds with Moscow" (Yanukovych) and "one advocating closer ties to Europe" (Yushchenko), the choice between East and West. Thus, the candidates were portrayed offering "strikingly diverged visions for the country's future." Similarly, their support bases were showed as Western and Eastern parts of Ukraine.

After the second round of the election, the New

York Times never legitimized Yanukovych's "nominal victory." He was portrayed as "official winner," "nominal winner," "the declared winner," "candidate declared the winner and president-elect." On the other hand, Yushchenko was depicted as "officially defeated presidential candidate," "opposition candidate," "the opposition leader who asserted that he had been denied the rightful victory," "opposition challenger," "Western-leaning challenger," "popular leader."

Yanukovych supporters, unlike the opposition protesters, were mentioned in the New York Times' coverage seldom, and their portrayal was predominantly negative: "rough-looking young men," "[Yanukovych supporters] warned away opposition supporters with menacing sheer, and in at least one case, threats," "the bands of Yanukovich supporters who have begun wandering the capital, often taunting the opposition side. Although vastly outnumbered here, the men who make up Mr. Yanukovich's demonstrations are often menacing and rude; today they catcalled to pedestrians and passing traffic with some of the most foul Russian insults."

#### *Ukrainian history and present situation, East-West division*

The New York Times depicted Ukraine as "former Soviet republic... at an important crossroads of Europe... flanked by NATO countries to the west and Russia to the east" (also "bridge between Russia and the rest of Europe"). The centuries of Russian domination are also mentioned, and it is shown as cause of Ukraine's (and especially Eastern Ukraine's) deep ties to Russia. However, calling Kiev "the birthplace of the Russian state and Russian Orthodox Church" the New York Times follows Russian historiography, which claims the Rus heritage because Russians were the only East Slavs to create a state in modern times. Nevertheless, according to Ukrainian historiography, Ukrainians are the most direct descendants of the Slavic tribe of Polonians who played a major role in creating Rus' statehood (Subtelny, 1988; Wilson, 2000).

After the election results divided country in two almost equal parts, the situation in Ukraine was depicted as "split" or "sharp division": "with the Russian-speaking eastern half of the country strongly behind Yanukovich and the capital and the more "European" western half strongly behind Yushchenko, Europe's new dividing line seems to run somewhere east of the Dnieper River." The situation was seen as very dangerous, and "risk of civil war" and "threat to break up the nation" was mentioned several times.

#### *Foreign actions and attitudes*

In the beginning of the campaign, the foreign in-

volvement was seen only from the Russian side: the New York Times reported that Yanukovych benefited from "high-profile support from Russia's president, Vladimir V. Putin." After Russian president came to Kyiv for three days before the first round of elections, the Times characterized it as "interfering in another country's internal affairs" and "Russia's soft imperialism."

Overall, Russian support for Yanukovych was portrayed as "open," while the West supported Yuschenko "not quite so openly" or "more subtly." The Western observers were shown as "unequivocally critical" and "calling on" investigation or recount. Nevertheless, soon the United States became to use the more strict vocabulary: it "could not accept" the results and "put pressure" for solution to the problem. Later Western nations "condemned" the official results. Europeans were mostly depicted as "mediators."

As the tensions between Russia and the West grew ("tensions... not seen... perhaps since the cold war"), the parallels with "the cold war" became ubiquitous. The situation was depicted as "a cold war-style proxy confrontation" ("the standoff had a cold war quality, as the United States and Russia tussled over spheres of influence and political principles"; "Russian officials dusted off cold war vocabulary and summoned bitter visions of lost imperial ambitions and fears of Western meddling in Russia's sphere of influence").

#### *Sources*

The most common source the New York Times journalists use is "a senior Western diplomat." In some cases it is "a diplomat," "an American diplomat," or "United States official." The experts from the American think tanks both in the USA (Brookings Institution) and Moscow (Carnegie Moscow Center) were heavily used. European observers were the source of the election falsification. Among Ukrainian sources prevailed the experts close to Viktor Yanukovych and former president Leonid Kuchma.

Thus, coverage of the Ukrainian presidential campaign partially proves the Said's (1997) suggestion that an American journalist in a foreign country usually communicate with the colleagues, American embassy officers, American residents and people who are known to have good relations with Americans, thus limiting the available sources of information to the pro-American circle.

#### *The Problem*

Entman (1993) suggests that a frame may be detected by posing these questions a frame will answer: What is identified as the overriding problem? What is identified as the underlying cause of the

problem? What is identified as the primary solution to this problem? What are the moral claims made within the coverage?

So, in case of the presidential elections and the Orange Revolution' in Ukraine the electoral fraud was depicted as the primary problem of the conflict. In coverage the elections were characterized as "disputed," and the results as "fraudulent." The main agency was the Ukrainian government.

#### *Causes*

The underlying causes for the electoral crisis were linked both to domestic and foreign factors. In Ukraine, the corrupt government was accountable for the falsifications, and especially the outgoing president Leonid Kuchma who endorsed his "personally selected successor." Russian interference was seen as the equally important cause of the fraud. President of Russia Vladimir Putin was characterized as "a co-conspirator with Ukraine's outgoing president, Leonid Kuchma, to tilt the campaign and fix the election in favor of the pro-Moscow candidate..."

The history of Ukraine was told in a very primitive way, as it was shown as a birthplace of Russia and its former province. Depicting Ukraine, the New York Times' journalists relied on Russian historiography while Ukrainian historians offer the absolutely different vision. Therefore, the split of Ukraine in two parts - pro-Yuschenko, "nationalistic," "more European" Western Ukraine and pro-Yanukovych, "industrialized," "Russian-speaking" Eastern Ukraine - was also oversimplified. In reality the regional and political division of Ukraine is much more complicated (Yuschenko, for instance, won some eastern, predominantly Russian-speaking, regions).

#### *Solutions*

Only Westerners were presented as working to solve the problem facing Ukraine. Among them the most active were the American, Dutch, British, and Polish officials. President Aleksandr Kwasniewski of Poland and Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief were presented as the main "mediators." By contrast, Russians were only trying to interfere into Ukraine's politics. Thus, the speaker of Russia's lower house Boris Gryzlov who also took part in the talks between Yuschenko, Kuchma and Yanukovych was never depicted as a mediator. He was rather shown as "a counterweight" to the Westerners and a source of "the overt support" for Yanukovych.

In its coverage of the Orange Revolution', the New York Times heavily relied on the Western diplomatic sources ("a Western senior diplomat"). Thus, the solution offered by the newspaper was

identical to the position of the West in the conflict. First it called for "a recount or investigation of Mr. Yushchenko's charges", but very soon it adopted the line of Ukrainian opposition which insisted on rerun of the second round. The Russia's objections were condemned as "interference" and ridiculed.

#### *Moral claims*

The understanding of the democratic principles is used to generalize about the people involved in the conflict. Thus, the supporters of Yushchenko are shown as "more European", "a free-wheeling, flower-waving generation", while the supporters of Yanukovych as "those comfortable living in a centralized and disciplined form of post-Soviet government." Eastern Ukrainians were also always linked to Russia and its President Putin, who was depicted as an authoritarian leader ready to start a new cold war. Overall, the Westerners were showed as saving "young Ukrainian democracy," while Russians were trying to steal it.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study suggest that the New York Times in its coverage of the presidential elections and the Orange Revolution' in Ukraine employed the conflict frame. This frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions, and is conceptually related to strategy coverage. This type of coverage makes winning and losing the central concept; thus the vocabulary of wars, games, and competition is often used, and the performance and style of a party or an individual are highlighted (Valkenburg, 1999).

In this conflict frame Russia was portrayed as an

aggressive intruder, while the Western powers were portrayed as working to solve the internal Ukrainian conflict. The causes of the conflict could be found both in the Ukraine's corrupt government and Russian interference. The keyword "cold war" was often used to characterize the tensions between the Kremlin and the West. Moreover, Ukraine was depicted as a "battleground" of the world powers. The Ukrainian society was also depicted as polarized into two camps - democratic pro-Western Yushchenko supporters and not so democratic pro-Russian Yanukovych supporters. So, we may say about the revival of the Cold War frame in the New York Times coverage of the political crisis in Ukraine.

Overall, this kind of coverage may be characterized as the dichotomization, one of the propaganda model's filters (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Herman and Chomsky's findings show that the elections in client states are usually found by American media legitimizing, irrespective of facts, while the elections in enemy states are found deficient. In the case of Ukrainian presidential elections, the second round, officially won by Yanukovych, was announced by the New York Times "disputed."

This study offers only brief and partial analysis of the New York Times coverage of the political crisis in Ukraine in 2004. The researcher is working on the comparison of the New York Times coverage of the Orange Revolution' with its coverage in Russian press. The further research in this sphere may also include the study of the Western news media coverage of other modern-day velvet revolutions (Serbia 2001, Georgia 2003).

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Дмитро Губенко

**СТРУКТУРНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ВИСВІТЛЕННЯ ПРЕЗИДЕНТСЬКИХ ВИБОРІВ  
ТА УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ «ПОМАРАНЧЕВОЇ» РЕВОЛЮЦІЇ ГАЗЕТОЮ  
"НЬЮ-ЙОРК ТАЙМС" У 2004 РОЦІ**

*До «помаранчевої» революції Україна не перебувала в центрі мас-медійних репортажів. І хоча після початку масових виступів опозиції ситуація змінилася, було зроблено дуже мало для аналізу висвітлення подій української революції закордонними журналістами. Автор статті зосереджується на методах подання інформації про президентську кампанію в Україні на сторінках газети «Нью-Йорк Тайме». При цьому особливу увагу приділено портретизації різних учасників конфлікту. Структурний аналіз забезпечує методологічну основу дослідження, а критична теорія слугує його теоретичним підґрунтям.*