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Between Digital Elections and the Information War: Post-truth, New Media and Politics in the 21st Century

Między wyborami cyfrowymi a wojną informacyjną. Postprawda, nowe media i polityka w XXI wieku

• **Abstrakt** •

O ile poszukiwanie istoty prawdy ma swoją starożytną metrykę, to pojęcie postprawdy jest jak najbardziej pojęciem współczesnym. Wyrosło ono z XVIII-wiecznej apoteozy rozumu i odrzucenia prawd objawionych oraz XX-wiecznego postmodernistycznego podejścia, które odrzuca obiektywność prawdy. W warunkach demokratycznego społeczeństwa powoduje to równoważność różnych opinii. Pojęcie postprawdy oznacza sytuacje, w której fakty mają mniejszy wpływ na kształtowanie opinii publicznej niż emocje oraz osobiste przekonania. Ważnym nośnikiem nolens volens kształtującym rzeczywistość postprawdy są nowe media, a w szczególności media społecznościowe. Celem artykułu jest przeanalizowanie wpływu pojęcia postprawdy oraz nowych mediów na świat polityki. Tekst składa się z dwóch części. W pierwszej postaram się opisać kwestie związane z pojęciami postprawdy i nowych mediów oraz ich wpływem na kształtowanie opinii publicznej. W kolejnej postaram się ukazać zmiany, jakie wywołały zjawisko postprawdy w świecie polityki. Odwołam się tu zarówno do kwestii brytyjskiego głosowania w sprawie Brexitu, ostatnich wyborów

• **Abstract** •

While the search for the essence of truth has its ancient record, the concept of post-truth is the most modern one. The concept of post-truth means situations in which facts have less influence on shaping public opinion than emotions and personal beliefs. New media, in particular social media and digital society, are an important medium nolens volens shaping reality. The existence of the notion of post-truth in the discourse, above all politicians, political scientists and media people, is beyond doubt. However, the very nature of this phenomenon is seen differently. When I started writing the text, I asked myself the following research questions: What are the features that define post-policy? To what extent does the concept of truth refer to a new phenomenon, and to what extent is it a new term for the phenomenon that has always accompanied politics and elections? What is the specificity of new media and the digital generation? Do they play the role of determinants or are they just a medium for shaping the post-truth process? Are modern elections digital or more information warfare? Looking for answers to these research questions, I will

prezydenckich w Stanach Zjednoczonych oraz konfliktu na Ukrainie jako przykładu wojny informacyjnej.

examine two cases of campaigns: the British Brexit campaign and the American presidential campaign Clinton-Trump. The text also undertakes an analysis of the post-truth phenomenon in the information war that has been taking place in eastern Ukraine since 2014.

Text Structure, Research Method, Research Questions

The article consists of three parts. In the first part, the definition of the features defining the terms: post-truth, information society and new media will be undertaken. The next part will compare the British Brexit campaign with the American Clinton-Trump presidential campaign. The last part of the case study will focus on the influence of post-truth on the nature of the information war being waged in Ukraine.

The scientific methods that I will use are the case study and the comparative method. The case study will allow me to describe both of these campaigns. This method is empirical because it analyzes and evaluates the phenomena taking place in reality. The case study is used especially for research topics of a descriptive nature. The method should help to find the answer to the question of why the post-truth topic appeared in both campaigns. Using this method, I will refer to the analysis of available campaign data by analyzing: election programs, campaign materials, public opinion polls, interviews, press and Internet sources, and available databases.

The main research questions are:

What are the defining characteristics of post-truth? To what extent does the concept of post-truth refer to a new phenomenon, and to what extent is it a new term for a phenomenon that has always accompanied politics and elections? What is the specificity of the new media and digital generation? Do they play the role of a determinant or are they only a vehicle for shaping the post-truth process? How, on the example of the conflict in Ukraine, does the reality of post-truth influence the face of contemporary information wars?

Post-Truth, Digital Society, and New Media

When starting to define the concept of post-truth, we must first clarify a certain number of issues. The concept of post-truth exists in the discourse conducted primarily by political scientists and media people and it is a concept that has the ambition to describe the contemporary political reality. The concept was created by combining two words: the noun 'truth' and the prefix 'post'. The prefix 'post' is the first part of compound words that denotes an occurrence after or being a later form of something. In turn, under the concept of truth, following the Greek philosopher Aristotle, we recognize the compliance of judgments with the actual state of affairs. The conditions that fostered the emergence of the post-truth discourse in modern times are: the crisis of the classical definition of truth and the disappointment of rational faith in progress and the process of democratization, which are worth following. Man has struggled with the problem of truth since the dawn of time. Looking for answers to various questions, the man wanted to organize the reality around him from the very beginning. It resulted, as anthropologists emphasize, from the fear of the unknown and the desire to create a cover of clarity and predictability around them. Scientists studying primitive cultures drew attention to this when studying the basis of religious conflicts between tribes. In addition to the purely material aspects of such wars as: spoils, weapons, the land belonging to the conquered, the spiritual dimension was much more important (perhaps not fully realized).

Here, the defeated must accept the deities of the victors, which reflect their perceptions of reality. The psychological aspect of this act consisted in accepting their view of nature and the world. The ancient Greeks civilized the consideration of truth and created philosophy. The core of the philosophers' considerations is epistemology, that is, the tools and methods of cognition. Already, at the very beginning of the study, a dispute arose between Platonic cognition through anamnesis and Aristotle's empirical experience. The confrontation between *a priori* and *a posteriori* went on for twenty centuries. To this day, subjectivism and the research workshop of historians, for example, are controversial (Carr, 1999, pp. 15–43). The Enlightenment's rationalism and empiricism, as the apogee of belief in human cognitive abilities, created at the same time the illusion of predictability. The bloody experiences of the 20th century shattered faith in the progress that science was supposed to guarantee. Certain and verifiable knowledge that was to be the principle of optimizing human life on Earth turned out to be a fiction. This disappointment was supposed to give rise to postmodernism and critical theory. If there is a "truth", it is created by some lobby or the scientific commu-

nity, using politicians – representatives of these trends seem to explain (Gellner, 1997). The progressive process of democratization, which covered a large part of the world, is also considered one of the determinants of the post-truth discourse. This process is to create egalitarianism of attitudes, opinions and views. American political scientist Francis Fukuyama announced "the end of history". Because, as most states that are parliamentary republics have claimed, through their political system, professed democratic values and free public opinion will put up natural barriers against war (Fukuyama, 1996, pp. 5–21).

The concept of post-truth was first used in 1992 by Steve Tesich, an American writer of Serbian origins. In his article in *The Nation*, he wrote about the Iran-Contras scandal. In the light of information disclosed by the media, with the approval of the Ronald Reagan administration, American arms were sold to Iran, and the profits were used to finance right-wing guerrillas in Nicaragua. However, the scandal did not hurt the president (one of the journalists called him the "Teflon"). Tesich, in his article entitled *The Government of Lies*, stated that "it is up to people whether they want to live in a world of post-truth" (Tesich, 1992). In this way, the American writer introduced a new concept into the political discourse. It means situations in which facts have less influence on shaping public opinion than emotions and personal beliefs.

The concept of post-truth made a real career a quarter of a century later thanks to another revolution in communication. According to the media expert, Tomasz Goban-Klas, there have been six revolutions in the way people communicate in history. They were: signs and signals, speech, writing, printing, telecommunications, and computer (Goban-Klas, 2005). At the turn of the 21st century, the combination of the computer and the Internet made it possible to create a digital society. Even before the rise of the Internet, American sociologist Ray Oldenburg formulated the concept of the "third place". According to the sociologist, apart from the place of life and work, there is also a place where a person realizes their social life (Oldenburg, 1989). In the 21st century, social networking sites became the third place. The factors motivating the emergence of such online communities are: common need, product, common demographic or cultural features, common interests, and habit (Mazurek, 2003, p. 28).

We refer to the digital generation as native speakers of the digital language, i.e., the language of computers, games and the Internet. By this term we understand the representatives of the so-called generations Y (1977–1997) and generation Z (since 1998, born at the turn of the century). Representatives of the digital natives generation are described as those who perceive information very quickly, like to perform many tasks simultaneously, prefer graphics to text, develop based

on instant gratification and frequent rewards, and prefer playing rather than serious work. We can meet different opinions about the digital generation. According to Don Tapscott, a specialist in business strategies and the author of several books on the role of technology in business and society, most of the negative opinions about representatives of this generation are false because they are actually smarter, more shrewd and more tolerant than their predecessors (Tapscott, 2010, pp. 58–59). In turn, according to Mark Bauerlein, an American professor of literature, representatives of this generation, due to a lack of reading habits, have huge gaps in general knowledge. Young people surf in space, manage files, comment, create and design, but they can hardly analyze all these activities, read with understanding, draw conclusions, use a correct and complex language – argues Bauerlein (2008, p. 201).

Assessment of the Internet and new media among sociologists and media theorists is complex. It results from certain contradictions in human behavior in the cyber world. This is because communication via the Internet is less engaging and less emotional, but more pragmatic. Its users are focused on achieving specific goals. On the one hand, the Internet speeds up and facilitates communication, but on the other hand, it weakens development and self-education. Although, in fact, there are completely different opinions among researchers as to what impact communication using new media has on the quality of social bonds. Some believe that they are a favorable development opportunity, while others treat this form as a limitation (Barani, 2009, pp. 106–113).

New media to some extent determine the cognitive conditions of their users. Douglas Rushkoff, an American sociologist and media theorist, spoke in an interview about the "shock of the present", that is, the viewer's perception of the media reality in a direct way without a distancing perspective. This is to result in the creation of a uniform message in the recipient's mind, which is difficult to verify. "Today we live in a world of many memories and many stories. Everyone tries to tell their own story, and the digital reality favors isolation and closure, because it minimizes confrontation with other variants of the same story", says Rushkoff (2018, p. 18). Social networks take advantage of this phenomenon, magnifying it through the so-called "filter bubble" (Pariser, 2011). Eli Pariser, an activist advocating the use of digital media for democracy, stated that new media has absorbed not only the press but also political campaigns, the banking system, personal stories, the entertainment industry and even government and security. As a result of the operation of filtering algorithms, some information is visible only to a certain group of recipients. In this way, the Internet and community groups are a divisive instrument. According to Rushkoff, by transforming it into a huge advertis-

ing platform, the Internet has lost its social and integrating dimension. However, there are also those who believe that the Internet is a new common good. On the one hand, it is a commercial world based on the production, exchange and consumption of these goods. On the other hand, the Internet is characterized by strictly open access to public goods, the community nature of Internet goods (Hofmokl, 2009).

To sum up, the concept of post-truth appeared at the end of the 20th century and is understood as a situation in which beliefs and emotions have a greater impact on shaping public opinion than facts. In the literature on the subject, the dominant belief is that the crisis of the classic definition of truth has the greatest impact on the formation of a similar concept, disappointment with the failure of the Enlightenment concepts of progress related to science, and the progressive process of democratization introducing equality of opinions, attitudes and views. Nowadays, the key determinant regulating the functioning of the reality of the post-truth discourse is the existence of a digital society that communicates through new media. The digital society is represented by the so-called Y generation (born in 1977–1997) and generation Z (since 1998), who efficiently navigate the world of new technologies. They perceive information very quickly, like to multi-task and prefer graphics over text. They are sometimes judged to be smarter, more shrewd and tolerant than their predecessors. Due to the lack of reading habit, others claim, they are hardly able to analyze, read with understanding, draw conclusions, use correct and developed language.

New media is primarily the Internet and social networking sites, which at the beginning of the 21st century became the "third place" where social life is conducted, and the exchange of views and opinions takes place. The nature of the functioning of new media means that they provide access to a huge amount of information which at the same time are filtered using algorithms before they come to our eyes. This affects the cognitive conditions of the digital generation.

British Brexit Referendum Campaign and US Presidential Clinton-Trump Campaign

According to the British Guardian, the concept of post-truth came into play in 2016. According to publishers, the use of the word 'post-truth' in media circulation was to increase by 2.000% compared to 2015 (Flood, 2016). This increase was associated with two election campaigns: the British Brexit referendum, and the US Presidential Clinton-Trump campaign.

The British referendum on Britain's membership in the European Union was held on June 23, 2016. With a turnout of 72.3% of those eligible to vote, Brexit was supported by 51.9% of Britons, while 48.1% voted against. Great Britain, from the very beginning of its involvement in the integration project, expressed greater Euroscepticism than other member states. The state became a member of the EEC in 1973, and the government ratified the accession treaty, despite the polls having more opponents than supporters. The first referendum on further membership took place as early as June 1975 (*1975: UK…*, 2015). At that time, over 67% of voters were in favor of membership. The British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was known for her distance to the EEC; she negotiated, *inter alia*, the so-called British rebate, i.e., the reduction of contributions paid to the EU fund. During the second referendum campaign, the European press wondered to what extent the "iron lady" would support the country's exit from the EU structures (Judah, 2016). The Brexit referendum was overtaken by the campaign that lasted all year. The conduct of the referendum was announced in the program documents of the Conservative Party Welsh Manifesto (2015, p. 30) and the speech of Queen Elizabeth II (*Queen's Speech*, 2015). Public opinion polls indicated that in mid-2015, despite the dissatisfaction among the British society about the direction that the EU took in the fight against emerging crises, the majority were in favor of staying (*Little Change in Public's Views…*, 2016). The main slogans of the campaign were: "Keep it under control" versus "Britain stronger in European Union".

For its supporters, leaving the EU was a case of restoring control over the chaotic reality, and for the opponents, it was a political and economic weakening of the country. Exit supporters appealed to national patheticism and promised freedom of trade with the whole world, full border control (in the sense of regulating immigration), and their own sovereign law. At the same time, they relied on negative emotions that had been built up over a quarter of a century in the course of the media debate that presented the Union as an institution squandering British resources in the name of European interests. The method of misleading the public opinion through innuendo and half-truths was also used (Jackson, Thorsen, & Wring, 2016). The biggest manipulation of the campaign was the claim that England maintained the entire EU, and it cost her £350 million a week. This information was disavowed by the supporters of leaving the EU the day after the elections. The research conducted after the elections and referring to this distortion shows that the final result of the campaign was not accidental. Namely, among the respondents who read this slogan and the information that it is false, 50% believed that it was definitely or mostly reliable. This behavior of voters illustrates the phenomenon of "motivated reasoning", which means that a person

rejects new information that is inconsistent with the previously held beliefs or values and searches for the information that will confirm the current position (Kunda, 1990).

The campaign also involved rivalries between opinion leaders: United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage, and the head of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister David Cameron. On Facebook, Farage's profile during the short campaign was liked by three times more people than Prime Minister Cameron, and the number of people talking about the UKIP leader on the Internet was greater than conversations about all other small party leaders combined. The campaign to stay was supported by such famous personalities as writer J.K. Rowling, actors Jude Law and Benedict Cumberbatch. Opinions of political scientists and economists critically speaking about the consequences of leaving the EU structures were directly disavowed during the campaign by one of the leaders of the exit camp, Michael Gove, who stated that the British are fed up with experts (White, 2016).

The Brexit referendum is referred to as the first "digital election". However, the actual explorers of Internet election marketing were the creators of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign (Frontczak, 2008). Eric Schmidt, the president of the board of Google (CEO – Chief Executive Officer), was involved in the Obama campaign. A platform was created for the campaign to engage Obama's supporters in a variety of ways. Using the platform, it was possible to sign up for the staff, get materials for discussions with opponents, make donations to the campaign, and deny false reports from the opponent's camp. The easy-to-use method of donating money to Obama's campaign resulted in a large number of contributions from small amounts. This allowed Obama to broadcast half-hour spots on television. Obama used search engine marketing. Most frequent inquiries were caught to redirect attention to the candidate (e.g., "Worried about the health of the economy? Read about Obama's recovery plan"). The problem of the state of the economy and jobs was the greatest challenge for the new administration in opinion polls (*Economy, Jobs…*, 2009). Sponsored links protecting the candidate's image dispelled doubts without having to go to the controversial page (the person entering the sequences of the words "Barack Obama terrorism" was sent to such a sponsored link).

Similar actions were taken in America by the creators of the Brexit campaign. Both parties engaged in data mining and analysis using social media to identify and motivate their supporters (Jackson, Thorsen, & Wring, 2016). Both sides had experienced strategists who had proven their competence in previous campaigns. The traditional political campaign involving, for example, handing out leaflets,

was replaced by campaigns using the Internet and new media, which enabled: voter registration, collecting campaign donations (in addition to the £600 million donated by the government to supporters and opponents of Brexit), gathering information about voters (creating a voter profile and then lists of people to be persuaded), political advertising (the exit campaign got 554,297 likes on Facebook, and supporters to stay 561,277) (Jackson, Thorsen, & Wring, 2016). Exit supporters faced a theoretically stronger opponent. The exit slogan was more radical than the moderate demand to stay in the EU. Supporters to stay were supported by incumbent Prime Minister David Cameron and the Labor Party, while those who opted to leave had no support from any party. State infrastructure supported the side of staying, while the supporters of the exit had to build such a base from scratch. The exit option won with a simple and clear campaign in the absence of an unequivocal counter-proposal from the adversaries. The victory of the Brexit camp is interpreted as an expression of the frustration of British citizens at the failure of the government of David Cameron to solve the problem of migration policy or long lines at the doctor's. At the same time, the referendum raised new questions about the future of the United Kingdom, in which the two constituent parts, Scotland and Northern Ireland, were in favor of remaining in the European Union (62% and 56%, respectively). The political and economic relations between Europe and Great Britain after Brexit are also a big question mark (Musiał-Karg, 2016, pp. 5–18).

Douglas Rushkoff stated in one of the interviews (Rushkoff, 2018, p. 18) that the election of Donald Trump as president of the USA was the result of a collective projection created by the media, in particular the Internet. This opinion fits perfectly into the post-truth narratives. After Donald Trump took office, the first polls showed a decline in the sympathy of, for example, the Germans towards the US (Bittner, 2017). The United States was perceived as a threat because, in the opinion of critics, it was headed by a president posing as a strong leader, however unpredictable and impulsive, who in his rhetoric is far from the broadly understood political correctness. Opinion polls show that Donald Trump embodies the negative character traits that Europeans see in Americans, such as arrogance, greed, intolerance and a propensity for violence. The slogans "America First", or "Make America Great Again", raised by the new president, are associated with unilateralism or isolationism.

Europeans, fearing for their future, seeing the problem of migration and Islamic extremism, expected the power of America to be involved in the affairs of the world. Meanwhile, the new president, in accordance with the wishes of his electorate, declared his willingness to focus on internal problems. On the other hand,

in foreign affairs, he suggested an agreement with the leader of Russia, in a way alongside the NATO countries. The German press criticized the right-wing shift that was supposed to close America to emigrants. On the other hand, German business was afraid of the introduction of a "business administration" by Trump, which would introduce protectionist tariff barriers, preventing the export of, for example, European cars overseas (Feldenkirchen, Medick, & Stark, 2016).

The presidential election in the United States in 2016, according to public opinion polls, was the first vote in many decades in which the candidate was voted against, but against his competitor (Geiger, 2016). Of the votes cast for Hillary Clinton, 53% were votes for her and 46% were votes against Donald Trump, say Pew Research respondents. In the earlier elections in 2000 and 2008, the main candidates were voted. According to the above studies, Trump voters are mostly male, young and highly educated. In post-election comments, they were called "Shy Trumpers" (timid supporters of Trump) because, ashamed, they were supposed not to admit to their candidate (Mercer, Deane, & McGeeney, 2016). As was the case in the Brexit elections, the campaign took place beyond the press and classical media, also on the Internet and on social networks. During the campaign, 44% of respondents said they were following the Internet-based elections, thus distancing the popular local and national press. 24% of them followed the campaigns via the candidates' social media, and only 15% via websites. Hillary Clinton used social media more often to send official campaign messages, while Trump used them more often to communicate with the media (*Candidates Differ…*, 2016). On Twitter, Trump was more likely to reply to messages from ordinary citizens than Clinton. The campaign itself was assessed by experts as one of the dirtiest presidential campaigns in history. Trump's campaign and the Brexit campaign are linked by an anti-immigrant attitude and the slogan of 'Make America Great Again'. Trump won by appealing to anti-globalist slogans. Internet memes created by Trump supporters appealed to patterns and negative associations: political careerists are untrustworthy, Clinton is corrupt, many Mexicans are murderers and rapists, Muslims are a threat to international security, etc. (Karpf, 2016). According to commentators, the election in the United States, as in the United Kingdom, was to confirm that the result of the elections was the result of dissatisfaction and frustration towards the world of politics, which pursue the interests of the elite of big cities, and not the entire society. Like the UK, social media in the US has accelerated the flow of rumors, half-truths, and even hate speech, but has not created a cynical audience that does not care or care about how knowledge-generating institutions work. Thus the claim that lies plus social media led to Brexit or brought Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States,

which is tied to the post-truth discourse – although it is, according to commentators, ignoring the historical, cultural and institutional context. Media does not change society, but responds to social needs (Kreiss, 2016).

Information Warfare in the Conflict in Ukraine

State security at the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century is related to the redefined concept of strength. According to the American political scientist Joseph Nye, states should have prudent force, i.e., a combination of coercive power and soft power of persuasion and attractiveness (Nye, 2012). The currency of soft power, according to the beliefs of the author of *The Future of Strength*, is the narrative. Wise image management, community of values and culture, and a long-term communication strategy bring the desired results. Virtually managed e-image, shaped through narrative media and digital diplomacy. Propaganda is a systematic activity aimed at shaping beliefs, manipulating attitudes, and directing behavior in line with the expectations of a propagandist. According to Lindley Fraser, propaganda is the art of making people do what they would not do if they had all the data on information (Kula, 2005, p. 10). In the oldest strategy and war tactics manual, written in the 6ᵗʰ century BC in China, war was first portrayed as the art of misleading the enemy ("The greatest achievement is to defeat the enemy without a fight"). Its author, Sun Tzu, wrote: "If you are gifted, pretend to be not gifted. Pretend to be passive when you push your troops to action. If your goal is close, act as if it is distant" (Sun Tzu, 2008, p. 65). According to the author of *The Art of War*, effective intelligence related to the enemy's disinformation is a key element of war planning. Information warfare has a specific psychological impact: as an instrument in offensive combat, it is supposed to weaken faith in the enemy's strength and combat abilities (e.g., negating the military, political and economic potential), while in defense it serves to strengthen one's own morale and gain sympathy or neutrality from other countries. "Gaining an advantage in the information sphere becomes the same condition for victory as dominance on land, sea and air", wrote Jeffrey Burnett in his book *The Future of War* (Burnett, 1996, p. 142). The Internet very quickly became another battleground in the realities of the cyber world. As Internet users, we expose ourselves to threats against which we often cannot defend ourselves. These include: scanning (to learn about the security of the attacked system), sniffing (network eavesdropping), exploits (using existing errors in the computer's operating system), denial-of-service (DoS, system blocking), trojan horses (programs transmitting information to the outside world). The motive for

action may be money or a political order: stealing know-how that leads to the collapse of a company, theft of bank accounts by hackers, spying, terrorism. Impersonating others by using intermediary computers raises the question of perpetration and responsibility. Attempts to create norms for waging war in cyberspace assign responsibility to the country from which the attack was made or which networks and computers were used (Żebrowski, 2016). The US National Security Agency collected information from the servers of Internet companies that were analyzed to prevent terrorist attacks. President Barack Obama, when asked about these issues, replied that 100% security and 100% privacy cannot be ensured at the same time (Lucas, 2017).

The conflict in Crimea and eastern Ukraine showed the development of the real potential of social media. Russia's systemic information warfare was based on the influence of: traditional media (Russia Today TV, established in 2005, has 700 million recipients in 100 countries around the world), social media and the Internet (e.g., the Sputnik 2014 website). The Russian media adjusted their narrative to the recipient and emphasized various elements (Ukrainian Slavyansk compared to Spanish Guernica) (Darden, 2014). The citizens of the Federation heard from the media about the anti-Russian policy of the present "illegal authorities" of Ukraine and their nationalism threatening the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine as the main reasons for the conflict. With regard to third countries, international organizations and Western countries, the conflict was presented as a civil war in which the authorities in Kiev perpetrate the genocide of their people (Al-Rodhan, 2017). The image of the Ukrainian state was exposed as a "failed state", deprived of legitimacy, nationalistic, which repeatedly violates human rights. In turn, the people of Ukraine were told that the culprit of the conflict was the government in Kiev. Trust in the political and military authorities was undermined and efforts were made to polarize Ukraine's society. In the face of the Russian information offensive, Ukraine had to intensify its narrative policy. First of all, the impact of its media was ensured by modernizing the existing broadcasting stations and building some new ones. The organization of weekly press conferences of the President and Prime Minister of Ukraine, available to the Ukrainian and foreign media, was launched (Baluk & Doroszko, 2017). As part of the "embedded journalists" project, foreign journalists were invited to military units stationed in the conflict area to learn about the real situation at the front. In 2014, the project "Elimination of Illiteracy. Historical Front", a multilingual Internet resource was created, containing a sufficient amount of information on the history of Ukraine and the causes of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Dementing false reports on the Russian side was supported, among others, by the website *Stopfake* and the online news-

paper *Euromaidan Press*. Non-state actors were also involved in the information warfare, resulting in information projects such as "Interactive Map of Combat Operations" or "Interactive Map of Events in Ukraine" (Baluk & Doroszko, 2017). The new media in the conflict played the role of a carrier of propaganda content, but also played the role of exposing propaganda (live broadcasts often without commentary). In Ukraine, a high level of credibility and technical coverage have made the new media a key element of information in the Russian-Ukrainian information war.

Summary

In the light of the above case study of both the Brexit campaign and the presidential Clinton-Trump campaign, one can ask how much the concept of post-truth relates to a new phenomenon, and to what extent it is a new term for a phenomenon that has always accompanied politics and elections. The result of the referendum called the EU project into question, and many thought it might have set a dangerous precedent for other member states to follow suit. The disappointment of the opponents of leaving the EU resulted in a critical assessment of the campaign as not substantive. The campaign had features that defined it as post-truth. These were digital elections where the campaign took place largely on the Internet and on social networks (collecting donations for campaigns, providing information). Both sides referred to the image clash of opinion leaders such as Cameron-Farage and the support of celebrities. The campaign was based on emotions. On social media, people support issues more than politicians or parties. Information about facts with comments from the beginning of the press was an expression not so much of an objective truth as the worldview of publishers and journalists (Viner, 2016). On the other hand, contemporary media, fighting for the recipient, use the methods of generalization, and the language of scandals. *The British Daily Mail* suggested in its pages that Prime Minister David Cameron during his student days took part in a secret initiation with the participation of a severed pig's head. The journalists left the readers with this offensive and understated innuendo, stating that it is up to the people to believe the story or not. The British campaign and the American one resembled more information warfare than simple digital elections. This is evidenced by the scale of fierce fighting and language brutalization described above. In this way, sewer journalism uses the phenomenon of "information cascade", i.e., a situation in which an increasing number of people accept incomplete and unverified information as true. The Pew Research study shows that 64% of respondents

believe that fake news causes confusion, but at the same time half of them, i.e., 23%, share made up stories, whether they are aware of it or not (Barthel, Mitchell, & Holcomb, 2016).

The new media has been perfectly managed by politicians and their election staffs, but they have not changed the essence of the behaviors involved in the political process, which are elections. It is a truism to say that the majority of citizens do not follow the analysis of socio-economic data, but refer to personal beliefs and emotions when selecting their representatives. It is a truth as old as the world, as exemplified by the anecdote about living in the 5th century BC Athenian politician Aristides the Righteous, quoted by Plutarch. Here, during the shell vote at the People's Assembly on banishing a person, an illiterate citizen of Athens was supposed to approach Aristides, asking him to write the name of Aristides for him. When asked by Aristides what was the politician's fault, the citizen replied: "None. I don't even know this man. It only makes me angry when I hear them everywhere calling him righteous" (Plutarch z Cheronei, 2004, p. 19). Aristides was to write his name on the ostracon (shell) without protest. Andrew Heywood, a political scientist, wrote about "irrational factors" that a voter succumbs to, such as the personality of the leader, the party's image or the usual loyalty resulting from social conditions (Heywood, 2009, p. 228). The political scientist also explains it as a result of the campaign, where their weight is not based on the program and problems, but on personalities and images. In Polish conditions, Professor Markowski also notices that voters are ready to sacrifice certain postulates, problems they care about, to make a choice based solely on the candidate's name and party colors. As a result, the image and discourse conducted by the media, including social media, is of key importance not only during the elections, but throughout the political process. The researcher Jayson Harsin, dealing with the theory of media and communication, used the term "post-truth regime" in relation to contemporary politics (Harsin, 2015, pp. 227–233). Its essence is to manage the attention and beliefs of a specific group of recipients through techniques of strategic use of rumors and false information, economy of attention determined by the frequency of information provided, management of content generated by serial participants and trusted authorities to distinguish between the truth and the untruth, creating algorithms that decide what appears in social media and search engines and the use of information media with their propensity for plagiarism and the use of propaganda. Public opinion polls show the difference between voters' views and attitudes towards the media and broadcast content. According to a Pew Research Center study from 2014, "consistent conservatives" attached to one medium of FOX News while expressing distrust of most media (Mitchell et al., 2014).

More often than others, they use social media to discuss political topics, and ⅔ of them declare that they have friends who share political views. "Consistent liberals" are more open to various media and less distrustful of them. Liberals, more than any other analyzed group, are ready to cut off acquaintances for reasons of political differences. Liberals and conservatives talk about and follow politics.

The concept of post-truth is related to the crisis that emerged in post-modern discourse, which referred to the issue of truth as such. Postmodernism through, e.g., critical theories created a sense of the lack of unambiguous criteria determining the objectivity of truth and exposed the phenomena of its instrumental use. In the realities of liberal democracy, the phenomenon of the belief in the equality of opinions expressed is also noticeable. They constituted the ideological ground for the emergence of the concept of post-truth today. The emergence of the Internet, and with it the digital society and social networking sites, is to a large extent a vehicle for these changes. However, new media as such do not create post-truth societies themselves.

In the world of politics, the election campaigns concerning Brexit and the US presidential elections, which brought victory to Donald Trump, are exemplification of the phenomenon of post-truth. For the first time on a massive scale, social media was used during the presidential campaign of Barack Obama. Voters could learn the arguments of their candidates or donate to their campaign and encourage their friends to vote. Rumors and slander have always been present in campaigns, and part of the society is susceptible to them, as indicated by public opinion polls. The decisions of voters who reject facts and rational arguments in favor of emotions and loud slogans result from the depths of human nature, and not the effect of new media. This is evidenced by the views of Heywood and Kunda.

From ancient times, the key issue was to gain an advantage over the opponent in the sphere of security. One of the battlefields was the information war, which served to mislead the opponent. In the cyber world, social media, apart from classical media, become an instrument of communicating one's own arguments, i.e., propaganda. In the event of conflict, the Internet allows you to confront a false propaganda message with reality. Serious steps in the fight against fake news are announced, such as: improvement of technological tools to verify the truthfulness of information and the state's fight against hackers who create false information (*Joint Declaration…*, 2017). The joint declaration of the UN, the OAS and the OSCE of March 2017 warned against the influence of false information on the Internet, but at the same time stated that state censorship and blocking websites cannot be the answer (Anderson & Rainie, 2017).

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