

## POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA – AN INSEPARABLE CONNECTION \*

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Neven Obradović

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy,  
Department of Communicology and Journalism, Serbia

**Abstract.** *Mass media have completely changed the way politicians and voters communicate. Communication within political parties, membership activism, party discipline and respect for hierarchy have become less important, because the media play a central role in the dissemination of political information, in political education, and also in the process of persuading the masses to do certain things. According to Zoran Slavujević (2009), contemporary politics is actually an organized media phenomenon that is planned and implemented for and through cooperation with the media. In this paper, the author elaborates on the relationship between political communication and traditional media, showing its historical development, but also contemporary concepts of this inseparable connection. The press, radio and television were created at different periods of time, but each of these media changed the rules of political communication and set new standards. Although many theorists predicted the end of their predecessors with the appearance of each of these media, each of them adapted to new circumstances and survived to this day. Recognizing the power of political communication through mass media, political subjects accepted the concept of politics based on the standards set by the media.*

**Key words:** *political communication, traditional media, press, radio, television*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of traditional mass media, primarily the press as the initial mass media, and later on, radio and television, fundamentally changed social communication relations. Peter Dahlgren states that: “in the modern world, many institutions, including religion and sports, and especially politics, have adapted their activities to the logic of the media, and thus transformed themselves” (Dahlgren 2001, 85). Michael Parenti states that the mass media have set the limits of public discourse and public understanding. “They

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**Corresponding author:** Neven Obradović

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Ćirila i Metodija 2, 18000 Niš, Serbia

E-mail: [neven.obradović@filfak.ni.ac.rs](mailto:neven.obradović@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

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may not always form opinions, but they don't have to". It is enough to create visibility for different opinions, while giving legitimacy to one side and illegitimacy to others. The media represent essential issues in the same way as they represent politicians, some are elevated and given legitimacy, while others are marginalised" (Parenti 1987, 23). Richard Jackson Harris and Fred Sanborn believe that the mass media, in addition to changing the way we spend time, have also revolutionized the way we think and the way we look at the world: "The media are not only the magic windows through which we view the world, but also the doors through which ideas enter our minds as we interact with them" (Harris and Sanborn 2013, 3). Zoran Slavujević advocates an almost identical point of view, according to which: "the mass media are the main way in which we acquire and expand knowledge about the world in general, and thus also about the world of politics, regardless of the extent to which they depict mere reality or rearrange it, and sometimes even falsify it. This is their cognitive function, and the emergence of each new media opened up new opportunities for people to get to know the world that is further than their immediate vision and wider than their immediate experience" (Slavujević 2009, 44).

Jens Tenscher points out that the mass media represent a central instance for political representation and perception. This author also advocates the point of view that the mass media have a key role in bridging the gap between the individual and politics: "which for a long time was characteristic of the "classical" instances of political opinion formation (e.g. political parties, trade unions)" (Tenscher 2011, 201). According to Tenscher (2011, 202), the main functions of traditional media in democratic societies are as follows: 1) creation of the public, 2) criticism and control of the ruling political structure, 3) articulation of citizens' interests and opinions, 4) contribution to the political socialization and education of citizens, and 5) encouraging citizens to participate politically.

It should certainly be noted that these are ideal-type functions, which in practice often prove to be difficult to achieve. According to Harris and Sanborn, the media and politics are closely related, and it is the media that throughout history have set the agenda according to which politics is extremely important (Harris and Sanborn 2013).

## 2. PRINT MEDIA – THE DINOSAUR THAT HAS SURVIVED THE INTERNET

The connection between politics and mass media has a long history, primarily thanks to the press as the first mass media. Brian McNair states that the press initially based its freedom on the principles of independent economic organization. "Early newspapers were private commercial institutions that existed to generate profit for their owners". They were sold as commodities on the market, initially (due to the high price) only to the wealthy elite. However, as literacy spread throughout the capitalist world during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and with the advancement of printing technology, the price became more affordable and newspapers reached the widest possible audience. In this way, press became the first mass media (McNair 2003, 48). At the same time, the press is becoming the first mass medium of political communication (Slavujević 2009). Citing Jürgen Habermas, Giovanni Gozzini claims that the development of the press is linked to "changes in politics, which little by little ceases to be an activity reserved for narrow ruling circles and acquires a wider and more widespread dimension, parallel to the rise of a new bourgeois class in the fight against the old, feudal regime" (Habermas 1971, cited by Gozzini 2001, 10). Having freed itself from the oppression and censorship that characterized feudal states, freedom of the press has always been seen as a central element of democratic processes in any society

(McNair 2003, 49). Thanks to the press, the public: “becomes an active subject capable of monitoring the actions of governments”. The press, which interprets the public’s moods with variable independence and freedom, joins parliament, government and the judiciary as the fourth estate<sup>1</sup> (Gocini 2001, 10). Among the basic principles of early liberalism, which were defined by John Locke in his work “The Second Treatise on Government”, and which liberal democracy was later built on, was the principle of free public information, i.e., the right of every citizen to know what the government is doing (freedom of information), on the basis of which they would make a decision whether the government worked in their interest (Lou 2013, 49). The principle of free flow of information and criticism of press censorship by European rulers were the foundations of the idea of media as the fourth branch of government (Lou 2013, 50). James Curran states that, according to liberal orthodoxy, the press under capitalism is an autonomous institution that empowers the people, and that this view is at the core of the history of the conventional liberal press (Karan 2005, 135).

The introduction of representative politics opened up numerous questions, but the key ones are related to the control of political representatives of citizens, i.e., how to: “1) make representatives accountable to those who elected them, 2) prevent them from becoming corrupt, 3) prevent them from abusing power (Lou 2013, 52). Identically to John Locke, John Stuart Mill believed that the solution to these problems is free press. Free flow of information, according to Mill, is the best guarantee against corruption and abuse of power. “The idea of the media as a “watchdog” developed from this concept”. In other words, the media informs voters by ensuring that bad representatives are removed in the next election. [...] The combination of Mill's and Locke's principles led to the development of a professional discourse that is nowadays the foundation of the opinion of liberal journalists about their own role in society” (Lou 2013, 52).

In his paper “On Liberty”, Mill also pointed out the danger of the “tyranny of the majority”, i.e., that in the beginning of liberal democracy those who are in the minority could be persecuted. Mill believed that the best mechanism for preventing such a scenario was the guaranteed freedom of expression, i.e., the right to diversity of opinion and expression of views (Lou 2013, 57). Freedom of the press and the right to vote in a liberal democratic system, according to Mill, are a barrier to any form of tyranny, because: “this combination empowers individual citizens, and by providing two interlocking mechanisms for ensuring good government - one ensures that citizens are constantly informed about what their political representatives are doing, while the other enables the removal of bad politicians and governments” (Lou 2013, 52).

As a medium of political communication, the press has always played an important role, and the best confirmation is that it has survived in the era of radio, and especially television. The daily press offers an analytic approach, a clearer presentation of data and a deeper analysis of political and social problems, and until the emergence of the Internet and digital television, it was the only mass media where the user chose the way to use it

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<sup>1</sup> The term “fourth estate” was coined by the English historian Thomas Babington Macaulay, a Liberal MP in the British House of Commons and a supporter of the balance of power between the Crown and the Parliament. In the “Edinburgh Review”, in 1828, Macaulay states the following: “The gallery in which the reporters sit has become a fourth estate of the realm”. The publication of treatises—a practice which to most liberal statesmen of the old school seemed very risky for the defense of public liberty—is now regarded by many as a defense worth as much as all the rest put together, if not more” (Macaulay 1828, 165, cited in Gocini 2001, 11). The same judgment about the press at that time was expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville for the United States of America: “the press is, after the people, the first power” (Tocqueville 1998, 198, cited in Gocini 2001, 12).

(reading pace, rereading the text, etc.). Quality press made it possible to improve knowledge, and this especially refers to: “comments and analytical texts in reputable newspapers that significantly influence the formation of the public’s general attitude towards an institution, event, person, either directly - by acting on the readership, or indirectly – influencing the attitudes of journalists from other media and opinion leaders” (Slavujević 2009, 46).

Due to the reasons mentioned above, newspapers have survived in the era of radio and television with a decrease in circulation - however, the Internet and digitization have permanently changed the “ecosystem” of print media as a mass media. A drastic decrease of circulation, lower income from advertisers, the emergence of information portals threatened all print media, and for many, especially smaller and financially weaker media, these problems were insurmountable. The more powerful print media adapted to the global network and the challenges of digitalization, so the Chicago Tribune was the first to publish an electronic edition of the newspaper in 1992 – this example was followed by all the major print media in the USA (The NY Times, LA Times, USA Today) (Gocini 2001). According to data from the “Pew” research center, the approximate circulation of printed editions of daily newspapers during working days in the USA in 1998 was slightly more than 56 million copies, in 2008 the total circulation decreased to 48.5 million, and in 2018 to 28.5 million.<sup>2</sup> Circulation data show that the only way to survive are online editions.

Although the Internet and online journalism have made it possible to provide information to the broadest masses, and almost constantly update it with new information, numerous problems have arisen at the same time, such as the hyperproduction of news, which is inevitably accompanied by numerous unverified and inaccurate information that creates noise in every sphere of social communication, especially political. Although paradoxically, this is precisely where the chance for the survival of print media (in paper or electronic edition) lies. Going back to analytical journalism, providing readership with high-quality information in a timely manner and adhering to journalistic codes is a chance for the survival of daily newspaper editorial offices. Following this model, the British newspaper The Guardian launched a campaign at the beginning of 2019 asking readers to donate funds, starting with at least one British pound, in order to support The Guardian's policy of independent journalism. The message to the readers was: “The Guardian is editorially independent, which means we have our own agenda. Our journalism is free from commercial bias and is not influenced by billionaires, politicians or shareholders. No one edits our editors. No one controls our opinion. This is important because it allows us to give voice to those who are less heard, challenge the powerful and hold them accountable. This is what makes us different from many others in the media, at a time when factual and fair reporting is in critical condition” (The Guardian 2019)<sup>3</sup>. The executive editor of The Washington Post, Martin Baron, on the panel entitled “Media Freedom in Crisis”, which was held on January 22, 2019, during the World Economic Forum in Davos, also expressed the opinion that readers are returning to traditional media, i.e., reputable newsrooms. “As the use of social media has expanded, people have experimented and seen the numerous pitfalls of social media when it comes to information and now they are once again gravitating towards reliable media sources. We, at the Washington Post, are a great example, we have always adhered to traditional values in journalism, we have been engaged in investigative journalism and

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<sup>2</sup> Complete research available at: <https://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> The above message is automatically displayed when opening The Guardian website, link: <https://www.theguardian.com/us> (visited on June 12, 2022).

this has resulted in people paying a subscription to read us and with the help of this we finance our work. In short, people have engaged in social media, discovered that a lot of information there is false and return to verified media, which of course are not perfect. We all have flaws and we all make mistakes, but people have recognized that we are trying to present the facts and the truth, and I think that is the main reason why trust in traditional media is returning” (Baron, 2018)<sup>4</sup>. According to Neda Todorović, responsibility is the key to the survival of traditional media and journalism. “Accuracy of data, putting facts into context (interpretability), verifying facts (truthfulness, credibility) and taking responsibility for the written word. Research and interpretation are the *raison d’être* of quality journalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Todorović 2013, 21). Based on these postulates, media are crucial for political communication in every society in the sense that they inform the public in a better way, allow them to better understand politics, and ultimately ensure the political engagement of citizens.

### 3. RADIO – THE KEY IS IN LOW COST

When it comes to broadcast media (radio and television), McNair states that, unlike the press, which has from the very beginning functioned as a “set of capitalist businesses”, the broadcast media have had “different organizational forms. In the United States, radio and later on, television, like the press, were commercially developed, funded by advertising revenue” (McNair 2003, 49). On the other hand, as stated by Stanley Baran and Dennis Davis, in Nazi Germany during the 1930s, radio was primarily used for propaganda purposes and was in the service of the ruling party. The control over the media in Germany, Italy and other totalitarian countries at the time was disguised as the need for them to be at the service of the citizens - however, they were at the service of: “ruthless leaders who were convinced that they are the ones who decide what is best for citizens” (Baran and Davis 2010, 29). Radio, writes Slavujević, has changed the nature of political communication since 1928, when its mass use began. “It extremely accelerated the dissemination of information, made the political campaign more intimate, allowing citizens to listen to statesmen, party leaders and candidates in the elections in their homes, and largely freed politicians from inevitable and painstaking field campaigns.” (Slavujević 2009, 46). The importance of radio for political communication is best illustrated by the following examples – namely, in 100 days of the election campaign in 1896, presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan gave 600 speeches in 27 American states, traveled about 30 thousand kilometers and spoke to about 5 million voters, while US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s radio speech during the Senate elections in 1942 was listened to by an audience twelve times larger. President John Calvin Coolidge’s inaugural speech broadcast on the radio in 1925 was heard by more Americans than all the speeches of the 29 American presidents before him (Jamieson 1992, 20–24, cited in Slavujević 2009, 46).

According to Stephen Smith, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had a natural talent for radio. In his radio addresses to the nation, he spoke confidently, in an informal manner, using simple words and phrases that were easy to understand. “He was a pioneer in modern political campaigns through electronic media. Roosevelt and his administration

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<sup>4</sup> Excerpt from the Washington Post Executive Editor Martin Baron’s response to a question about restoring readers’ trust in traditional media during the “Media Freedom in Crisis” panel. Source: live broadcast of the panel on cable television N1.

successfully used radio as a tool to educate and persuade a nation that was going through the “Great Depression” and later on World War II. [...] Roosevelt and his administration understood and used the power of radio to “sell” the “New Deal” to the people, and later on to mobilize Americans in to fight the Axis powers” (Smith 2014)<sup>5</sup>. Smith also points out that Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s speeches had an almost incredible audience, at some points, his radio addresses were being listened by 70% of US radio listeners, and about 800 radio stations across the country were broadcasting his speeches (Smith 2014). Tevye Troy states that Roosevelt saw the best way that radio ushered politics into a new era that required special methods of communication, which won him the presidential race against Herbert Hoover, but also helped in his later political career (Troy 2011)<sup>6</sup>. In the text about Franklin Roosevelt’s radio speeches, the editors of the web portal history.com claim that this American president “made sure he used the simplest possible language, specific examples and analogies, in order to be understood by the majority of listeners. He began many speeches with “my friends”, when he mentioned himself he would say “I” in the first person, while addressing the people he would say – “you”, in order to get the impression that he was addressing the listener directly and personally” (history.com 2018).<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Kuehl states that Roosevelt’s speeches strengthened the position and importance of electronic media in political communication and indicated the importance of using everyday language when addressing the people (Kuehl 2018).<sup>8</sup>

The role of radio in political communication was soon acknowledged in other parts of the world - as stated in the editorial text of the magazine “Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture”, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, bearing in mind the vastness of Russia, called radio “a newspaper without paper and without distance (allowed faster information-sharing and did not require physical transport like newspapers, ed.), while Leon Trotsky viewed radio as an ideal channel for “stimulating urban revolutionary fervor in the vast rural interior of Russia” (Editorial Board 2017, 82). Radio survived the era of television primarily because of cost-effectiveness and the speed of information dissemination (Slavujević 2009). Starting a radio station and producing radio programs required significantly lower costs compared to television and print media. Radio receivers were small and provided greater mobility to listeners. The advantage of radio was a facilitated direct (two-way) communication with the audience, but also with all other subjects of political communication, which is why it had a significant role in political communication all over the world during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Everette Dennis and Edward Pease cite the words of the former president of Poland, Lech Wales, that free media and the need for objective information were key to democratic changes in that country, and that radio played a key role there, as it enabled citizens to access otherwise prohibited information, which “raised the people’s mood, strengthened faith and hope. Created a sense of community and international solidarity” (Dennis and Pease 1993, xii).

Radio as a medium of importance for political communication has survived even in the era of digital television, the Internet and social networks, primarily thanks to the podcast (Podcast).<sup>9</sup> Gaby Hinsliff, a columnist for the British Guardian, believes that the

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<sup>5</sup> Complete text available at: <http://www.americanradioworks.org/segments/fdr-radio/> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Complete text available at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/114600/fdrs-secret-weapon-winning-presidency> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Complete text available at: <https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/fireside-chats> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Complete text available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/fireside-chats> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> A podcast is a radio program that is stored in digital form, which can be downloaded from the Internet and later played on a computer or mobile device. (Cambridge Dictionary, Merriam – Webster Dictionary 2019). Links:

1. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/podcast>

increase in interest in political podcast content on a global level is a consequence of general tabloidization, populism and sensationalism, and that podcasts help a large number of listeners to properly keep up with the rapid and often enormous amount of news. “The special importance of podcast content is that they give back to the listener a sense of control over the enormous news cycles they receive every day. We are constantly bombarded with information from print media, television, radio, and social media, which overwhelms us with different ideas, arguments, and opinions and forces us to struggle to separate the signal from the noise” (Hinsliff 2018).<sup>10</sup> The benefit of podcasts, like of radio itself, is the ability to listen while doing other work: “the best podcast content distills everything you want to know into one manageable weekly roundup of topics. You can download it and listen to it whenever you want, while running, driving...” (Hinsliff, 2018). Pat Ralph, a political journalist with Business Insider, believes that the simplicity and practicality of updating the most important stories is what makes podcast content an increasingly popular form of informing citizens (Ralph 2018).<sup>11</sup> Thanks to this form, but also to internet broadcasting, radio continues to have a significant influence on political communication even in the era of digital media.

#### 4. TELEVISION – THE POWER IS IN THE IMAGE

The rapid expansion of television during the 1950s led to another restructuring of the mass media (Baran and Davis 2010), after which television positioned itself as the most influential medium. The importance that television has had for people around the world is perhaps best described in the editorial of the American magazine *The Saturday Review*, dated December 24, 1949: “Before us, even as a concept, is the grandest of all forms of communication. Before us is the supreme triumph of innovation and invention – a dream dreamt for centuries, something that could directly bring into homes a moving image combined with the action of reproducing sound, language and thought, without losing measurable time. Before us is a magic eye that can bring the wonders of entertainment, information and education directly into the living room. Before us is the means to create an enlightened democracy, the likes of which the world has never seen before” (Baran and Davis 2010, 54).<sup>12</sup> Television soon became the most important tool in political communication and radically changed the entire political life (Slavujević 2009). As the most significant advantages of television in political communication compared to other mass media, Slavujević mentions communication through images that has an immediate effect on the viewer, followed by the dynamics offered by the combination of image, text and sound, and the ability to emotionally “involve” the viewer, i.e., provoke emotional reaction, and finally the minimal effort that the viewer needs to make to find out something. Some of the shortcomings mentioned by Slavujević are the overabundance of information that makes it difficult to follow the content and leads to fragmented attention of viewers, as well as difficulties in decoding television content. At the same time, this

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2. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/podcast> (Visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Complete text available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/jun/17/political-podcasts-10-of-the-best> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>11</sup> Complete text available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/best-political-podcasts-2018-4> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> The original text can be accessed at: <https://www.unz.com/print/SaturdayRev-1949dec24-00020/> (visited on June 12, 2022).

author defines the “magic of authenticity” as an advantage and a disadvantage of television. An advantage in the sense that viewers can often identify reality based on the interpretation television gives of it, while on the other hand, the disadvantage is that this authenticity can be manipulative and edited, which results in a falsification of reality (Slavujević 2009, 48–49). According to Jovanka Matić, the key moment when television was positioned as the primary medium in political communication was the year 1960. “In the campaign for the presidential elections in 1960, the first televised duel between candidates John Kennedy and Richard Nixon was organized. The live TV debate attracted 70 million viewers and was the most watched television program in television history up to that point. According to the opinion of the voters themselves, the impression they got about the candidates in this TV duel, for a large number of them, it was decisive for their electoral decision” (Matić 2007, 17). Referring to Thomas Patterson, Matić states that the next elections in 1964 were marked by paid advertising of candidates in the media: “From then on, political advertising in the media became the most expensive activity within the election campaign in all multi-party democracies” (Patterson 1980, 184, cited in Matić 2007, 17). Patterson also says that since 1964, primetime (evening) news television shows have become the main target of presidential campaigns: “presidential candidates timed their election appearances to accommodate the deadlines necessary to prepare evening TV shows, and shaped their appearance strategy according to assumptions about how television works” (Patterson 1980, 5, cited in Matić 2007, 17). Matić points out that at the beginning of the 1960s, television stations in the USA opted for their own production of daily news, as opposed to the previous reliance on news agencies. “Since 1963, the primetime evening newscasts have been significantly extended and given the standard 30-minute format. These informative shows intended for the entire nation, and with a significant share of current TV shows, with their focus on political events of wider social importance and on certain individuals, perfectly suited the needs of election candidates for publicity” (Matić 2007, 18). Matić concludes that modern societies in which the media is the main source of information, and where elections are unthinkable without media-focused campaigns, are often called “electronic” or “teledemocracies”: “the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is qualified as a completely new era in the development of political communication, which is characterized by the enormous multiplication of media production of political content (TV stations with 24-hour current news are appearing), new media opportunities due to the development of new information technologies (satellite and cable television, mobile telephones, digital signal)” (Matić 2007, 20). The development of broadcasting in all its institutional forms, as argued by Richard Collins et al., strongly influenced modern democratic politics. The mass media became: “a forum for debate and discussion on current issues of general importance, and therefore a new platform for the formation of public opinion” (Collins et al. 1986, 212, cited in Livingstone, Lunt 2002, 30).

The key role of the mass media in political communication is supported by the statement made by David McQueen in his book “Television” (1998) – in Great Britain: “advertising accounts for more than 80% of the campaign costs of the main political parties, compared to less than 3% paid for public gatherings” (Mek Kvin 2000, 248). When it comes to the audience and changing habits in political information in the era of mass media, an illustrative example is certainly the research conducted by Marie-Louise Kiefer in the fall of 1995, on a representative sample of German citizens. When asked how they obtain information about politics and events happening worldwide in general, 6.000 participants gave the following answers (it should be noted that the respondents



had the opportunity to choose among several options): a) radio 53%, b) television 87%, c) daily press 66%, d) magazines 12%, e) conversation with other people 25% (Kiefer, 1996, cited in Schulz, 1997, 60).

The digitization of television, and the emergence of the Internet and social media, were not a serious threat to television being the primary news source for citizens. The new platforms are widespread, but they are used together with television, which is the conclusion of the research conducted by the “Pew” research center between October 30<sup>th</sup> and December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in eight Western European countries (in this case also the respondents could choose among several options when answering the questions – see table 1).

**Table 1** News sources for Western European citizens,

Country:	Television	Online	Radio	Press
Italy	81%	67%	46%	31%
Spain	81%	59%	46%	26%
France	71%	47%	53%	23%
Netherlands	70%	60%	54%	32%
Germany	70%	54%	67%	43%
Denmark	66%	68%	56%	28%
Sweden	65%	70%	61%	46%
United Kingdom	60%	55%	48%	20%

*Source:* Matsa, 2018, Pew research center

Katerina Matsa from the “Pew” research center states in the same text that the situation is similar among US citizens, i.e., that in a survey on news sources, it was concluded that 50% of American adults, in addition to other platforms, are also informed via television (Matsa 2018)<sup>13</sup>. Although it still plays a leading role in information dissemination, television as a medium is changing and adapting to new platforms. According to another Pew Center survey from 2014, 36% of American adults watch video news online, which at the time was identical to the percentage of those who watch news via cable TV or Facebook. Among the younger research participants, these percentages are even more pronounced, so 9 out of 10 participants aged 18 to 29 regularly watch online video content, and slightly less than half (48%) regularly follow informative video content online. Research authors Amy Mitchell, Jesse Holcomb, Kenneth Olmstead and Nancy Vogt state that video news is clearly becoming a part of the media space. “News is part of what people watch online, and more than ever, the public is part of the creation of the news” (Mitchell et al., 2014)<sup>14</sup>. As an example of media orientation towards online broadcasting, they cite the launch of the digital information channel “Vice Media”<sup>15</sup> at the beginning of 2014, as well as the purchase of the application “Stringwire”<sup>16</sup> by NBC television, as well as the worldwide expansion of the platform for live broadcasting of video content “HuffPost Live”, which was launched by the American news portal Huffington Post (Ibidem).

<sup>13</sup> Complete research available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/09/27/most-western-europeans-prefer-tv-news-while-use-of-print-outlets-lags/> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> Complete research available at: <http://www.journalism.org/2014/03/26/news-video-on-the-web/> (visited on June 12, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> “Vice media” has been present in Serbia since 2014, through the license of the Greek “Antena Group” (owned by the Kopernikus Corporation since 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Application for live broadcasting of video content.

Therefore, we can conclude that television as a medium still has a leading role in information dissemination, primarily thanks to the rapid adaptation to digital communication and innovation. A current example is the platform being developed at Duke University in the US, which will enable checking information in real time during speeches given by politicians and government officials (Bauder 2019). The platform is designed to “communicate” with the online journalist databases PolitiFact, Factcheck.com and The Washington Post during political televised speeches, to check the facts, and then highlight inaccurate or misleading claims made by the politician who is on the screen. David Bauder cites as an example the televised speech by US President Trump that was broadcast on January 8, 2019, in which he stated that 90% of the heroin that kills 300 Americans every week comes via the US border with Mexico. If this application had been active, notes Bauder, the information would have appeared on the screen that the majority of narcotics entering the US were smuggled at legal border crossings, and that the smuggling problem could not be solved by building a wall between the two countries (Bauder 2019).<sup>17</sup>

The combination of digital platforms and television is definitely the direction in which television will move. The above example shows that television can impartially participate in informing citizens as a means of political communication, however, as journalist David Bauder also states, “it is a mystery whether even one TV station will decide to use such platforms” (Bauder 2019), because many political centers of power around the world are enjoying the possibility of creating “television reality”.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Although professional standards and the theory of media freedom indicate that the media should be at the service of citizens, i.e., that they should be used to control the government and political entities, the media in the fight for profit not only push the boundaries of objective reporting, but often reach to the “production” of events (Slavujević 2009, 45), entering the field of persuasive and manipulative influence on the public.

The press, radio and television, as we had the opportunity to see in the previous sections of this paper, were actually for the greater part of their existence in the service of creating political reality, instead of being a corrective factor, the seventh force or the fourth entity of government. The abovementioned theoretical categories are not there without reason, the media can really be a corrective factor to politics. The best example is the “Watergate” affair, in which analytical work and newspaper articles by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein led to the impeachment of the US President Richard Nixon. Of course, there are numerous similar examples worldwide; however, if we look at the influence that political power centers have on the media, and the role of the media in election processes and campaigns, all the mentioned examples can actually be seen as exceptions that prove the rule that the media is at the service of politics.

Eric Louw defines politics in Anglo-liberal democracies as medialized politics. Louw explains this by saying that a vast number of Americans, but also Britons, Canadians and Australians, accept as normal the fact that they are limited to seeing politics as a series of (processed and distorted) media images. In fact, Louw points out, one can even conclude

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<sup>17</sup> Complete research available at: <https://www.apnews.com/9591a9be2e464775a92aeee69d783be4> (visited on June 12, 2022).

that they are comfortable in the position of passive “public” led by the elites who produce the representations, stereotypes and myths that they consume (Lou 2013, 41).

According to Louw, the key problem in such a formed “public” is the absence of communication. Members of the public do not know each other, nor do they communicate with each other: “Instead of communicating with people, isolated individuals now encounter a form of created ‘pseudo-interaction’ as a substitute for what they receive through mass media messages. In other words, they receive a media-influenced experience” (Lou 2013, 41). The consequence of the mediatization of politics are ‘passive followers’, ‘led’ by the limited agendas presented by the media. The result is a (passive) public, instead of active (engaged) citizens. The possibilities of manipulation of these mediatized (passive) outsiders are unlimited. The formation of mediatized public opinion encouraged the development of a symbiotic relationship between different interests. In other words, the ‘industry’ of public opinion is good for: a) political elites (insiders) who strive to create policy with as little interference as possible from the masses (outsiders), b) media workers because it provides them with employment, c) media owners because it ensures their profit” (Lou 2013, 41–42). Mediatized politics, Lou emphasizes, is based on the effect of the “demagogic art of media manipulation” by the authorities (Lou 2013, 42).

The power of traditional media lies in the absence of “feedback”, i.e., the inability of the public to directly influence the media and social changes. Letters from readers, participation of listeners or viewers in radio and television shows are always strictly controlled by the editorial offices and completely prevent the breaking of informative “echo chambers”<sup>18</sup> created by the media.

Breaking the “echo chambers”, i.e., the unbreakable link between traditional media and political communication, which, as has been shown throughout history, has often served to manipulate the masses, seriously threatened social media as a new means of political communication at the beginning of their existence. The Arab Spring, the protests in Turkey, the protests after the referendum in Catalonia, as well as many other protests around the world created the illusion that these platforms are bringing back political information-sharing and activity, and therefore democracy, to the hands of citizens. However, this turned out to be premature optimism. Realizing the power exerted by social media, political entities tried in every way to bring them under control. Attempts to ban them in certain countries did not give the expected results, because the Internet as a communication network offers numerous ways to circumvent this type of restriction. Punishing users of social media for their views or for organizing civil gatherings also did not establish control - it was actually brought about by social media themselves by creating a personalized reality for each user.

Social media algorithms, which are formed based on what users follow, like and share, actually place them in almost identical “echo chambers” as traditional media, showing them the content of users with whom they share similar interests in music, sports, art, but also politics. All the danger of social media algorithms is best seen in the victory of Donald Trump in the elections in the USA, and in Brexit. Social media algorithms and the abuse of user data, better known as the “Cambridge Analytica”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> “Echo chambers” are imaginary information bubbles within which identical political opinions and views are created and with the help of which a certain media audience is isolated from those who have opposite views and opinions (Sunstein 2001; Pariser 2011).

<sup>19</sup> More details about the affair “Cambridge Analytica”:

scandal have largely contributed to the aforementioned geopolitical ‘earthquakes’, on the basis of which it became clear that new media and platforms are also a controlled field of ‘mediatized politics’. In the “Social Media and Democracy” panel which was part of the series of lectures on ‘Democracy’ organized at Harvard University, ethicist Tristan Harris precisely defined the new kind of control: “You have to appeal to the Facebook algorithm to win elections, you have to appeal to the algorithm to attract attention. The algorithm has primacy over the media, over the news, over the newspaper publishers, over each of us, and it controls what we do” (Milano 2021)<sup>20</sup>.

Each new media, which at one point was the press, radio and television, brought with it the hope of being a powerful ally of the public in controlling the government, but soon each of them became a means of control. The unbreakable link between political communication and traditional (mass) media is based on total control of content, which actually leads to control of the masses in the political process.

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## POLITIČKO KOMUNICIRANJE I TRADICIONALNI MEDIJI – NERASKIDIVA VEZA

*Masovni mediji su u potpunosti su izmenili način komuniciranja između političara i birača. Komuniciranje unutar partija, aktivizam članstva, partijska disciplina i poštovanje hijerarhije postali su manje važni, jer su mediji preuzeli centralnu ulogu u širenju političkih informacija, zatim u političkoj edukaciji, ali i u procesu persuazivnog delovanja na mase. Savremena politika prema Zoranu Slavujeviću (2009) je zapravo organizovani medijski fenomen koji se planira i realizuje za i kroz saradnju sa medijima. Autor u članku elaborira međuodnos političkog komuniciranja i tradicionalnih medija, prikazujući istorijski razvoj, ali i savremene koncepte ove neraskidive veze. Štampa, radio i televizija, nastali su u različitim vremenskim razdobljima, ali je svaki od ovih medija menjao pravila političkog komuniciranja i postavljao nove standarde. Iako su mnogi teoretičari sa pojavom svakog od ovih medija, predviđali kraj prethodnika, svaki od njih se prilagodio novim okolnostima i opstao do danas. Uviđajući moć političkog komuniciranja posredstvom masovnih medija, politički subjekti su prihvatili koncept politike koja se temelji na normama medijskog sistema.*

Ključne reči: *političko komuniciranje, tradicionalni mediji, štampa, radio, televizija*