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Political communication in post-truth society: The case of the 2016 US election

1 Introduction

The following verses taken from the poem "Las dos linternas" written by the Spanish poet Ramon de Campoamor in 1846 illustrate that a subjective approach to reality is not new and the concept of truth has always been controversial:

> In this treacherous world
> nothing is the truth nor a lie.
> Everything depends on the colour
> of the crystal through which one sees it. (de Campoamor, 2003)

Today, in the world of parallel realities, we are faced with the serious challenge of recognizing and responding to fake news, alternative facts, and bot-generated content, all constituent elements of the so-called post-truth society. "Post-truth" was named the Oxford Word of the Year in 2016. The adjective was defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Oxford Languages, n.d.). According to Oxford Languages there was a spike in the frequency of its usage in 2016, particularly in the context of the Brexit referendum and the US presidential election. Post-truth seems to be a euphemism for lying, which is "normally a violent expression of moral reprobation, to be avoided in polite conversation" (ibid.). However, truth, which is on the other side of the spectrum, is also not an easy term to define. Truth is one of the central and largest subjects in philosophy, which has been a topic of discussion in its own right for thousands of years (Glanzberg, 2018). Fuller (2018) argues that there has never been agreement on neither the nature nor the criteria of truth, and the *Oxford Dictionary* defines truth as "that, which is true or in accordance with fact or reality", but also as "a fact or belief that is accepted as true". Also, Fuller (ibid.) states that knowledge is a game of power, and elites are most likely those who define what can or cannot be accepted as true. With this statement Fuller challenges our approach to knowledge and truth by assuming that we tend to believe people in power (political, financial or epistemological) and seldom doubt claims that are recognized or given the status of

truth. This kind of thinking can lead to the "post-truth" character of politics with "the value of truth in contemporary public affairs being relatively irrelevant" (Forstenzer, 2018, 5). Political campaigns are thus often based on loudly and repeatedly expressed falsehoods and lies (ibid.). According to Keyes (2004, 16), the "emotional valence of words associated with deception has declined", while Daniel Boorstin claims that "truth has been replaced by believability" (in Keyes, 2004, 9). Moreover, Rodriguez and Rygrave (in Keyes, 2004, 10) believe that "lying is not only a possible action, but a preferred one", which may well be the face of a broader phenomenon: the routinization of dishonesty (ibid.). In 2017 it was the term "fake news" which became the *Collins Dictionary* word of the year, a term of kindred nature signifying "(F)alse, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting" (Flood, 2017). The usage of the term "fake news" has increased by 365% since 2016 (ibid.).

Another term that needs to be defined for a better understanding of this paper and its scope is "computational propaganda". As a communicative practice, it describes the use of algorithms, automation, and human curation to purposefully manage and distribute misleading information over social media networks (Woolley, Howard, 2016).

The paper focuses on computational propaganda, with special emphasis on the role it played in the 2016 presidential election in the US, and its effectiveness in manipulating the electorate to vote for a particular candidate. The study presented in the paper is based on a review of relevant literature: we first reviewed a selection of literature on political communication with emphasis on its challenges in a digital environment, and then surveyed the research reports for the 2016 presidential election. Our research was guided by the following questions:

1. Did the political communication of the Trump campaign adapt to the digital environment, and if so – how?
2. What was the role of computational propaganda in the 2016 US presidential election?

2 Political communication and its focus in different media environments

Ever since Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, scholars have been intrigued by the connection between politics and communication. The balance between the rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, and logos) set out by Aristotle remains highly significant as credibility, emotional appeal and the reasoning of politicians work together in pursuit of selling a story to the electorate. For example, already in 1858 Lincoln knew that "public sentiment is everything" and "whoever can change public opinion can change the government" (Lincoln in Guelzo, 2014, 171). Thus, political communication can be understood as a tool of mediation between the state (politicians, policies, political issues) and the public. In addition, Norris (2001) claims that political communication is above all

an interactive process in which information is relayed between politicians, the news media, and the public. Furthermore, political communication can operate vertically in both directions, that is top down and bottom up, or the state with the public and the public with the state, and horizontally, when it connects political actors to one another. It can also involve non-human actors such as automated software that has been created to mimic the behaviour of real people and whose goal is to artificially shape public life. In fact, political campaigns, governments and regular citizens around the world are employing combinations of people and bots on social media platforms to create manipulative disinformation campaigns. They can either bolster or drown a particular politician or policy idea, and can also be used together with human trolls in order to "manufacture consensus" or create an illusion of general support and popularity (Woolley, Guilbeault, 2017). Politics and with it also political communication is mostly transmitted via media channels, with television being a game changer in political communication, as suddenly people were able to see political figures debate and perform on camera, with all the additional information this provides. A key event here is the 1960 presidential debate between Kennedy and Nixon, when the focus shifted from what the candidates were saying to their charisma, body language, and appearance.

A new era began with social media networks. The ability to share everything online without "filters", such as editors, censors, or fact-checkers, and to engage in communication interactively shifted the focus from the role and authority of the leader to the emotions and feelings they create (Maddalena, 2016). The Internet has radically disrupted our understanding of what political communication is, who does it and with what purpose (Wooley, Howard, 2016). Drüeke (2012) claims that faster access to information, opportunities for participation of diverse actors, communication via e-mail (and social media) and exchanges on online discussion forums indicate that the Internet is perceived as a medium of political communication and as a means of engaging with the decision-making processes. The Internet has changed both the formal political process and political communication among institutional, civic and individual actors. We live in a time of great and rapid political change, and digital technologies provide the platform for much of contemporary civic engagement and political action (Vaccari in Wooley, Howard, 2016). Hence, political communication has had to adjust to a world in which social media play an increasingly important role in the circulation of ideas and conversations about politics and public policy.

3   Challenges and threats of political communication today

We live in the "era of plenty" (Ellis, 2000), or even better, the "era of overflow" (de Meulenaere et al., 2012), brought about by the digitization process that enabled the creation of and access to a myriad of content. However, this extensive choice and availability of

content across different platforms can create information and sensory overload for the viewer. While digitization has provided the viewer with more autonomy, it has also resulted in more complex decision-making processes in selecting the content (ibid.), as modern filters and search engines are not substitutes for the authoritative information that television seemed to provide in the past. Today, people can search and find information on the Internet, but they are left to themselves when interpreting or deciding which information, among the many hits, is indeed credible. So, on the one hand the Internet offers unparalleled opportunities to interact with institutions, governments and people, but at the same time it leaves us with the feeling that we have very little (if any) impact on policy-making.

We may therefore feel technologically connected, but politically disconnected, which leads to civic disengagement and democratic deficit (Gurevitch et al., 2009). In this crowded contemporary media space, journalists have a unique opportunity to provide an authoritative and non-partisan interpretation of the world, separate information from propaganda, and present a balanced and objective account of political ideas and events by filtering the readily available multitude of data, news and conversations (ibid.). Moreover politicians, who now need to be present in more media spaces than ever before, and thus have less time to focus on their political agenda, might also feel more anxious.

Rúas and Capdevila (2017) believe that political communication strives to achieve the necessary legitimacy of the media and citizenry. Likewise, citizens seek authentic signals that will lead them to trust political establishment. The media (traditional and new) have the task of bringing citizens and politicians closer together and enabling their communication. With regard to this, American opinion polls indicate (Pew Research Center, 2019) that the loss of political credibility and the lack of trust in politicians have paved the way for the upsurge of populism and partisan politics. As Rosanvallon states (2008), we[1] live in an age of distrust, produced by the steady erosion of confidence in our elected representatives. This democratic deficit is evident from increasingly low voter turnout and general political indifference or apathy on the one hand, but also increasing protests and movements on the streets and social media on the other. People see the establishment of politics as unfair to ordinary people and have decided to take matters into their own hands. Traditional means of communication and instruments of political participation (e.g. elections, party politics) are considered part of the system and thus not to be trusted, hence the paradox of increased political activism and social movements, and a general decrease in the electoral turnout. For example, the victory of Barack Obama in 2008 was characterized by a major surge in young voters, as 66% of the youth vote went to Obama, against 31% for McCain (Pew Research Center, 2008), and 67% to 30% in 2012 against Romney (Robillard, 2012).

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1   "We" refers to people living in democratic societies (note of the author).

Young people responded to Obama's social media campaign, and not only voted for him, but also contributed their energy and enthusiasm as campaign volunteers, and probably also assisted in persuading more traditional voters to vote for Obama.

The 2016 election of Donald Trump and the 2016 referendum on Brexit were the products of distrust in the establishment, expertise, and institutions, which symbolize the essence of post-truth society, with facts playing a secondary role to the sensations they produce. All this contributes to the trivialization of politics, political pop (Mazzoleni, Sfardini, 2009), entertainment and infotainment (politainment), typical of the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1983). In a society characterized by increasing individualism, social fragmentation and the decline of party loyalty (Bennet, 2012), all typical of post-industrial democracies, politics is becoming increasingly personalized and present in the digital media, which often serve as a platform for the coordination of individualized collective action (ibid., 37). Considering the unprecedented possibilities of information access, it seems contradictory that the level of civic participation is decreasing. This is partly due to the underrepresented genre of in-depth political analysis in the media landscape, mostly concerned with gossip and celebrities, all presented in a fragmented way and in the framework of politainment.

Another important feature of this time is the appearance of big data and algorithmic culture (Rúas, Capdevila, 2017), connected with control mechanisms, the absence of transparency, discrimination and exclusion (van Dijck, Poell, 2013). Many automated accounts are present on social media for the purpose of adding emotions to the trending topic of feelings (ibid.), and as indicated by Woolley and Howard (2016), computational propaganda is gaining importance. Moreover, an assemblage of social media platforms, autonomous agents, and big data aim at manipulating public opinion, with computational propaganda being among the latest, most ubiquitous and technical strategies to be deployed by those who wish to use information technology for social control (ibid.). Social media may be especially conducive to fake news, as they enable low cost and easy access to the market and content production. The format of social media (fragmented information viewed on our phones or tablets) makes it difficult to assess an article's veracity. Social media – in particular Facebook – ideologically segregate friends, so people are unlikely to be exposed to non-ideologically aligned stories (Allcott, Gentzkow, 2016). With regard to this, various experts have voiced concern regarding the creation of echo-chambers and filter-bubbles, where like-minded citizens are isolated from different perspectives (ibid., 211).

4 Research design

The present article is based on descriptive research, consisting of a systematic review of the literature and primary sources on the 2016 US presidential election. Our goal

was to understand the role of computational propaganda in the election of Donald J. Trump and to answer the following questions:

1. Did the political communication of the Trump campaign adapt to the digital environment, and if so – how?
2. What was the role of computational propaganda in the 2016 US presidential election?

Our sample consisted of academic papers and mostly American articles on the role of computational propaganda in the 2016 presidential election, covering the six months prior to Election Day. As substantial primary research had already been conducted on this topic, we were able to select, use, interpret and evaluate some of the research reports, with an aim to provide answers to our research questions.

5   Results

The results that are presented below follow the order of the research questions.

5.1   Digitalization of the Trump campaign

The 9th of Nov. 2016 is a day that most political communication researchers, pollsters, journalists and digital communication experts will certainly remember. Donald Trump won the presidential election and became the 45th President of the U.S.A. His victory was seen to be connected with the focus of his campaign on social media, which have a substantially different structure from all previous media technologies (Allcott, Gentzkow, 2016). They can disseminate content without any fact checking or filtering by a third-party (e.g. an editor), with a reach even greater than that of mainstream media outlets (ibid.). The fact that the Trump campaign spent more money than the Clinton campaign on social media marketing is thus not surprising (Howard et al., 2018). Trump had a strong, well-established and publicized Twitter presence already before the beginning of his presidential campaign, and expertly used his knowledge and skills in the race for the Republican nomination, and afterwards in the presidential campaign. Twitter was adopted as his primary communication platform, and social media was essential to the success of Trump and his campaign, as it was constantly used to communicate with supporters, the electorate, media, and wider world. While different analyses claim that Trump's Twitter and social media activity was very spontaneous and lacking in strategy (Sampathkumar, 2018; Cillizza, 2018), a stylistic analysis of his Twitter presence from 2009 to 2018, including the campaign period, clearly shows that there was a serious and highly efficient strategy behind it, and the style of his tweets constantly adapted to the communicative goals of Trump and his team (Clarke, Grieve, 2019).

Throughout the 2016 pre-electoral race there were repeated warnings about the manipulation of the campaigns on social media by automated agents. Researchers

reported on dozens of purported Mexican Trump supporters sending identical messages late at night, all bragging about Trump, posing with Latino voters in the Nevada Republican caucuses (Howard et al., 2018). As it turned out, this was only a part of the automated messages with fake content. In Michigan, where pre-election polls showed the two presidential candidates relatively close in voter support, researchers (Howard et al., 2017) analysed the behaviour of social media users and voters, and found that Trump's presence on Twitter was consistently more than twice that of Clinton's. However, a substantial difference was established between the sentiment of Twitter users from the surveyed sample of 22 million tweets (from 1-11 Nov. 2016) and that of the voters from public opinion polls, with the latter showing a relative tie between Trump and Clinton. Michigan social media users shared a lot of political content, but the amount of professionally researched political news and information was always lower than the amount of sensational news, fake news and other types of junk news. Professional news content actually hit its lowest point on the day prior to the election (ibid.).

Bovet and Makse (2019) find that 25% of 30 million tweets (collected in the five months prior to election day) containing a link to news outlets shared either fake or extremely biased news. They report a similar percentage of automated accounts for fake news and traditional news, with fake news automated accounts being much more active (ibid., 10). The top news spreaders of traditional news were found to be mostly journalists with verified Twitter accounts, while the top spreaders of fake news were mostly unverified accounts with seemingly deceptive profiles and deleted accounts (ibid.). Clinton supporters seem to have been mainly influenced by traditional centre and left-leaning news (i.e. fact-based journalism). The diffusion of such news stories is driven by a small group of influential users (mostly journalists), and follows a diffusion pattern in heterogeneous groups, which is typical of social media. The diffusion of fake and extremely biased news, on the other hand, seems to occur in more connected clusters and is a result of collective behaviour. The tweets of Trump supporters actually activated production and diffusion of fake news, and not *vice versa* (ibid., 11).

5.2 The role of computational propaganda in the 2016 presidential election

A study of Twitter accounts (Bastos, Farkas, 2019) operated by the Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Russia-based agency specializing in online influence, reveals that propaganda operations are not always immediately enacted. In fact, they can be designed for short-, medium-, and long-term deployment. As seen from the research, the IRA often purchases Twitter accounts in bulk, uses them to create fear among a population, and only later repurposes them for the needs of specific campaigns (ibid., 2019, 12-13). At the request of the Congressional investigation into the involvement of

Russia in the 2016 presidential election, Twitter submitted a list of deleted Twitter accounts on October 31, 2017. The investigation led to a "troll factory" supposedly connected with the Russian government (Fiegerman, Byers, 2017). According to Twitter, a total of 36,746 Russian accounts produced approximately 1.4 million tweets in connection with the US election (Bertrand, 2017). Some 3,814 of these accounts were operated by the IRA (United States Senate Committee, 2017; Twitter Public Policy, 2018).

The examination of the IRA fake accounts shows that the agency deployed campaigns tailored to specific propaganda efforts, with little overlap across strategic operations. Out of nine identified propaganda targets, the following accounts were the most prominent: Conservative Patriots (75), Black Lives Matter (50), and local news outlets (37). Conservative Patriots self-described themselves as conservative US citizens, patriots, and supporters of the Republican Party and Trump. Their accounts tweeted mostly about US politics, gun rights, national identity, and the military on the one hand, and anti-abortion rights, anti-Democratic Party, anti-Hillary Clinton, and anti-mainstream media on the other. The Black Lives Matter account supposedly represented African American citizens, and thus tweeted mostly about racial inequality. Their goal seems to have been to discourage African Americans from voting in general, and from voting for Hillary Clinton in particular. The local news outlets were fake accounts building on the growing distrust of mainstream media. They seem to have been replicating filtered, but true local news content, with a bias toward crime, public safety and similar emotionally polarizing issues (Bastos, Farkas, 2019, 9-10), aimed at dividing Americans.

In research conducted by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017), a fake news database was created for articles that circulated on social media in the three months before the 2016 election. The sample consisted of 158 articles. In addition to the analysis of fake news, the authors also conducted an online post-election survey to learn about the sources of political information and the importance of social media in this regard. Their results suggest that social media have become an important source of political news and information, but not the predominant one. According to the 2016 survey (ibid.), the main role in providing political information was still reserved for the television. When asked about their most important source of news and information regarding the 2016 election, the respondents assigned just a 13.8% share to the social media (ibid., 221-224). The database consisted of 41 pro-Clinton (or anti-Trump) articles and 115 pro-Trump (or anti-Clinton) articles, which were shared on Facebook a total of 7.6 million and 30.3 million times, respectively. There were about three times more fake pro-Trump than pro-Clinton articles, and the average pro-Trump article was shared more times than the average pro-Clinton article (ibid., 223). The average exposure of American adults to fake news in the election-period was calculated, amounting to one or perhaps several articles per adult, with the effect

of the exposure being approximately a 0.02% influence on the change of vote. The research also proved that the more ideologically profiled the voters are, the more they are prone to fake news favouring their candidate and not others (ibid., 224). We believe this to be true, since these voters are pre-determined in who to vote for and are thus less receptive to the media messages of the opposing candidates, which could potentially make them rethink their preference. It seems that despite the ratio of 3:1 in favour of pro-Trump articles, the impact of fake news on his victory might have been overrated, in particular when considering that the predominant source of political information was not social media. However, it seems that Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) did not consider some important factors, such as the impact of fake news that is repeated, and/or appears on different media channels (ads in papers, on social media, on TV, radio, live gatherings) that might have been important in exerting influence on voters and possibly changing their behaviour.

In a study on the effect of computational propaganda on the political discussion around the 2016 presidential election, Bessi and Ferrara (2019) reveal that a significant portion (about one fifth) of the entire political conversation was computer generated. Their findings suggest that the presence of social media bots can negatively affect the democratic political discussion rather than improve it, which in turn can potentially alter public opinion and endanger the integrity of an election. Bessi and Ferrara (2019) point to three problematic issues; first, influence can be redistributed across suspicious accounts that may be operated with malicious purposes; second, the political conversation can become further polarized; third, the spreading of misinformation and unverified information can be enhanced.

6 Discussion

Political communication has undergone many transformations since its beginnings in Ancient Greece. The development of technology marked important phases in this course – from the advent of radio and television to modern ICT technologies. Based on the analysed literature and research, we can confirm that computational propaganda has overrun the stage of political communication. One of the most important political events that stands witness to this fact is the 2016 US presidential election. Obama's victories in 2008 and 2012 were considered to be the triumph of digital over analogue (Warzel, 2019), which paved the way for the digital dominance of 2016. The Trump campaign only outperformed the Clinton campaign in the field of social media marketing, but that was enough. In fact, not only his campaign, but also Trump's presidency has been predominantly run through Twitter. With more than 11,000 tweets over 33 months, he has reshaped the nature of political communication, the presidency, and presidential power (Shear et al., 2019).

Trump's political communication is well adapted to social media, which are perfectly suited for short, fragmented conversations and the direct involvement of the audience. His campaign communication represented a clean cut with traditional communication on mainstream media outlets. His hyper-active presence on social media made him seem increasingly popular based on the number of likes, replies, re-tweets, and views, even though a substantial percentage of these were not human, but bot-generated. Both presidential candidates actively used different forms of computer-generated propaganda; in fact, and as noted above, about one fifth of the entire political conversation was computer-generated. It was an unprecedented all-out bot war with an unpredictable outcome, with Trump and his campaign being more active and present on social media. What has also been discovered from in-depth research into the style of Trump's communication (see Clarke, Grieve, 2019), which may not have entirely been understood so far, is the fact that his rhetoric and style of communication seemed to have followed the precise communicative goals of Trump's team not only during the presidential campaign, but also once he had won the presidency, when Twitter became the communication platform of the Trump administration.

The assumptions regarding the decisive impact of fake news on the outcome of the 2016 election have not been proven, at least not by the research reports at our disposal, as they show a fairly limited direct effect of exposure to such propaganda on the behaviour of voters and their change in candidate preference. Nevertheless, social media and computational propaganda did have a strong impact on the 2016 election and its result along with some other negative consequences, such as increased polarization of the society with adverse effects on and implications for democratic processes. Moreover, the difficulty in revealing the financial and political structures behind computational propaganda presents a serious problem that leaves doubts regarding the outcome of the 2016 election and the potential involvement of foreign states.

The Internet allows for propaganda and politicized information to be more individualized, to be spread wider and faster than ever before, and to be targeted at precisely defined groups. Stakeholders in political communication now have to understand that citizens themselves create political discourse, and determine what ideas and which political actors are worth their support. The contest for votes has turned into one for likes and re-tweets; due to the fragmented format and rapid diffusion of news, content is fighting a losing battle with form. Digital political communication is focused on political pop, politicians as celebrities, and politics as a spectacle for the masses, although this is hardly a new development, since in Ancient Rome politicians already knew that in order to obtain public support they needed to provide *panem et circenses*. With social media on the main stage, this has never been easier.

7 Conclusion

One of the challenges for political communication experts, journalists, and political actors remains the ability to recognize how voters can be influenced into changing their opinions, while on the other side voters need to recognize when and how they are being manipulated. Investment in education and training in this field, as well as other efforts, will be needed in order to empower people and develop sophisticated detection techniques that can unmask the puppet masters of deceptive online campaigns, which can be politically, financially, or otherwise motivated, and therefore present a danger to democratic processes. Just as the development of the printing press helped the Protestant Reformers to spread their word and encourage people to read the *Bible* themselves instead of believing in the interpretation of the Roman Catholic Church, various anti-establishment campaigners today are urging their followers to ignore expert opinions, judge the evidence for themselves and support politicians who dislike experts. Since people often obtain information via various media channels notorious for gossip, politainment, and the absence of in-depth political information, it is easy to embrace ignorance and treat all opinions as equally valid, with truth and lies being different, but equally acceptable sides of the same coin. The present article opened with a definition of post-truth and its related concepts, to reveal the embarrassing multitude of ideas that have replaced or expanded the once seemingly simple world of truth and lies. It has never really been simple, of course, but the understanding of what is true and what is not has never been as complicated and subjective as it is today: when the president of the U.S.A. presents his interpretation of reality as "alternative facts", even though these facts are objectively proven to be incorrect; when we receive breaking news from the world via numerous social media channels without even knowing if they are the real accounts of serious media outlets, or simply algorithms and bots masqueraded as such, so they can endlessly spread fake news or seriously biased content; when the general public, voters, but also experts, journalists and other stakeholders are demotivated and lost, because they do not know who to trust and how to compete with algorithms and lies – then it is time to focus on revealing and analysing such phenomena. Systematic research in this area is needed unless we want to subscribe to the prophetic words of George Orwell from *Homage to Catalonia* (2018, Kindle): "The very concept of objective truth is fading out of the world. Lies will pass into history."

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Nina Gorenc

Political communication in post-truth society:
The case of the 2016 US election

Keywords: political communication, post-truth, fake news, computational propaganda, bots

The research behind this paper is set in the context of the 2016 US presidential election that has come to symbolize the post-truth era. We conducted a literature review on the 2016 election, with the aim to better understand the impact of computational propaganda on the election outcome and on the behaviour of voters. The paper opens with a definition of post-truth society and related concepts such as fake news and computational propaganda. It explores the changes of political communication in a digital environment and analyses the role of social media in the 2016 election. It probes into phenomena such as the trivialization of politics and the loss of credibility of political actors, which are both common in post-truth societies. The reviewed literature seems to indicate that social media have become strong actors on the political stage, but so far not the predominant source of political information and influence on the behaviour of voters. The paper makes two important contributions. Firstly, drawing on the concept of post-truth society, it analyses the role of computational propaganda in the 2016 presidential election, and secondly, it attempts to explain the paradox of general political apathy on one hand, and increased political activism on the other. These are some of the challenges we are now facing, and in order to be able to cope with them it is important to acknowledge and understand them.

Nina Gorenc

Politično komuniciranje v postresničnostni družbi:
Primer ameriških predsedniških volitev 2016

Ključne besede: politična komunikacija, postresničnost, lažne novice, računalniška propaganda, boti

Članek je utemeljen na raziskavah ameriških predsedniških volitev leta 2016, ki so postale simbol postresničnostnega obdobja. Predstavlja pregled literature na temo volitev in pomaga razumeti vpliv, ki ga je računalniška propaganda imela na izid volitev in obnašanje volivcev. Članek se začne z definicijo postresničnostne družbe in z njo povezanih konceptov, kot so lažne novice in računalniška propaganda. Poglobi se v spremembe, ki jih je politična komunikacija doživela v digitalnem okolju, in analizira vlogo socialnih medijev v volitvah leta 2016. Prouči tudi spremljajoče pojave postresničnostne družbe, kot sta banalnost politike in izguba kredibilnosti političnih akterjev. Po pregledu literature se zdi, da so socialni mediji sicer postali pomemben dejavnik na političnem odru, vendar zaenkrat še niso prevladujoč vir političnih informacij ali vpliva na obnašanje volivcev. Članek prinaša dva pomembna prispevka: s pomočjo koncepta

postresničnostne družbe analizira vlogo računalniške propagande v predsedniških volitvah 2016, obenem pa skuša razložiti paradoks splošne politične apatije na eni strani in povečanega političnega aktivizma na drugi. Da bi bili pri soočanju z omenjenimi izzivi uspešni, jih moramo najprej prepoznati in razumeti.

O avtorici

Nina Gorenc deluje kot lektorica za angleški in italijanski jezik na Fakulteti za družbene vede Univerze v Ljubljani, kjer je vodja Oddelka za tuje jezike. Po diplomi iz angleškega in italijanskega jezika je nadaljevala študij politične znanosti, ki ga je zaključila z magisterijem in doktoratom, pri tem pa je jezikoslovno izobrazbo združila z zanimanjem za politično komunikacijo. V tujini predava o izzivih politične komunikacije, predsedniški retoriki, ameriškem predsedništvu in podobnih temah. Je redna gostja na La Sapienza University v Rimu, kjer je tudi članica različnih mednarodnih znanstvenih teles in komitejev.

About the author

Nina Gorenc works as Lector of English and Italian languages at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, where she also serves as Foreign Language Department Chair. After her graduation in English and Italian, she pursued her academic interests in political science, with master's and doctoral degrees in political science, which merged her linguistic background and interest in political communication. She lectures abroad on political communication and its challenges, presidential rhetoric, the American presidency, and similar topics. She is a regular guest at La Sapienza University in Rome, where she is a member of various international scientific boards and committees.