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CONTENTS

Economic and Democratic Consolidation of the Former Yugoslav Republics

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Abstract:

Article analyses the processes of democratic consolidation in the former Yugoslav republics in the period since the volatile and violent breakup of socialist Yugoslavia three decades ago. Author is putting an emphasis on the notion of economic consolidation processes in all former Yugoslav republics and tests the thesis that economic consolidation is indeed the one prerequisite of democratic consolidation that suffered most direct effects of failed peaceful transformation in areas of former Yugoslavia that plunged into post-independence wars and conflicts. Author confirms that the secret to the democratic resilience is hidden in economic development – not only, as some theories claimed back in the 1960s (Lipset, 1959, p. 69–105), in various forms of undemocratic rule, but in a democracy built upon democratic institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms plus the rule of law.

Keywords: democracy, economy, consolidation, former Yugoslavia, republics, Slovenia.

Introduction

The disintegration of the socialist political system forced several countries of Central and Eastern Europe to undertake fundamental changes that were to constitute a system resembling that is present in Western societies. These states saw themselves as genuinely part of Western civilisation for they had several common historical, cultural and economic elements. Consequently, their prime development strategy was oriented to social modernisation, particularly in the sense of adopting two main institutional characteristics – a market economy and a parliamentary democracy (Tomšič 2002: 125). Before we can even discuss democratic consolidation, at least three basic conditions must be fulfilled. The first is the existence of a country because otherwise there can be no free elections or human rights. The second condition is that no democracy can be consolidated before the process of democratic transition has ended. A necessary but not a sufficient prerequisite to finish the democratic transition are free, general and democratic elections. In many cases of free, general and democratic elections it became obvious that governments de facto lacked real decision-making power, which despite the institute of democratic elections remained in the hands of the former rulers or other powers. The third condition of democratic consolidation is therefore the necessity of democratic rule. If democratically elected authorities violate the constitution, restrict human rights, interfere with the work of other independent authorities and do not govern within the limits of the rule of law, then we cannot talk of a democratic regime. It may be concluded that only democracies can be consolidated democracies (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 16). If we are to talk about a consolidated democracy, then we must also fulfil other conditions than those mentioned above. Linz and Stepan list five more interlinked prerequisites: economic consolidation, the rule of law, the existence of an organised civil society, an efficient country bureaucracy and the relative autonomy of political society (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 14–33).

In this article we aim to analyse the processes of democratic transition and consolidation in the former Yugoslav republics from early 1990s, when socialist Yugoslavia finally broke apart, to the 2020, when now-independent countries celebrated their first three-decade anniversaries. We will put an emphasis on various internationally recognized measurements that try to cover a combination of elements that influence the processes of democratic transition and consolidation in the Linz and Stepan's (1996) traditional trajectory. Following their work, we will put particular emphasis on the notions of economic transition and economic consolidation processes in all former Yugoslav republics and test the assumption that economic consolidation is indeed the one prerequisite of democratic consolidation that suffered most direct effects of failed peaceful transformation in areas of former Yugoslavia that plunged into post-independence wars and conflicts.

Theoretical Backgrounds

How are the concepts of social and political modernisation to be understood? Social modernisation includes key changes in all aspects of human thought and human activities. Its elements, such as economic growth, urbanisation, development of education and establishment of the mass media are historically interlinked with the advancement of democracy. Nevertheless, establishing various democratic institutions usually lagged general progress (Zajc, 2000, p. 13). Political modernisation will, for the purposes of this article, be defined as the rationalisation of authority (dismissing various traditional, family-based, local or religious authorities and replacing them with secular and legitimate national authority) and the consolidation of sovereignty of the nation state versus external influences or internal regional and local powers. It further requires a division of power between legislative, juridical and executive authorities, established relations between them, and the protection of professional fields from arbitrary political influence (judiciary, armed forces and civil administration).

According to its definition and historical experience, the concept of political modernisation correlates with an increase in political independence. The right to independence and self-regulation originates from the right to mutiny against any foreign or unjust authority ('*ius resistendi*'). It also represents the people's right (people as a self-protecting entity) to change government, demand the government's responsibility or establish their own government (Zajc, 2000, p. 16–17). In the context of the former socialist systems, the right to mutiny and the right to self-determination enabled the formation of not only new but also more democratic states.

Despite achieving different levels of social and economic development, researchers disclosed many common characteristics of the reasons for the political modernisation seen among Central and Eastern European countries. The first of these common characteristics is a legitimacy crisis. Up until the late 1980s the monistic systems of CEE based their legitimacy entirely on ideological suppositions: of no-conflict societies; of the established belief in their 'historical right'; and of their expertise in human development. The democratic version of legitimacy proved to be more attractive to citizens, especially in socially and economically less developed countries, even more so when compared with the state's limitless and unsupervised power and the irresponsibility of its electors (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 17). The second of the common characteristics is the systematic restraint of human rights. Totalitarian and authoritarian systems theoretically and practically opposed those constitutional regulations that were based on the individual and had respect for the inalienable rights of the citizens and of all the people. Particularly restricted by the authoritarian powers were the freedom of thought and freedom of expression – the pillars of an autonomous civil society. Also highly restricted was the freedom of public gathering which created circumstances fitting the monopolisation of power and the creation of an authoritarian single party system. The third of the common characteristics was the complete ineffectiveness of the socialist systems. They could not fulfil the material expectations of their citizens or solve the ever-growing problems. Socialist systems were increasingly falling behind in the race with democratic and competitive states. The fourth of the common characteristics were the very high costs of repression. Undemocratic systems tend to break all social linkages except their own, which they form and enforce systematically. They sustain an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust where any kind of opposition is severely sanctioned. The result of uncertainty and repressiveness is the so-called ‘subculture of fear’, which weakens people’s ability to independently plan and act in order not to worsen their individual position. Gradually all the rights and institutions, which could ensure the success of a collective action, disintegrate. Nevertheless, in undemocratic systems there is a relationship between tolerance of political opposition and the costs of its repression. Expensive tolerance necessarily signifies an even more expensive repression. The more the costs of repression exceeded the costs of tolerance the higher became the possibility of altering the political system (Dahl, 1990).

The key reason for the political democratisation of CEE countries were the restraints on social development imposed by communist rule. In these countries the process of social development could be marked as inorganic top-down modernisation based on the idea of homogenised and disciplined society. It effectively suffocated any alternative realisation of social potential. Reforms and ideas were legal if they did not collide with the monopoly’s legitimacy, based on the idea of a classless society. This was the origin of the system’s incapability to ensure sustainable development, self-reproduction, the absorption of constant social changes and adjustment to the complex circumstances (Tomšič, 2002, p. 126).

The term democratic transition relates to the process of dismissing the authoritarian regime, authoritarian entities or undemocratic legislation and to the establishment of the constitutional regulation and formation of procedural rules for political competition. This process of transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system usually involves evolution. The establishment of a fully democratic system must necessarily be preceded by liberalisation – while still within the old regime’s framework, certain rights must be restored or expanded to serve as protection of the individual or greater social formation, against arbitrary interventions of central powers. This enables the creation of political opposition, articulation and popularisation of new ideas and consequently also an increase in public support (Tomšič, 2002, p. 130).

The democratic consolidation requires the establishment of a suitable institutional framework. Schmitter understands consolidation as ‘a process of transformation of random agreements, prudent norms and accidental decisions (formed in the period of transition) into a generally known and regularly practiced relations of cooperation and competition. These must be voluntarily accepted by all individuals and groups enrolled in the democratic exercise of power' (Schmitter, 1994, p. 60). To put it more simply, the process of democratic consolidation is finished when no relevant actor seeks to politically exist outside the frameworks of democratic institutions (Kukovič & Haček 2014, p. 49) or 'when also the defeatists try to succeed only through democratic institutions' (Przeworski et al., 1996, p. 40).

Measurements of Democratic Consolidation

We can measure the success of democratic transition and democratic consolidation through various indexes. The most frequently used index is the Human Development Index (HDI), which is composed of various economical, social, demographic and other indicators. The precision and ability to determine any country's stage of development of the HDI is much greater than any other composite index or statistical indicator. HDI marks some of the fundamental achievements in a certain society, such as the average length of life, dissemination of knowledge, economic development and certain life standards. HDI is a more profound indicator than for example revenue per capita, because the latter is only one of the many means of human development but not also its result. Table 1 shows values of the HDI index from 1995 to the latest available data from 2019. Besides the actual value of the index, it also gives two kinds of information. The first one regards the stage of development a specific country has achieved, whereas the second one shows the country's position in the world ranking. The results mentioned are entirely congruent with frequently published economic indicators – Slovenia scored best among the former socialist countries in all time periods between 1995 and 2019. Between 1995 and 2019 some former Yugoslav republics advanced in their world rankings, but their progress is very diverse; Slovenia for instance moved up 15 positions, Croatia 33 and Serbia 29, but on the other hand, Montenegro stayed largely on the same level between 2010 and 2019. The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina is more troubling, as it moved down 19 positions between 2000 (when it was for the first time included in the measurement) and 2019.

Table 1: Human Development Index (HDI) in Central and Eastern Europe in 1995–2019*

Country	1995**	2000	2006	2010**	2014**	2019**	Rank 1995***	Rank 2019***
Slovenia	0.887; HD-37	0.884	0.910	0.828; VHD-29	0.880; VHD-25	0.917; VHD-22	1.	1.
Croatia	0.759; MD-76	0.826	0.846	0.767; HD-51	0.818; VHD-47	0.851; VHD-43	10.	9.
Romania	0.767; MD-74	0.773	0.805	0.767; HD-50	0.793; HD-52	0.828; VHD-49	9.	11.
Bulgaria	0.789; MD-67	0.795	0.816	0.743; HD-58	0.782; HD-59	0.816; VHD-56	6.	14.
Hungary	0.857; HD-47	0.843	0.869	0.805; VHD-36	0.828; VHD-44	0.854; VHD-40	4.	8.
Czech Republic	0.884; HD-39	0.857	0.885	0.841; VHD-28	0.870; VHD-28	0.900; VHD-27	2.	2.
Slovakia	0.875; HD-42	0.765	0.856	0.818; VHD-31	0.844; VHD-35	0.860; VHD-39	3.	7.
Poland	0.851; HD-52	0.845	0.862	0.795; VHD-41	0.843; VHD-36	0.880; VHD-35	5.	5.
Lithuania	0.750; MD-79	0.828	0.857	0.783; HD-44	0.839; VHD-37	0.882; VHD-34	12.	4.
Latvia	0.704; MD-92	0.812	0.845	0.769; HD-48	0.819; VHD-46	0.866; VHD-37	13.	6.
Estonia	0.758; MD-77	0.833	0.858	0.812; VHD-34	0.861; VHD-30	0.892; VHD-29	11.	3.
Ukraine	0.665; MD-102	0.754	0.774	0.710; HD-69	0.747; HD-81	0.779; HD-74	15.	17.
Russia	0.769; MD-72	0.722	0.797	0.719; HD-65	0.798; HD-50	0.824; VHD-52	8.	12.
Belarus	0.783; MD-68	0.774	0.794	0.732; HD-61	0.798; HD-50	0.823; VHD-53	7.	13.
Serbia	0.699; MD-93	0.716	0.754	0.735; HD-60	0.771; HD-66	0.806; VHD-64	14.	15.
Montenegro	-	-	-	0.769; HD-49	0.802; VHD-49	0.829; VHD-48	-	10.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	0.679	0.712	0.721; HD-64	0.758; HD-77	0.780; HD-73	-	16.

* The Human Development Index is measured on a 0 to 1 interval, where 1 represents a fully developed country and 0 represents a completely undeveloped country.
*** Countries are divided into three groups: high human development (marked HD), medium human development (MD) and low human development (LD). From 2006 there was also a fourth group added, very high human development (VHD), for the most developed countries in the world. Next to this mark we placed information about the individual countries' places in the world ranking.*
*** Ranking among listed former socialist countries.
Source: Human Development Report; http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/download-data (2 November 2021).

Very similar to the Human Development Index is the Democracy Index, measured annually by an organisation called *Freedom House* and presented in a special report – *Nations in Transit*. The Democracy Index is composed of seven indicators. It includes evaluations of electoral systems, civil society, free media, democratic government at both national and local levels, independence of the judiciary, and the spread of corruption. Every indicator is measured on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represents the highest level of the democratic process and 7 represents the lowest level. *Nations in Transit* encompasses all former socialist countries including the successor countries to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. All included countries are divided into five groups. The highest group includes countries with the best ratings in the Democracy Index, i.e. consolidated democracies. Countries receiving a Democracy Score of 1.00–1.99 closely embody the best policies and practices of liberal democracy, among them independent, vibrant and sustainable civil society, independent media, competitive, free and fair elections, stable, democratic, and accountable national and local government systems, etc.

From former Yugoslav republics, only Slovenia consistently ranked among consolidated democracies, mostly scoring below 2.00, but in the reports after 2016, Slovenia again crossed the threshold of 2.00; while remaining the consolidated democracy, some challenges largely associated with corruption, judiciary and independent media contributed to a slightly lower score in most recent period.

Table 2: Democracy Index in the period 1998 to 2020

	Slovenia	**Croatia**	**Bosnia and Herzegovina**	**North Macedonia**	**Montenegro**	**Serbia**	**Kosovo**	**FR Yugoslavia**
1998*	1.94	4.25	5.35	3.95	-	-	-	4.90
2000*	1.95	4.19	5.13	3.44	-	-	-	5.50
2002*	1.81	3.25	4.56	4.13	-	-	-	3.63
2004	1.75	3.83	4.29	4.00	-	-	5.50	-
2006	1.75	3.71	4.07	3.82	3.89	3.71	5.36	-
2008	1.86	3.64	4.11	3.86	3.79	3.79	5.21	-
2010	1.93	3.71	4.25	3.79	3.79	3.71	5.07	-
2012	1.89	3.61	4.36	3.89	3.82	3.64	5.18	-
2014	1.93	3.68	4.43	4.00	3.86	3.64	5.14	-
2016	2.00	3.68	4.50	4.29	3.93	3.75	5.07	-
2018	2.07	3.75	4.64	4.36	3.93	3.96	-	-
2020	2.07	3.75	4.68	4.25	4.14	4.04	4.82	-

** Different methodology was used before 2003 in calculating democracy index, only evaluating electoral process, civil society, independent media and governance.* Source: Freedom House, Nations in Transit; available at http://www.freedomhouse.org (2 November 2021).

Countries receiving a Democracy Score of 3.00–3.99 are ranked as semi-consolidated democracies. Among former Yugoslav republics Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro are being ranked among semi-consolidated democracies, but none of them sees recent positive trends that would lead toward consolidated democracy status; Serbia and Montenegro even lowered their scores to below 4.00 in the most recent report (2020). Those countries are still electoral democracies that meet relatively high standards for the selection of national leaders, but exhibit some weaknesses in their defence of political rights and civil liberties, among them irregularities that may occur during elections, widespread corruption and weak state capacities to investigate corruption, weak judicial independence and the protection of basic rights, especially those of ethnic and religious minorities, etc.

Countries receiving a Democracy Score of 4.00–4.99 are typically electoral democracies that meet only minimum standards for the selection of national leaders; those countries are either transitional or hybrid regimes. Among former Yugoslav republics, all former Yugoslav republics and Kosovo (apart from Slovenia and Croatia) are currently in this category, although some of them already ranked among semi-consolidated democracies in previous periods. Democratic institutions in those countries are fragile and face substantial challenges to the protection of political rights and civil liberties. The potential for sustainable, liberal democracy is unclear.

If we compare scores and reports from 1998 to 2020, the most noticeable characteristic is the recent regression of almost all former Yugoslav republics in terms of their democratic consolidation, most noticeably of Serbia and Montenegro in terms of reassignment to lower group. There are also few cases of progress (Kosovo in recent period, Croatia after president Tuđman's death, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia in mid 2000s, etc.), but the differences between the grades are not substantial in most cases. We can also notice that all former Yugoslav republics apart from Slovenia received especially concerning low scores in the fields of independent media, spread of corruption and judicial framework and independence (Freedom House, 2021).

The Notion of Economic Consolidation

The process of consolidation within the economic sphere of society is only one of the conditions leading to the consolidated democracy. Even the most economically consolidated and successful society would be but a pale reflection of democracy if it lacked the institutes of civil society or the rule of law. Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 21) claim that a consolidated modern democracy requires a set of socio-political norms, institutions and arrangements in the sphere of economy –

they term this set “economic society” – which is situated between the country and the market. Namely, democracy can be consolidated neither in the context of planned economy nor under the circumstances of a pure market economy.

We can ask ourselves why a completely free market cannot coexist with a modern consolidated democracy. In recent years, all sound studies of modern policies have empirically confirmed the existence of important degrees of country interventions into the market and country ownership in all consolidated democracies (Freeman, 1989). There are at least three arguments in support of such empirical findings and their validity. The first one stresses that, despite neoliberal claims of market’s self-sufficiency, pure market economies cannot exist without a certain degree of country regulation. Namely, the market requires legislative enforcement of contracts and obligations, protection of investments and money, regulatory standards and protection of private as well as public property. Because of all this, the country must undertake certain actions in the market (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 18–24). The second argument is the fact that even the most developed markets require certain corrections by the country if the market is to yield optimum performance (Murrell, 1991, p. 59–76). The last and the most important reason, which supports market intervention and country ownership in consolidated democracy, is the public character of government priorities and policies. If a democracy fails to implement policies whose direct result is the production of public goods in the domains of education, healthcare and transportation or the creation of social security networks intended to alleviate social inequalities, then democracy as such cannot exist. Therefore, were a democracy to be born in a pure market economy it would, already by its own operation, transform such an economic system from a pure market economy into a mixed-type economy or a consolidated economic sphere, i.e., something Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 18) call “economic society”.

First and foremost, the consolidation of democracy requires the institutionalisation of a politically regulated market. This, in turn, demands “economic society”, which, however, can only operate efficiently under the conditions of efficient country mechanisms, intended for monitoring developments in the market. A frequent objective of countries that underwent a transition into a new political and economic system in the late 1980s or early 1990s has been the project of privatisation of once socially owned business enterprises. Even such a goal, whose primary aim is to reduce the share of public property, is much easier to achieve if country mechanisms are efficient and strong enough. Economic deterioration, which is caused by the inability of a country to exercise its regulatory functions, significantly contributes towards the problem of economic reform and democratisation.

A modern consolidated democracy can be conceived of as a notion, which comprises five mutually, interlinked arenas,[1] whereby each of them must adhere to its own organisational principle. Democracy is more than a form of rule – it is a system of mutual interaction (Przeworski et al., 1996, p. 39). None of these arenas can work properly without the support of other arenas. Hence, e.g., civil society cannot exist without the rule of law that would guarantee the citizens' rights and freedoms. Furthermore, each of these interlinked arenas exercises a certain amount of influence over others. Therefore, the arena, which is of greatest importance to our contribution, also significantly affects others and we dare say that one cannot even speak of a modern consolidated democracy without economic consolidation.

Economic Indicators and the Process of Democratic Consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe

Let us ask which factors influence a certain country at a given moment so that it will achieve and maintain the status of a consolidated democracy. This question is answered by Przeworski et al. (1996, p. 39–55) in a very large-scale project, which was presented for the first time in 1995 at a conference, entitled "Consolidating Third Wave Democracies" in Taiwan and published the following year in the Journal of Democracy magazine. The above-mentioned researchers claim that these factors are democracy, country-owned assets, economic growth with moderate inflation rates, reduction of inequalities, a favourable international atmosphere and, finally, parliamentary institutions. Their entire research project is based on data acquired in 135 countries during the period of 1950–1994.[2] In this period, they identified 224 different governments, of these 101 cases of democratic rule and 123 various cases of undemocratic rule, which are not of such importance to our contribution. During the time of their research, 50 cases of transition in the direction of democracy and 40 cases of transition in the opposite direction were recorded.

In political science circles (especially in the USA) a claim has been surfacing ever since the 1950s that democracy is a cyclical phenomenon. In this context, two arguments have been made, which directly refer to economic consolidation. The first one says that various forms of undemocratic rules are more suited to achieving economic development in poorer countries; and

[1] This pertains to a developed civil society, the rule of law, institutionalised economic society, an efficient and modern country bureaucracy and, finally, a relatively autonomous political society (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 17).

[2] The year in which an individual country achieved independence or, alternatively, the year in which certain data was first available is considered as the year in which data gathering began.

the second one maintains that the moment a once poor country achieves a certain degree of development, the rule of democracy gains in importance (Przeworski et al., 1996, p. 40). However, both the research project of the previously mentioned team of researchers and the results of our analysis indicate that these two theses do not withstand critical judgement. In their project, the research team thus claim that there is no basis for a greater probability of achieving higher economic growth rates under undemocratic forms of rule.[3] 56 countries with various forms of undemocratic regimes had less than 1,000 U.S. dollars of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita at the beginning of research.[4] By the project's conclusion, only eighteen of the countries had managed to pass the threshold of 1,000 U.S. dollars of GDP per capita, only six managed to exceed the limit of 2,000 U.S. dollars of GDP per capita and only three had crossed the 3,000 U.S. dollars threshold. The other 29 countries even experienced economic setbacks during that same period.

As regards the data on GDP per capita during the period of 1991–2020 (Table 3) gathered in former Yugoslav republics, it is evident that immediately after democratic change in 1991, there were numerous countries with less than 3,000 U.S. dollars of GDP per capita (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia); in latest data available (2020) there were none of the former Yugoslav republics that would still lay below the mark of 3,000 U.S. dollars of GDP per capita.

Among all six analysed former Yugoslav republics, two groups can be clearly defined according to one of the key economic indicators – GDP per capita. In the first group of countries (comprising of all the former Yugoslav republics with notable exception of Slovenia), the influence of political and economic change, which occurred during the transition into a democratic system at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, is reflected either in the reduction of GDP per capita during the 1991–2000 period or in painfully slow growth of GDP per capita during stated period. In some cases, GDP per capita nearly halved in the period from 1991 to 2000. In the second group of countries (Slovenia) we can record decent and steady

[3] For more on relationships between economic growth ant the form of political rule in Halliwell (1993).

[4] Gross Domestic Product (the GDP) is the most frequently mentioned and applied economic indicator, which shows the developmental phase of a certain country. Comparative analyses most often apply the GDP per capita, expressed in market prices (current prices according to the current exchange rate) or the GDP per capita, expressed in purchasing power parity. In former socialist countries, it is especially problematic to monitor the private sector, primarily as regards informal economic activities, which is therefore to a greater extent done on the basis of more or less accurate estimates provided either by central statistical offices of individual countries or by international organisations. The latter is especially characteristic of countries that were established in the territory of the former Soviet Union, therefore data from this geographical region tend to be somewhat less reliable.

growths of GDP per capita also from 1991 to 2000, for instance in Slovenia GDP per capita increased by 58 percent. In the period from 2000 to 2008, the value of GDP per capita as a primary indicator of a country's economic success (Nowotny, 1997) was steadily increasing in all six countries, the most – in relative terms – in Serbia, by unbelievable 680 percent, figure indicating not only strong Serbian economic growth in stated period, but also general weakness of Serbian economy at the turn of the millennium.

The impacts of the global economic crisis can be observed when we analyse the movement of GDP per capita in the period from 2008 until 2020, and we can immediately see that impacts of the global economic crisis are very much different in different countries. The most severe impact of the crisis is clearly visible in the country with the highest nominal value of the GDP per capita in U.S. dollars, Slovenia, where the value of GDP per capita decreased 9.3 percent; much smaller decreases can also be found in the other five former Yugoslav republics. We can also clearly see that Slovenia still has by far the highest nominal value of GDP per capita in U.S. dollars in 2020, but differences are now smaller compared to two decades ago; for instance, Montenegro had only achieved 16 percent of Slovenian GDP per capita in U.S. dollars in 2000, whereas in 2020, the respective figure was 30.1 percent.

Table 3: GDP Per Capita at Current Prices (in USD)[5] *from 1991 to 2020*

Country	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020
Slovenia	6,339	7,231	10,455	10,201	14,849	19,673	27,483	23,510	22,643	24,215	21,664	26,104	25,517
Croatia	4,026	3,135	5,263	4,841	8,059	11,696	16,297	13,949	13,258	13,559	12,361	15,014	13,828
Bosnia and Herzegovina	n.a.	319	983	1,468	2,225	3,417	5,091	4,636	4,778	5,329	4,995	6,072	6,032
North Macedonia	2,477	1,794	1,964	1,854	2,410	3,326	4,794	4,545	4,697	5,468	5,133	6,087	5,888
Serbia	n.a.	n.a.	3,380	915	3,005	4,383	7,101	5,735	6,016	6,600	5,765	7,252	7,666
Montenegro	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,627	2,789	4,426	7,368	6,688	6,587	7,388	7,034	8,850	7,686

Source: The World Bank; available at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD (1 November 2021). Note that Socialist Yugoslavia had GDP per capita at current prices 3,549 USD in 1990, with Slovenia as the strongest republic 6,950, Croatia 4,480, Serbia 3,680, Macedonia 2,230, Bosnia and Herzegovina 2,410 and Montenegro 2,620 USD per capita at current prices.

[5] GDP per capita is gross domestic product divided by midyear population. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources. Data are in current U.S. dollars.

Przeworski et al. (1996, p. 39–55) further claims that it is the economic development, which importantly affects the percentage of probability of survival of a democratic rule. Democracies that are severely underdeveloped in economic terms and have a GDP per capita of less than 1,000 dollars have thus a twelve percent probability of being overthrown in the next twelve months. This percentage decreases to six percent for democracies with a GDP per capita between 1,000 and 2,000 U.S. dollars,[6] to three percent for democracies with a GDP per capita ranging from 2,000 to 4,000 U.S. dollars and to one percent for democracies having a GDP per capita in the 4,000 to 6,000 U.S. dollars range.

Considering these observations and if we once again look at our data on countries created in the territory of the former Yugoslavia (Table 3) we can infer that, from the aspect of economic underdevelopment, political systems in North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are the most compromised, as their economies still had a GDP close or even below 6,000 U.S. dollars per capita in 2020. Hereby, it needs to be stressed that the level of economic development is but one of many factors influencing the survival or demise of a democracy and that the above-mentioned percentages of probability are by no means to be considered as absolute. Democracies in countries with a GDP per capita exceeding 6,000 U.S. dollars are invincible according to the level of economic development. Never has it happened so far that a democratic system would fall in a country whose GDP per capita has been higher than 6,055 U.S. dollars,[7] so in this respect, all other four former Yugoslav republics can be considered perfectly safe. Thus, proceeding from the data provided by foreign researchers and those of our own research, we can conclude that the degree of economic development is an important (but, of course, far from being the only one) factor that influences the survival and consolidation of democracy. Or, if we summarize Martin Lipset, “the more a country is developed in economic terms, the greater is the probability of its democratic rule’s survival” (1959, p. 69). The question why democracies tend to be more stable in economically more developed countries has been attracting extensive debates. One of the reasons also mentioned by Martin Lipset (1981, p. 27–63) stresses the fact that the intensity of distributive conflicts tends to be lesser in countries, which have achieved a higher degree of economic development.

One of the key economic indicators contributing towards democratic consolidation is the economic growth accompanied by a moderate inflation rate. Przeworski et al. (1996, p. 39–55)

[6] This, in other words, means that the expected lifespan of a democracy under such conditions is 17 years.
[7] Argentinean rate of GDP per capita in 1976 (in 1995 international dollars).

claims that contrary to Lipset's (1981) and Olson's (1963) arguments,[8] rapid economic growth[9] does not contribute towards the destabilisation of democracy. According to them, only the opposite can be true: democratic rule has a greater probability of democratic consolidation and survival if annual GDP[10] growth is about five percent or higher. The team of researchers further establish that negative economic growth rates are one of the most important reasons for destabilisation.

With respect to these findings, a methodological error must be emphasised, which frequently occurs in scientific literature: authors often neglect the starting and the finishing positions of countries – i.e., their situation at the beginning and the end of a research period, respectively. It is by no means possible to equate the degree of economic growth in Slovenia, which had had a stable economic growth all the way between 1991 and 2009 when negative impacts of global economic crisis hit it, with a country in which the process of democratic transition has barely begun for whatever reason. Thus, Slovenia's 4.2 percent and Bosnia and Herzegovina's 5.5 percent of annual GDP growth in 2000 can by no means be interpreted as a sign of Bosnia and Herzegovina being more successful than Slovenia, because such a piece of data also requires at least the consideration of data on growth rates for the preceding years and the data on absolute values of GDP per capita in the same year, respectively. In the selected case, a rate of 4.2 percent of annual GDP growth in Slovenia equaled 350 U.S. dollars per capita, whereas a rate of 5.5 percent of annual GDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina equaled less than 100 U.S. dollars per capita. During the period between the gaining of independence and the year 2008, only some countries (Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia etc.) were experiencing permanent and positive economic growth, whereas other countries were experiencing intensive rises and falls, which was especially the case during volatile 1990s around former Yugoslavia. Instability in all former Yugoslav republics became more distinct during the 2009–2020 period, which witnessed the negative effects of the global economic crisis and the already negative effect of Covid19 pandemic in 2020.

[8] In their works, these two authors warn of a greater probability that a democratic rule may become destabilised under circumstances of rapid economic growth (they define it as an annual GDP growth rate exceeding five percent).

[9] Rapid economic growth is also defined as exceeding a five percent annual rate of increase in GDP by the group of authors whose research we refer to.

[10] Average annual GDP growth rate is an important indicator of economic trends within a national economy and tells us by how much percent the GDP of a certain country increases in an observed year.

Table 4: Annual GDP Growth[11] in former Yugoslav republics 1994 to 2020

Year	Slovenia	Croatia	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Serbia
1994	5.3	n.a.	n.a.	-1.8	n.a.	2.6
1995	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-1.1	20.8	n.a.
1996	3.5	5.9	n.a.	1.2	89.0	2.4
1997	5.1	6.6	n.a.	1.4	34.4	7.2
1998	3.3	1.9	4.9	3.4	15.6	2.4
1999	5.3	-0.9	-9.4	4.3	9.6	-12.1
2000	4.2	3.8	3.1	4.5	5.5	7.8
2001	2.9	3.4	1.1	-3.1	4.4	5.0
2002	3.8	5.2	1.9	1.5	5.3	7.1
2003	2.8	5.6	2.5	2.2	4.0	4.4
2004	4.4	4.1	4.4	4.7	6.1	9.0
2005	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.7	8.8	5.5
2006	5.7	4.8	8.6	5.1	5.4	4.9
2007	6.9	5.2	10.7	6.5	5.7	5.9
2008	3.3	2.1	6.9	5.5	5.5	5.4
2009	-7.8	-7.4	-5.7	-0.4	-2.9	-3.1
2010	1.2	-1.7	2.5	3.4	0.8	0.6
2011	0.6	-0.3	3.2	2.3	0.9	1.4
2012	-2.7	-2.0	-0.5	-0.3	-0.7	-1.7
2013	-1.1	-1.1	3.5	2.7	2.4	2.6
2014	3.0	-0.4	1.8	3.8	1.1	-1.8
2015	2.2	2.4	3.4	3.9	3.1	1.8
2016	3.2	3.5	2.9	2.8	3.2	3.3
2017	4.8	3.4	4.7	1.1	3.2	2.1
2018	4.4	2.8	5.1	2.9	3.7	4.5
2019	3.3	2.9	4.1	3.2	2.8	4.2
2020	-4.2	-8.4	-15.2	-4.5	-4.3	-1.0

Source: The World Bank, available at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG/countries (1 November 2021).

Former Yugoslav republics can be divided into two groups according to the levels of GDP per capita (Table 4). First group consists of four countries that had GDP per capita in 2020 well above 6,000 USD (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro). We can observe that those four countries have had quite stable GDP growth from 1994 to 2008 (with notable exceptions in

[11] Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2,000 U.S. dollars. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources.

1999), but after 2008 negative effects of the global economic crisis can be clearly seen. Also, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro suffered quite extensive drops in GDP in the 1990s, and although there is no official World Bank data for those three countries prior to 1994, we can clearly see this if we observe drops in GDP per capita in this period. Second group of countries consists of two former Yugoslav republics that had GDP per capita close to 6,000 USD in 2020 (North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), both of which experienced tough democratic transition in the 1990s and gross oscillations in economic growth rates. Very endemic for the former Yugoslav area is the case of Montenegrin GDP that decreased by an incredible 45 percent in 1993 relative to the year before, whereas in 1995 the GDP increased by equally astounding 40 percent over the preceding year.[12] Also Montenegro has the most astounding GDP decrease in 2020 (15 percent). The data in Table 4 allows us to confirm without any reservation the interdependence of both economic indicators – the GDP per capita and annual rates of GDP growth. Slovenia, being the country with highest GDP per capita in a group, had also been achieving stable positive annual GDP per capita growth rates up until the period of global economic crisis, when also Slovenia experienced high negative GDP per capita growth rates.

Surprisingly, Przeworski et al. (1996, p. 42) found out that a moderate inflation rate has a greater contribution towards democratic consolidation than a very low rate of inflation.[13] It is necessary to mention here that these findings support the hypothesis of Albert Hirschman made in 1981, who also claimed, that “a moderate inflation rate strengthens a democracy’s stability” (Hirschman, 1981, p. 177–202). Data in Table 5 is allowing us to conclude that most former Yugoslav republics, except for Serbia, had managed to curb inflation by 2000. In some of the countries, inflation even decreased by over a hundred times over the 1994–2019 period. In Slovenia, the inflation rate decreased by over twenty times during that same period, falling from 21 percent in 1994 to 0.9 percent in 2009 and 1.6 percent in 2019. If our findings are compared to those of the Przeworski et al. (1996, p. 42), a conclusion can be made that none of the former Yugoslav republics have come even close to exceeding a 30-per-cent annual inflation rate after 2003, a limit that the foreign research team’s research project defines as the threshold at which inflation may contribute towards the destabilisation of a democracy.

[12] See World Macroeconomic Research (n.d.).

[13] According to the claims made by them, even higher degrees of democratic consolidation can be expected in countries experiencing annual inflation rates between six and 30 percent than in those with annual inflation rates below six percent.

Table 5: Annual Inflation rates in former Yugoslav republics from 1994 to 2019 (Customer Price Index; Percent)[14]

Country	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019
Slovenia	21.0	8.4	8.9	5.6	2.5	0.9	1.8	1.8	-0.5	1.4	1.6
Croatia	107.3	4.2	4.6	1.8	3.2	2.4	2.3	2.2	-0.5	1.1	0.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6.1	-0.4	3.7	2.0	-1.0	0.6	0.8
North Macedonia	126.6	1.3	6.6	1.1	3.2	-0.7	3.9	2.8	-0.3	1.4	0.8
Serbia	n.a.	23.3	71.1	9.9	11.7	8.1	11.1	7.7	1.4	3.1	1.8
Montenegro	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2.9	3.5	3.5	2.2	1.5	2.4	0.4

Source: The World Bank, available at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/FP.CPI.TOTL.ZG/countries (1 November 2021).

Conclusions

The findings provided by our short research study perfectly match those of Przeworski et al. (1996, p. 49), which emphasise the importance of economic factors in democratic consolidation. Hence, we corroborate the claims made by Martin Lipset (1981) stating that a democratic rule has better chances at consolidating in economically more successful countries. Of course, this is by no means to say that other factors, such as the setting up of democratic institutions, the rule of law, the guaranteeing of human rights and fundamental freedoms are not of key importance to democratic consolidation. Our argument refers solely to the fact that a democratic rule has a greater possibility of consolidation in an economically more successful country. It is true, though, that economic consolidation cannot be achieved without prior or at least parallel political consolidation. Democracy may even be consolidated in poor countries, yet these are faced with a need to accelerate economic development, reduce inequalities, manage inflation, not to mention the existence of democratic institutions, the guaranteeing of human rights, the rule of law, etc. The research team correctly establishes that poverty and economic stagnation are the major obstacles in the way towards democratic consolidation.

The second finding refers to the situation of democratic consolidation of the former Yugoslav republics. A democracy becomes consolidated when the rate of risk[15] decreases in

[14] Inflation measured by the consumer price index reflects the annual percentage change in the cost to the average consumer of acquiring a basket of goods and services that may be fixed or changed at specified intervals, e.g., on a yearly basis.

[15] The rate of risk stands for the probability that a democratic rule will transform into some other form of rule, but with undemocratic properties. This rate is higher for countries that have only recently become democratic systems,

proportion to its age (Dahl, 1990, p. 16–17). Dahl further claims that the probability of attaining democratic consolidation is greater when democracies "operate" successfully during a given time span in political, social, economic and other terms. Based on our research and other similar ones, we can confirm this claim, as one former Yugoslav republic is relatively stable and consolidated democracy (Slovenia), one is stable semi-consolidated democracy (Croatia), but the rest are transitional regimes with slightly worrisome negative democratisation trends in latest periods.

Democratic rule has a greater chance of consolidation in economically more successful countries (Przeworski et al., 1996, p. 50). After several years of economic progress, the risk rates diminish enough to allow us to speak of economic democracy. Hereby, the nominal level of GDP a country achieves is not that much important for democratic consolidation itself, as are stability, straightness and sufficient speed of economic development. Considering all this, it seems justified to claim that most former Yugoslav republics, now mostly politically consolidated or semi-consolidated democracies (or not too far from that group), are belonging to the group of economically consolidated democracies. There are few exceptions though, as some of the former Yugoslav republics still have a long and difficult path ahead of them in terms of economic consolidation, as the effects of the global economic crisis and most recent Covid19 pandemic are felt. We can conclude that the secret to the resilience of a democracy is hidden in economic development – not only, as some theories claimed back in the 1960s (Lipset, 1959, p. 69–105), in various forms of undemocratic rule, but in a democracy built upon democratic institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

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for countries that can be defined as economically underdeveloped, yet with existing and operational democratic institutions, etc (Przeworski et al., 1996, 35–52).

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The Way of Presenting Political Events in Mass Media: Interpretation of the Events at the Poland-Belarus Border Determined by the Owner of the Medium (the Media Content Analysis Method)

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Abstract:

The article analyzes the media broadcasts in the evening editions of the news broadcasts on TVP and TVN (with different ownership forms) concerning the events at the Poland-Belarus border. Examined were the content, its form, visual and auditory messages. The analyzed aspects are enumerated to distinguish the broadcaster of the TV message, showing possible similarities and differences in that message. In this way, the author wanted to answer, if there is a difference in the presentation of the same political event by depending on who is the owner of the medium. As a background for the conducted research, the author presents theoretical issues concerning the mediatization of the political sphere and the agenda-setting theory.

Keywords: mediatization, political communication, political events, mass media.

Introduction

In modern democratic systems, mass media have become entities that actively participate in political communication (Saxer, 1998, p. 25). Currently, the role of the media is not limited to providing information. The potential of modern mass media in terms of communicating knowledge in a creative way and influencing the attitudes of recipients means that now the media are becoming a participant in creating public opinion, as well as a unit controlling the political circulation of communication. Media currently can influence the hierarchy of importance of current problems by the selection of events that are the basis of the message, and the manner of their presentation (Hess, 2011, p. 147). The development of the mass media has had a significant impact on the way politics is done (Piontek, 2009, p. 167). Politics is a system that cannot exist without mass media, thanks to which it achieves its goals and provides information on its activities (Michalczyk, 2009, p. 28). By contrast, the mass media determine how society perceives politics. The media's ability to "freely" select the content and form of information provided, as well as the very selection of it, is used (Hess, 2013, p. 85).

This paper aims to analyze and compare the media coverage in the evening news broadcasts aired by TVP and TVN (with different ownership forms) concerning the events at the Poland-Belarus border. The author thus wishes to answer whether there is a difference in the media's presentation of the same political event depending on the form of media ownership.

For this research, the author used the media content analysis method. This method enables the systematic examination of collections of messages. Knowing their content, it becomes possible to learn about other conditions and elements of the communication process (Pisarek, 1983, p. 45).

Mediatization

The media play an important role in shaping (and co-creating) public opinion and the attitudes of recipients. The way various events are perceived by society, as well as the understanding of problems in public life, depend to a large extent on how they are presented by the media. The media provide ways of interpreting the presented facts, information about who is an authority and who is not, they also provide patterns of behavior and patterns of "normality" regardless of the meaning of this concept, as well as the desired aspirations due to national affiliation, religion, politics, or political identification or gender (Siemieńska, 1997, p. 9).

Mediatization describes the process of changes that are caused by the process of communication in the cultural and social environment, as well as, in the relations of the participants, both with each other and with the aforementioned environment (Silverstone, 2005, p. 189) within the framework of rules established and imposed by the media (Molęda-Zdziech, 2012, p. 14). Mediatization reflects how mediation (taken as a reference to the process of communication as an intermediary in creating meanings) began to change with the emergence of different types of media. Thus, mediatization is characterized by greater detail in analyzing the role of the media in the process of socio-cultural change (Hepp & Krotz, 2014, p. 3). According to F. Krotz (2009, p. 24), mediatization is one of the four meta-processes (next to globalization, commercialization, and individualization) influencing modernity (or a contemporary novelty).

Pisarek (2006, p. 118) defines mediatization as a process in which the media interfere in getting to know the world. They contribute to how people perceive a reality that is directly inaccessible to them. This interference, however, means that media constructions can contribute to shaping the image of social reality or the very social experiences. Moreover, the media do not faithfully reflect reality, but distort it under the influence of various media factors, such as technology, culture, or market rules, which result from the assumed logic of the particular media. As a result, journalistic practices regarding the selection of broadcast material, as well as, the construction of the image of the presented world, play a key role in the mediatization process.

Based on a literature review, Molęda-Zdziech (2013, p. 35) indicates three perspectives in which the concept of mediatization is used. According to the broadest perspective, mediatization may itself lead to and constitute an independent research concept. It may also refer to selected perspectives, such as the mediatization of society, consumption, religion, or politics. In the narrowest sense, the concept of mediatization is used to study certain fragments of reality or case studies, such as the mediatization of the global industry of specific products, mediatization of tourist experiences, or mediatization of politics in a specific country. It is in this approach, based on the analysis of a fragment of reality, that it will be treated in this study.

Mediatization may contribute to changes in the perception of reality, and often, even its subjective loss. At the same time, it creates new opportunities in terms of various aspects of communication. As a result, mediatization treated as a scientific category contains a lot of theoretical and analytical potential (Michalczyk, 2009, p. 32). Molęda-Zdziech (2012, p. 11) indicates that mediatization in the context of media theories is part of the trend of theories that describe the one-sided dependence of a human being on the media (agenda-setting hypothesis or the theory of cultivation) and the theory, which indicates relationships based on reciprocity (e.g., the spiral of silence theory or the utility and gratification theory). Regarding this study, the author would like to pay special attention to the theories describing the one-sided influence of media on humans.

The theory relating to the concept of agenda-setting assumes that the media define the scope and hierarchy of importance of media messages, setting the direction of the recipients' thinking, even if they do not directly determine their views. This means that media recipients not only receive up-to-date information about domestic and foreign events, but also gain conviction about the value and importance of individual problems. Thus, this hypothesis emphasizes the ability of the mass media to shape the cognitive structure of recipients (Goban-Klas, 2008, p. 267). McCombs (2008, p. 141) points of view to two levels of the theory's effects: the extent to which the media devotes full attention to a given issue and how the issue is presented. These elements influence the opinions and point of view of the audience.

The framework theory is considered to be the second level of the agenda-setting theory (Dobrołowicz, 2017, p. 28). The framework theory is based on the assumption that there are different points of view of a given phenomenon (framework) that are determined by the senders of a message. The use of the framework may be the result of the subconscious actions of the sender or the author of the message, as well as deliberate actions, for example, convincing recipients to a specific way of interpreting a given event or the types of decisions made by politicians (Wasilewski, 2019, p. 96). As a result of media messages, society forms an opinion about specific events and the degree of their importance, for example, based on the time devoted to the given information as compared to other information (Napieralski, 2010, p. 26).

The cultivation theory assumes that among all modern media, television occupies a central place in everyday human life, and the (distorted) image of reality has replaced direct experiences and other ways of cognition. Watching television contributes to adopting views related to the nature of the social world, which are selective, stereotypical, and present a distorted picture of reality that is regularly presented in fictional and informative programs. Cultivation is gradual and based on accumulation. Information is pre-acquired, based on which a specific view of social reality is developed (McQuail, 2008, p. 486). Television is a kind of "arm of the official, industrial order aimed at maintaining, consolidating and strengthening conventional views and behaviors" (Gross, 1977, p. 180). As a result, television creates an almost comprehensive symbolic environment for its viewers, providing views on everyday life situations and norms of behavior, thus ceasing to be a reflection of reality in the form of a window to the world, and becoming a reality in itself (McQuail, 2008, p. 486).

Political communication

In the science of communication, mass media is usually viewed through the prism of an active subject in the process of political communication that controls the political circulation of communication. Thus, the role of the media ceased to be based solely on providing information and reacting to events. The mass media selects events and also prioritizes current problems. The possibility of presenting the same topics in different ways plays an important role in justifying political decisions (Hess, 2013, p. 84-85).

According to Dobek-Ostrowska (2012, p. 159), as a result of the media's influence mediatization is the modernization and transformation of the public zone as well as changes in the behavior of participants in political communication. Due to the significant position of mass media in the process of shaping political will, media success is a functional condition for success in the politics (Kepplinger, 2007, p. 134-137). Mass media are an irreplaceable tool for the implementation of electoral and government functions and an ally of political parties, as the media is indispensable in the process of social communication. They enable political actors to participate in debates, promote their candidates and program, and inform the general public about their decisions and intentions. At the same time, politicians strive for the media to favorably emphasize the activity of given politicians and speak unfavorably about their rivals (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011, p. 65).

In a way, the notion of political reality complements the definition of mediatization. Political reality can be defined through the prism of a set of three categories: objective reality, consisting of events in their actual form, subjective reality based on the way political events are perceived by citizens and political actors, and created reality which results from the description of events by the media (Dobek-Ostrowska & Wiszniowski, 2001, p. 126).

The role of television in shaping reality

The essence of the television message is an image, and more specifically a series of images that form blocks, themes, sequences and shots (Zdrowicka-Wawrzyniak, 2012, p. 71-72), which, according to the definition of Pisarek (2006, p. 216), reflects the concept of television understood as "the transmission of light images over a distance using electrical signals, as well as the reproduction of moving images with accompanying sounds at the reception site". The word, on the other hand, helps to understand the meaning of the image or complements it, which adds additional meanings to it (Żórawski, 2004, p. 38).

Television is the basic and greatest source of information not only for viewers, but also for actors of the political scene, being at the same time a link between them. From the point of view of politicians, thanks to television it becomes possible not only to present their programs and ideas but also - thanks to polls - to obtain information about their voters. For the viewers, however, it is a source of satisfying their needs and a tool enabling the formation of an opinion on individual political elites (Giereło-Klimaszewska, 2008, p. 72). For many viewers, television is the only form of social contact with the outside world. By referring to a specific program and using its content, recipients satisfy their needs for information, knowledge, learning, advice, or finding support for their values (Fiske, 1999, p. 191-193).

The media, which act as a liaison between the sender and the recipient of the message in the case of political communication and political power, become an intermediary between political broadcasters and citizens. The media can also create their political messages through journalists and producers who guided by certain political preferences, prejudices, or stereotypes, can significantly exceed the limits of reporting specific issues (McNair, 1998, p. 90). Therefore, television is not a "window to the world" as it does not show reality directly. The displayed image is not "raw" but "prepared". It is also not "watched" but "peeped on", which means that it may be subject to falsification and even manipulation (Bralczyk, 1990, p. 24).

Television offers the fastest, broadest, and most effective (next to computers) presentation, which makes it the most important carrier of information related to politics in contemporary political systems. The development of technology makes it possible to use a variety of visual, graphic, musical, and verbal elements. It is also possible to use different rhetoric: from debates or discussions to talk shows and interviews. Television must not require the imagination to be activated, as it is replaced by images and sounds which are an attractive form of presenting information to viewers (Giereło-Klimaszewska, 2008, p. 69).

Relationship between media and political power

Dobek-Ostrowska (2011, p. 69-72) points out that there are no completely independent and free media in the world. Even if the media strive to comply with certain norms and try to maintain high standards, they are exposed to influences from the external environment, even in countries with a long democratic tradition. The author points out that the basic determinant of media bias is media ownership. The consequence of this is the dominant visibility of politicians towards journalists and media personnel, as well as the influence of political groups on the content of messages. As a result, as illustrated by the practice of the functioning of public media in Poland, inconvenient messages or their fragments, as well as specific journalists, are eliminated from the broadcasts.

Media bias plays an important role in politics, because the interconnection of media workers and their owners with politicians, especially during the election period, can have a significant impact on both public opinion and electoral preferences (McNair, 1998, p. 33). Dobek-Ostrowska (2011, p. 86-87) indicates two variants of the asymmetrical relationship of power and media: the weak position of the media with a strong political actor, where the political party dominates over the media that are subordinate to the ruling and highly politicized groups. In the case of private media, we can talk about the second variant, which is the strong position of the media in the face of the weak position of a given political actor. In this case, private media are characterized by a certain resistance to political influences.

One of the main conditions of the proper functioning of public media broadcasters is right supervision and management. Regarding the general theory of public media, an effective system to serve the public interest must have certain structural conditions. They are determined by factors such as: the basis of the activity formulated in the form of a mission and statute, the existence of mechanisms ensuring accountability to the general public of the whole society, at least partial financing from public funds and independence from the government (McQuail, 2008, p. 192).

Since 2013, the Broadcasting Act in Poland regulates the activity of television and radio. According to it, public television is obliged to carry out public missions in the form of offering various programs, as well as other services in the scope of information, education, culture, entertainment, sport, and journalism, characterized by balance, pluralism, independence and impartiality with integrity and high quality, and innovation of the message (Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji, 1992).

In 2016, the National Media Council was established as a new state body resulting from the media reform (Ustawa o Radzie Mediów Narodowych, 2016). It took over some of the powers belonging to the National Broadcasting Council, such as appointing and dismissing the authorities of public media. Grzesiok-Horosz (2019, p. 105-106), in her work on the legitimacy of establishing a new body, points out that the current method of appointing supervisory and management boards of public radio and television companies has changed (the number of these bodies has been reduced, the term of office of their functioning has been abrogated, the records regarding the need to openly hold competitions for the positions of management boards and supervisory boards in public television and radio broadcasting units have been removed, and the provisions on the length of the member's term of office and the list of grounds for their dismissal have been abolished), which is treated as enabling the Minister of The Treasury considerable freedom and subjectivity in dismissing the above-mentioned entities without the need to indicate clear premises for these decisions. The judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of 13 December 2016 indicates the unconstitutionality of depriving the National Broadcasting Council of participation in the appointment and dismissal of the authorities of TVP and Polish Radio in appoint of a new body (the National Media Council), which is associated with the government, thus treating the National Media Council as a politicized organ.

The TV stations analyzed in the study have different forms of ownership. Telewizja Polska (TVP) is a Polish public television broadcaster that is also a joint-stock company of the State Treasury. Since 1993, the Broadcasting Act has obligated Television to pursue a clearly defined public mission (Ustawa o radiofonii i telewizji, 1992). The subsequent amendments to the act (Ustawa o zmianie ustawy o radiofonii i telewizji, 2015) were allegedly aimed at ensuring the ruling party's control over the National Broadcasting Council (which is an institution regulating the media market), as well as by selecting positions over public broadcasters (Pallus, 2016). There was also a noticeable direct relationship between these people and the political party Law and Justice (PiS) (Sikora, 2017). The public support from TVP towards Andrzej Duda during the election campaigns was noticed during the election campaigns, who a few months earlier signed the law transferring two billion zlotys to the state media, mainly TVP (Pawk & mb, 2020). From 2020, the operation of television is financed mainly from the state budget in the form of compensation for lost revenues from subscription fees (TVP, 2021).

TVN is a Polish commercial television station that currently belongs to the Discovery Inc. media group (TVN, 2018). Over the years, this station has been punished many times for breaking the provisions of the Broadcasting Act, such as insulting national symbols (Domagalski, 2013), presenting drastic and vulgar content at a protected time (PP, 2015), or disseminating discriminatory content (pp, 2015). In July 2021, the legislative process to amend the Broadcasting Act began the suspension of licenses for entities not belonging to the European Economic Area, if their share in the company that owns a given television medium that broadcasts in the territory of Poland exceeds 49% (Czermiński, 2021).

In Poland, hostile relations between the ruling party and the stations belonging to the TVN group can be observed, for example, the boycott of the then ruling party (PiS) lasting many months in the year 2008 caused by the offensive statement made in one of the programs broadcasted by TVN (TVN, 2008). The illustrated relations between the media and the authorities show that to understand the message well, it is important to refer to the knowledge about the sender, recipient, communication context, or other external conditions.

Methods

The research technique used for this study is media content analysis. It serves the objective, quantitative and systematic description of the content of public communication. In this case, objectivity is a postulate rather than a necessary condition and refers to making the method repeatable and transparent through the use of clearly formulated and uniform rules. The quantitative nature of media content analysis comes down to counting specific elements and measuring the intensity of certain features and comparing groups of texts under these aspects, or comparing the analyzed group of texts with an assumed pattern. Systematically, on the other hand, imposes the condition that the selection of the sample should be ordered according to clearly explainable and transparent rules, thus necessitating the organization of research units according to the same criteria and the analysis of messages using the same tools and identical rules identically. Both the process of drawing specific conclusions must be open and the conclusions themselves must be based on the open content of the message (Lisowska-Magdziarz, 2004, p. 13-15).

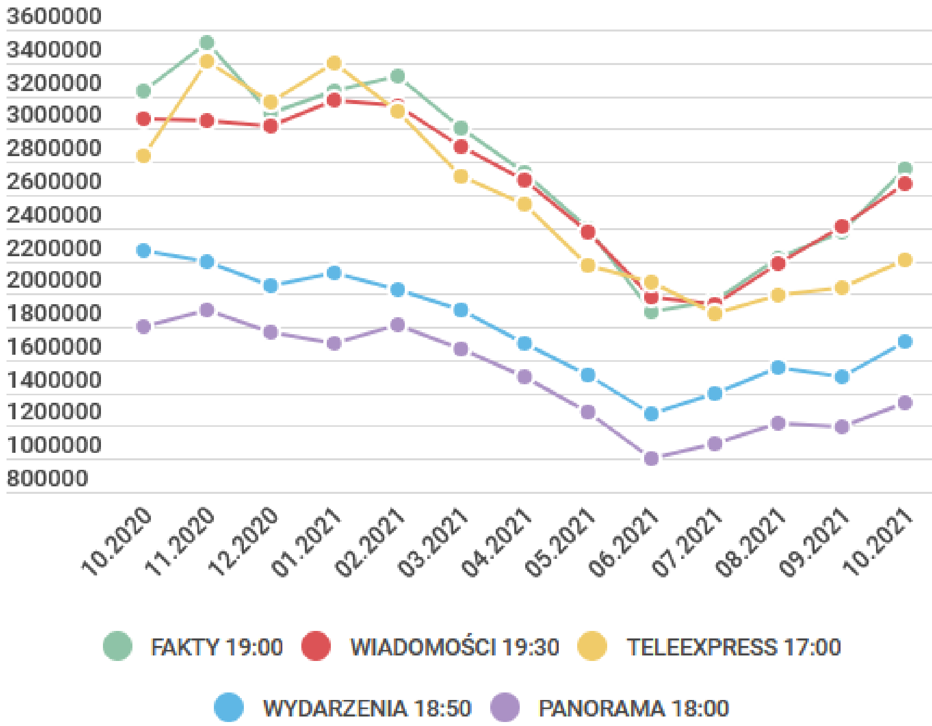
Because the mass media at any time produce a number of materials impossible to be analyzed, the entire content of the media cannot be examined. Media content analysis allows for the examination of only a small part of all messages, allowing for some freedom in designing research activities. Therefore, it enables the description of a certain fragment of reality indicated according to the adopted and defined assumptions.

This study is an overview. The author's goal is to compare media reports on the events on the Polish-Belarusian border in selected news programs using media content analysis, and at the same time, he tries to answer the question of whether the media presents events in different ways depending on the sender (forms of media ownership). It should be noted that the study did not cover the genesis and course of the situation itself, but only the media image that accompanies it in audiovisual messages.

This study will analyze the evening news programs broadcast by TVN and TVP tv stations, i.e., “Fakty” TVN (TVN FACTS) broadcasted at 7:00 p.m. and “Wiadomości” TVP

(TVP NEWS) broadcasted at 7:30 p.m. The selection of these programs is dictated by their highest viewership (Chart 1), as well as the similar duration of individual episodes.

Chart 1: TV audience share between October 2020 and October 2021



Source: https://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/fakty-na-czele-programow-informacyjnych-w-pazdzierniku

The study was conducted on the complete material in the form of video recordings of evening news programs broadcast on TVN and TVP from the period from November 15, 2021, to November 21, 2021. The sample material was selected based on objective conditions related to the subject matter under study, which means that only those blocks related to the situation at the Poland-Belarus border were selected from the news programs. The author will not examine the entire schedule of a given issue of the news, but will limit themselves to presenting and comparing only materials relating to the analyzed situation. The adopted scheme of conduct will be consistently applied in each of the analyzed materials.

The content of the conflict at the Poland-Belarus border was analyzed by analyzing the content, form, as well as, visual and audio content of messages. Thus, the examination covered both the verbal and non-verbal side, text and image at the same time. The author also indicates the sender of each broadcast (type of broadcasting station).

The type of analysis performed can be described as both synchronous, due to the examination of simultaneously appearing texts, and diachronic, where texts that appeared in the media for a specified period of time were examined. The presented in the article content analysis is based on a statistical model, which is a systematic and organized description of a certain fragment of media reality at a certain point in time. In this case, the emphasis is on the description of the elements found in the message due to the number, frequency, or intensity of the elements contained in the material examined.

To analyze the content of selected materials, categorization was used, which is an activity consisting in combining into specific groups of elements, objects that meet the criteria common for a given group. The category is understood here as an abstract concept that is a set of elements that share common features, distinguishing them from other elements that do not have these features (Lisowska-Magdziarz, 2004, p. 54). The conceptual grid superimposed on the reading of the material will make it possible to indicate how the messages in the analyzed material are grouped based on the features that are connected on the one hand and distinguishable on the other. In practice, the categorization key will be a questionnaire containing a set of issues that are important from the point of view of this study and will apply to each unit under study. This means that the questionnaire will be the same for each of the tested materials, which will allow the results to be summarized and presented in a statistical form.

Results

As part of the evening news of TVP and TVN, thematic blocks concerning the situation at the Poland-Belarus border were analyzed. Within each block, individual sequences (the so-called hundreds and offs) were analyzed, thus constituting the smallest messages recorded in the study. The threshold of detail of the analysis determined in this way meant that the given information was not broken down into smaller parts. The following content aspects were taken into account in the analysis:

- length of time in the publication of the message which was allocated to the presentation of issues related to the topic in question,
- the order in the schedule of the show,

- people appearing in the material,
- the nature of the statements of individual people,
- pictures and sound effects to accompany the statements,

which constitute the research corpus.

In the analyzed material, the frequency of the above-mentioned elements was counted (i.e. the frequency of occurrence of the elements significant from the point of view of the research objective), their intensity was measured and compared with one another in order to find similarities and differences (distinguishing between the broadcasting station). The results are given as a percentage.

The time in the publication of the news which was allocated to the presentation of issues related to the situation at the Poland-Belarus border, varied depending on the day and the broadcasting station (ranging from 5.27 to 12.09 minutes in the case of "Wiadomości" TVP and 3.10 to 11.56 minutes for "Fakty" TVN). Detailed data are presented in Chart 2. Chart 3 presents the percentage share of materials devoted to the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border in the scale of the entire news release. It is worth noting that while in the case of TVP stations the news lasted about 30 minutes, in the case of TVN this time was shortened with each release (from about 31 minutes in the case of the first four analyzed periods to 26-21 minutes in the last days of study).

Chart 2: Total duration of the thematic blocks devoted to the situation at the Poland-Belarus border

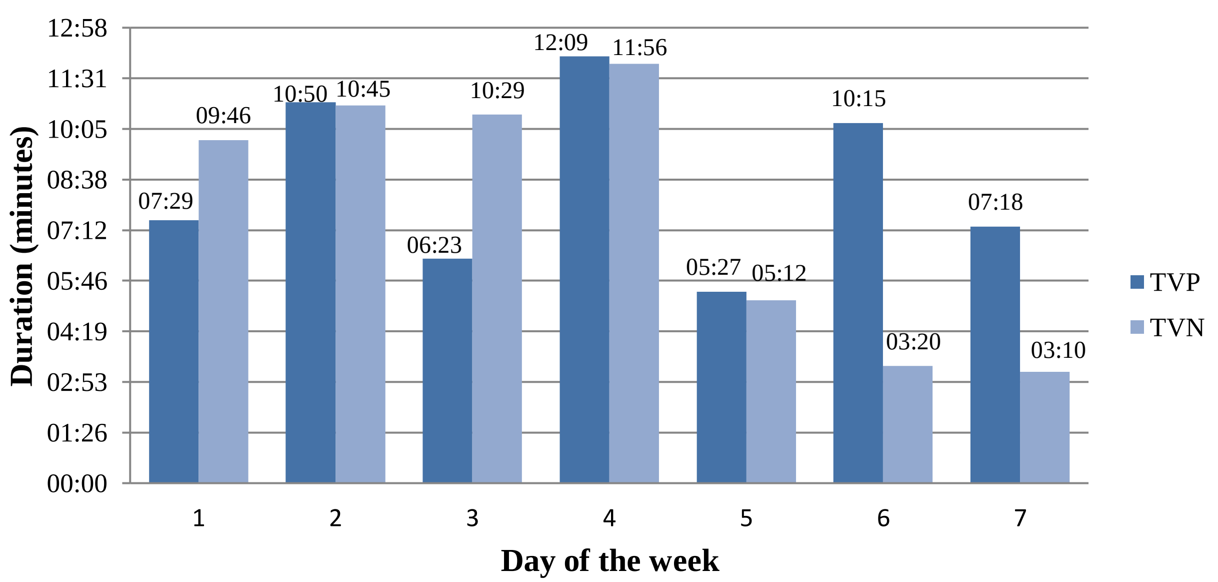
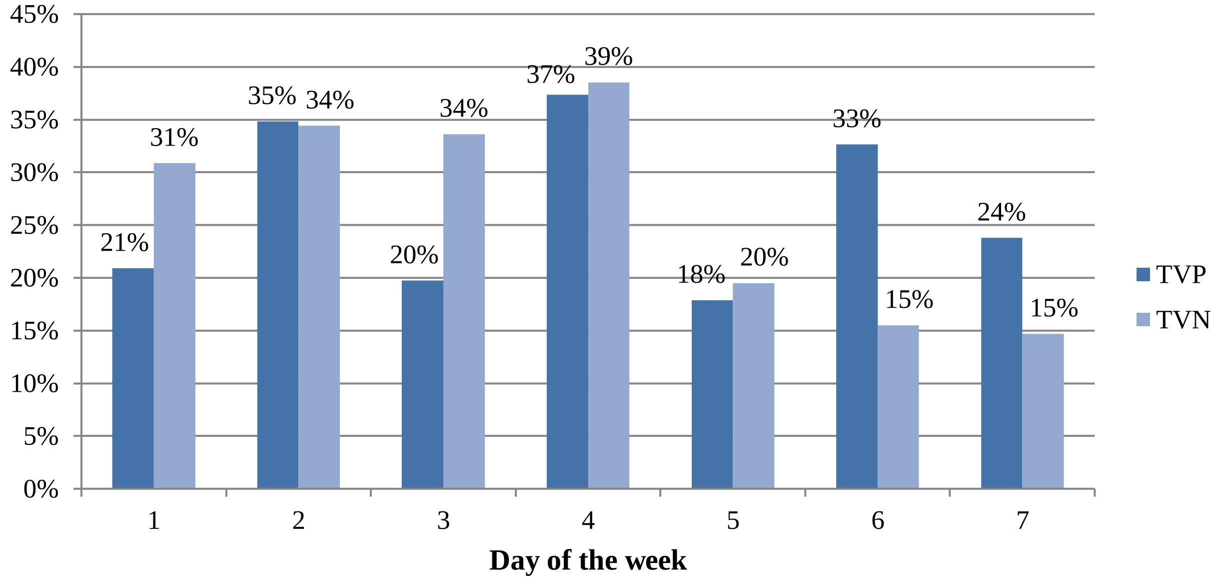


Chart 3: Percentage share of blocks devoted to the situation at the Poland-Belarus border in the scale of the entire news episode



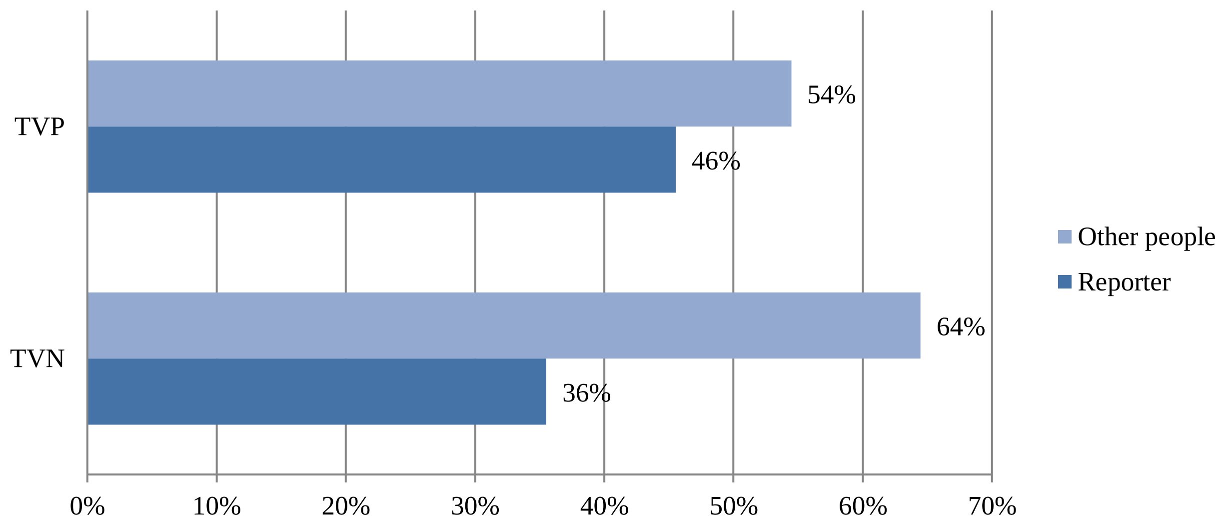
Throughout the analyzed period, the discussed subject matter occupied the first place in the editions of news broadcast by the TVP station. In the case of TVN, it was the first to be presented for only three days (the first two and the last), and on the remaining days, it was ranked second (Table 1).

Table 1: Order of the topic in the schedule

	15.11.2021	16.11.2021	17.11.2021	18.11.2021	19.11.2021	20.11.2021	21.11.2021
TVP	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TVN	1	1	2	2	2	2	1

In the case of both analyzed TV stations, the statements of individual persons dominated the statements of the reporter. In the case of TVP, the discrepancy was smaller (54% of people's statements compared to 46% of the reporter's statements) than in the case of TVN (64% of various people's statements compared to 36% of the reporter's statements), as illustrated in Chart 4.

Chart 4: The entity speaking in the material depends on the broadcasting station



The most common comments in the analyzed material were made by the government representatives (TVP: 24%, TVN: 22%). The next most spoken group was politicians, whose presence dominated the materials broadcast by TVN (29%) compared to TVP (5%). Due to the party affiliation of the most frequently speaking politicians, the following can be indicated: PiS (11 statements), Koalicja Obywatelska (6 statements), PO (5 statements), Nowa Lewica (4 statements), and Koło Parlamentarne Polska 2050 (3 statements) in the case of TVN and 5 statements made by PiS representative in the case of TVP (Chart 6), where the main speaker was the president of the political party. The presence of statements by a representative of uniformed units accounted for 18% (TVP) and 9% (TVN) of all appearances. Both stations had a similar percentage of journalists' statements in the studio compared to the statements of all people appearing in the material (TVP: 13%, TVN: 12%). The statements of foreign politicians were cited to a lesser extent (TVP: 14%, TVN: 10%). Journalists conducting an in-person interview in the field were more often shown on TVN (7%) than on TVP (1%). Statements of ordinary citizens (TVP: 5%, TVN: 2%), and people belonging to other social groups, were the least cited. In the case of TVP, they were mainly industry specialists, scientists, and journalists, while on TVN - social activists and entrepreneurs (Chart 5).

Chart 5: People who most often express themselves in the broadcasted materials

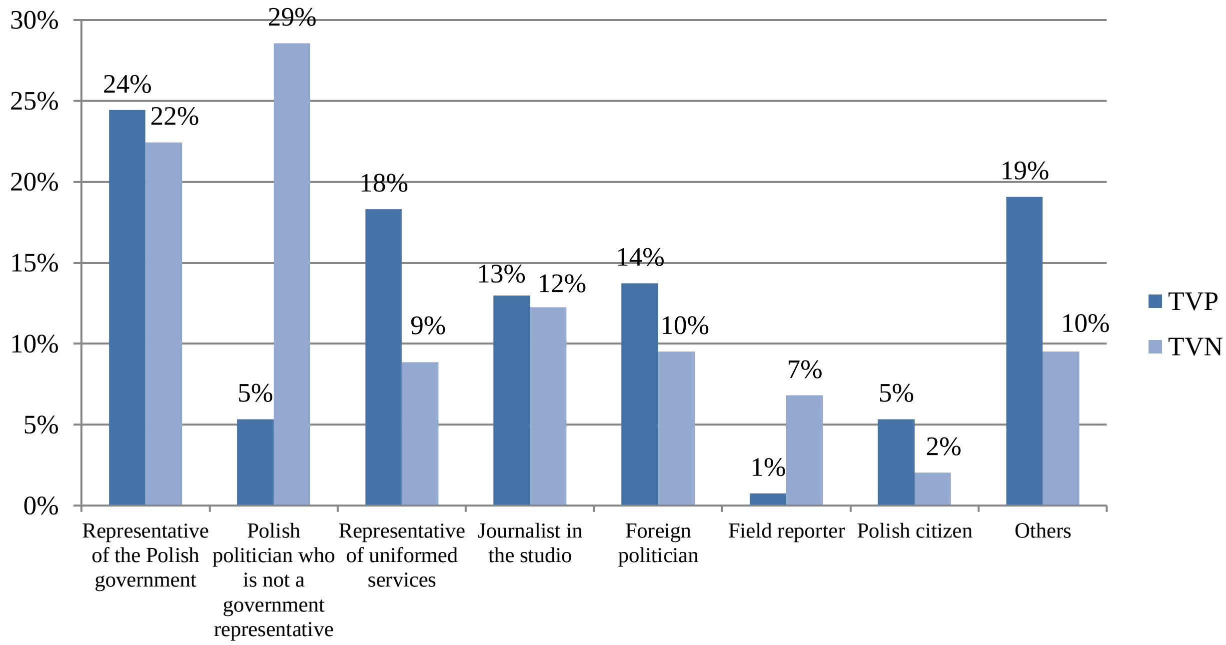
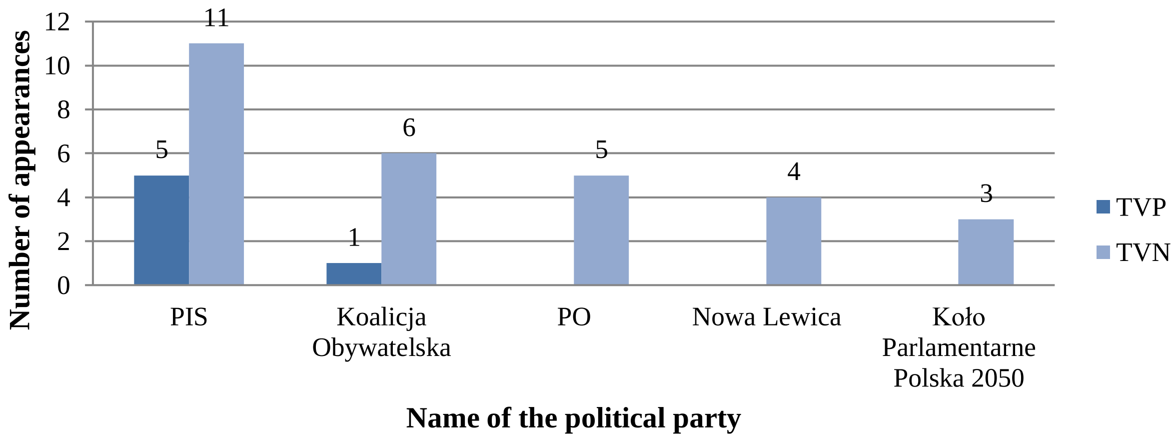
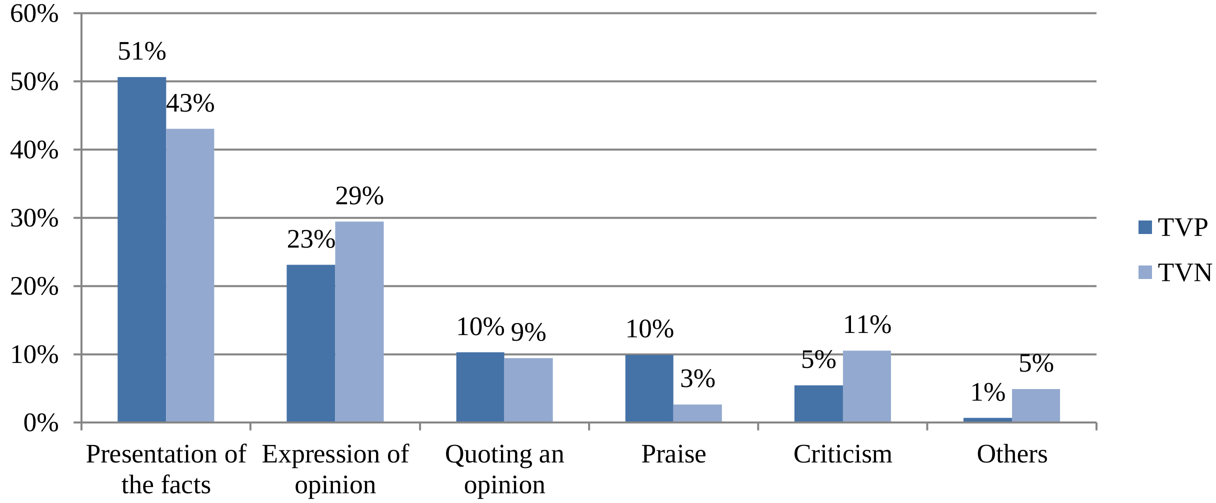


Chart 6: Party affiliation of the most frequently speaking politicians



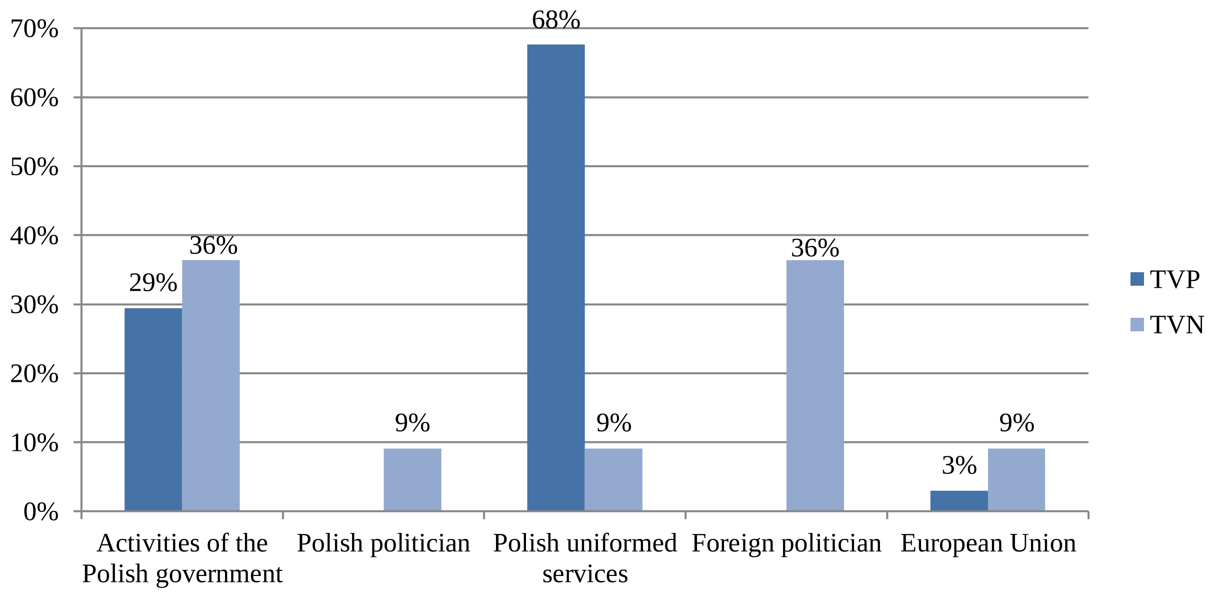
In the analyzed editions of news, facts were most often presented, which accounted for 51% of the character of all statements on the air of TVP and 43% in the case of TVN. Opinions were presented more often in the news of TVN (29%) than TVP (23%). Opinions of other people were cited to a lesser extent (TVP: 10%, TVN: 9%). In the analyzed materials, praise statements appeared more often on TVP (10%) than TVN (3%). The opposite was true for criticism (TVP: 5%) and (TVN: 11%). Among other statements in the TVP news, there were appeals, while in the case of TVN, allegations of telling the truth, attempts to ridicule, threats, and offers of help (Chart 7).

Chart 7: General nature of the speech



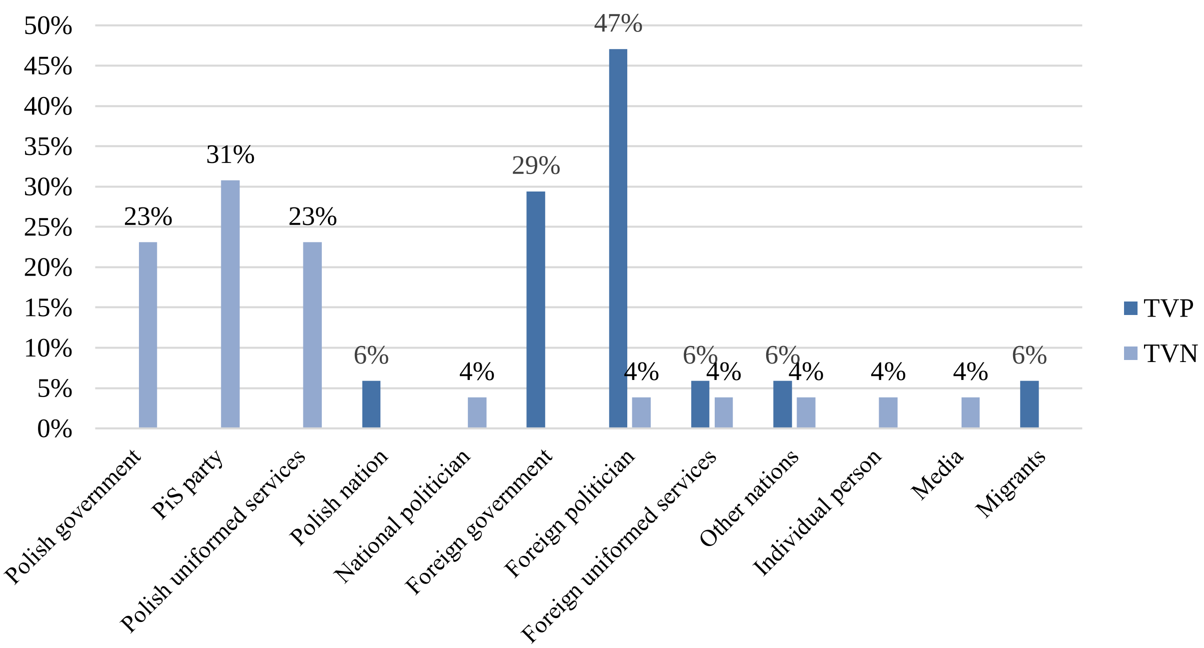
In the "Wiadomości" by TVP, the most frequent subject of praise were the Polish uniformed units (68% of all praise), the actions of the Polish government (29% of all praise), and the European Union (3% of all praise). In the case of "Fakty" by TVN, the Polish government and foreign politicians (36% each), as well as Polish politicians, Polish uniformed units, and the European Union (9% of all praise) were praised equally, as shown in Chart 8.

Chart 8: The item of praise



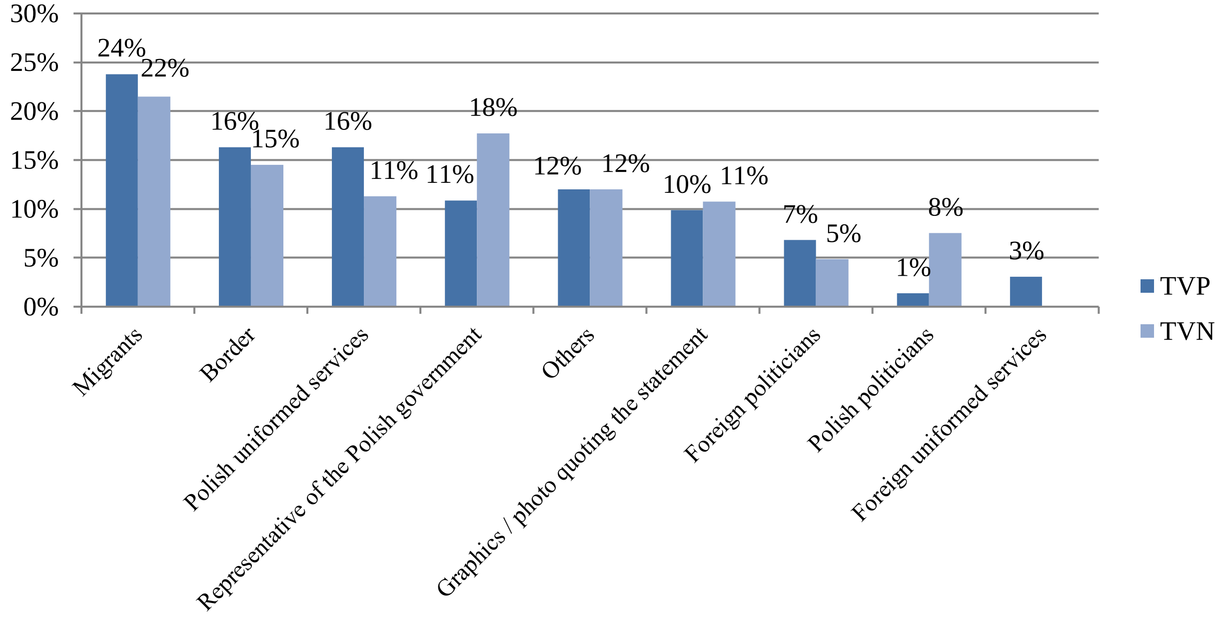
Criticism on TVP was most often the subject of foreign politicians (47%) and foreign governments (29%) and to a small extent migrants and the Polish nation (6% each). The dominant subject of criticism in the TVN news was the PiS party (31%), the Polish government and Polish uniformed services (23% each), as well as, to a small extent, other nations, domestic and foreign politicians, foreign uniformed units, the media and individuals (4% each) as shown in Chart 9.

Chart 9: The subject of criticism



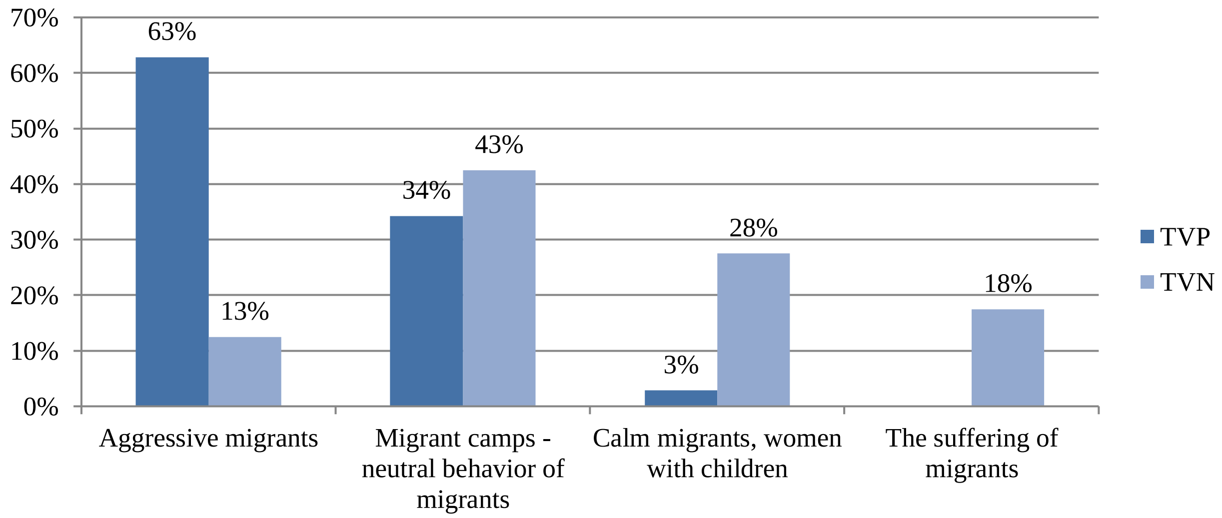
The most common images in the material are photos and videos of migrants, which in the case of "Wiadomości" by TVP accounted for as much as 24% of all images, and in the case of "Fakty" by TVN - 22%. The materials also featured shots and photos of the Poland-Belarus border (both in the form of barbed wire fences and border crossings), accounting for 16% of all images presented in the TVP news and 15% in the TVN news. In the case of news broadcast on TVP, the uniformed units constituted 16% of all images, while in the case of TVN 11%. This station showed representatives of the Polish government much more often (18%) than TVP (11%). Other presented images include shots of airports, government buildings, military training grounds, churches, children, agritourism farms, nature, etc., but their great diversity combined with low repetition would disturb the transparency of the presented data, so they were not listed in the chart. All discussed news programs also featured graphics and photos citing various statements (10% on TVP and 11% on TVN), as well as, foreign politicians (TVP: 7%, TVN: 5%) and Polish non-government representatives (TVP: 1%, TVN: 8%). Foreign uniformed units were shown only on TVP (3%). These data are illustrated in Chart 10.

Chart 10: Images appearing in the news about the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border on TVP and TVN



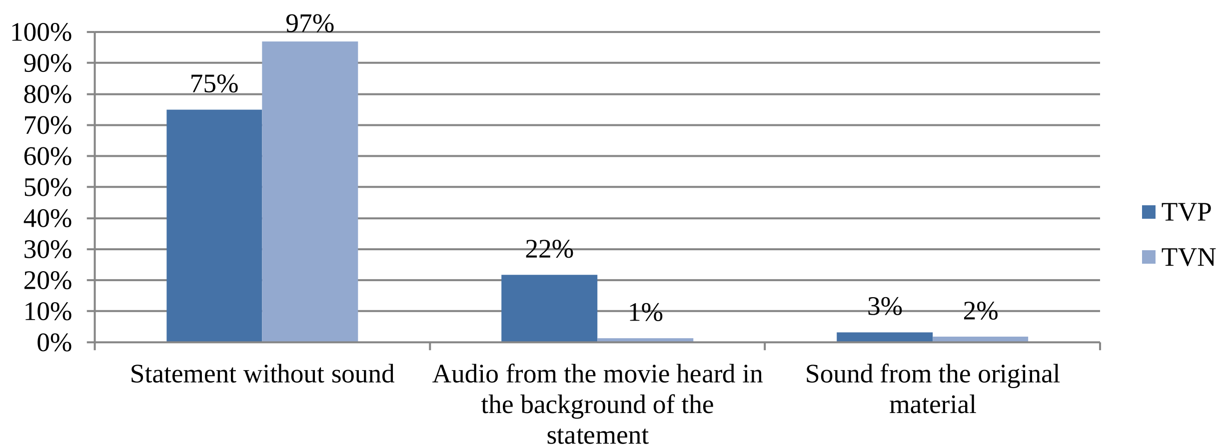
Migrants on TVP were mostly presented as aggressors (63%), where they were shown as such on TVN only in 13% of all materials. The materials also featured films of migrant's camps or presented them in a neutral character (TVP: 34%, TVN: 43%). Films of migrants shown as calm people or women with children constituted only 3% of the images broadcasted on TVP materials and as much as 28% on TVN. The TVN station also showed migrants as suffering people who secretly receive minimal help from border residents in 18% of all images presented (Chart 11).

Chart 11: The way of presenting migrants



In the case of news from both stations, statements with no background sound dominated (75% on TVP, 97% on TVN). The reports presented both photos and video materials. The sounds in their presentations that could be heard in the background of the reporter, were much more frequent in the case of TVP (22%) than in TVN (1%). It is worth adding that while the reporter's statements were often accompanied by photos without any background music, the films in the case of TVP always had an audible sound from the recording (for example, in the materials depicting the situation at the border, screams or stone hits were heard), while in the case of TVN they were almost completely muted (Chart 12).

Chart 12: Type of soundtrack



Conclusion

The media plays an important role in learning and shaping reality. The process by which the media mediate in getting to know the world was described by Pisarek (2006, p. 118) as mediatization. Due to various factors, the images conveyed by the media may be distorted and thus not reflect reality. According to Dobek-Ostrowska (2011, p. 69-72), one of these factors, as well as the basic determinant of media bias, is media ownership. The cited agenda-setting theory assumes that the information presented in the media is selected and assigned by a different hierarchy of importance. At the same time, the way of presentation may be different. Thus, media coverage concerning the same information, but constructed by different broadcasters, may contribute to the shaping of different directions of thinking and the cognitive structure of recipients, as well as society's opinion on specific topics.

TVP and TVN are the most important television stations on the media market in Poland, which are characterized by various forms of ownership. The most-watched news programs are "Wiadomości" by TVP (public broadcaster) and "Fakty" by TVN (private broadcaster).

Summarizing the results of the research carried out using the media content analysis method, one can notice differences in the presentation of the same event (the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border) on the discussed TV stations.

The news releases had different duration in individual TV stations (they were similar only in two cases) and lasted for TVP stations from 5.25 to 12.09 minutes (the percentage share in the entire issue ranged from 18% to 37 %), and in the case of TVN from 3.10 to 11.56 minutes (the percentage share in the entire edition ranged from 15% to 39%). In the case of TVP, the problem of the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border was presented as the first one in each news issue, while on the air of TVN three times as the first and four times as the second.

The materials were dominated by statements of various people (including representatives of the Polish government, politicians who are not representatives of the government, representatives of uniformed units (such as police, army, border patrol), or journalists in the studio) over the voice of the reporter, but the discrepancy was greater in the case of TVN (lower number of statements by the reporter than on TVP). It is worth mentioning here that the reporter can provide a specific framework for interpreting the fragmentary statements and images that appear after his announcement. The materials most often cited statements by representatives of the government and uniformed units in general terms, and they dominated the air of the TVP station. TVN, on the other hand, more often cited statements of politicians who are not representatives of the government.

The dominant nature of statements for both stations was presenting facts and then expressing opinions about them. TVP most often praised the Polish uniformed units and the activities of the Polish government, while TVN praised foreign politicians and also the activities of the Polish government. Criticized, on the other hand, were most often the foreign governments and foreign politicians in the case of TVP, and in the case of TVN, the PiS party, the Polish government, and domestic uniformed units were censured.

The most common images in the analyzed materials were migrants, the border, as well as Polish uniformed units. The TVP station mainly presented migrants as aggressors, while TVN was dominated by images of calm, often suffering people and women with children. While in most cases the statements were not accompanied by any sounds, it is worth noting that when video materials were used as a background for the reporter's statements, in the case of TVN they did not have any audible sound, while in the case of TVP the sounds were audible, and sometimes projecting come to the fore.

From the example of the analyzed event, one can observe the considerable difference in presenting the same topic concerning political events. In the analyzed editions of TVP and TVN news, the most significant difference was the image of migrants (accompanied by the media shots to increase the credibility of a given message), as well as, the special setting created for the activities of Polish uniformed units (on the one hand praise and showing expressions of support, on the other hand, criticism).

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Application ProteGo Stop Covid - Could it have been an opportunity to prevent Covid-19 spreading?

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Abstract:

This article has several aims. The first one, based on analysis of real-life data of the first Norwegian contact tracing app "The Smittestopp app", is to show how digital contact tracing apps work and their function and possible impact in COVID-19-crisis. I mainly focused on apps designed to automatically tell users or/and public health officials whether somebody has potentially been exposed to COVID-19. What are the factors that could impact its reception from the public opinion? The second one is to present the result of automated contact tracing apps that are backed by national governments in selected countries. And finally, I would like to look at the social, political, economic, and psychological circumstances of launching the Polish application "ProteGo Stop Covid". I characterize the process and conditions that occurred when the Polish government was working on it and try to answer the question if it were possible to implement this process more effectively.

Keywords: contact tracing apps, COVID-19, STOP COVID-ProteGo Safe, Ministry of Digital Affair

Introduction

In late December 2019 an abnormal form of mysterious pneumonia occurred, characterized by fever, dry cough, and fatigue, and occasional gastrointestinal symptoms, health threatening medical service in China. Shortly after the first confirmed cases outside of the country, scientists from all over the world began research into factors of disease as well as measures to catch it. On 11th of February 2020 at the media briefing, the Director-General of the World Health Organization announced "COVID-19" as the name of this new disease (WHO, 2020).

Since that moment it has become clear that pandemic is more than a matter of health system workers, nonetheless their effort is incredibly important, but it's a prominent social, cultural and political phenomenon. In the time of crises, society expects governments to take bold actions. Most of the time those actions are typically carried out in the private sector or citizens' standard of comfort. How local and state authorities responded to the pandemic can influence elections, who engages in political discussion, who registers to vote, who votes, and how they vote. Trust in institutions may alter because of perceptions of government response and performance during the crisis, so a pandemic like Covid-19 undoubtedly is a huge threat, but it might also become an opportunity. Therefore, not only was it necessary to diligently track the outbreak of COVID-19, but also Governments were forced to undertake a broad range of unprecedented interventions in order to provide as much protection for their citizens as it was possible. The simplest form of the measures that so far have been taken to stop the spread of the disease were lockdowns people had to undergo in most of the countries. Another popular action taken by authorities in many countries in order to stop the pandemic was launching digital contact tracing apps. The MIT Technology Review’s ‘Covid Tracing Tracker’ listed around 50 globally, 22 in the European Union (Johnson, 2020).

The aim of the paper herein is to explore the element that is crucial to effective uptake of contact tracing apps in the communities, with the focus on how effective this technology is compared to the uptake level. In this context the article will try to answer the following question: Could it have been possible for the Polish government to reach higher uptake numbers, that would help to sustain the control of the epidemic. The aim of this comparative research is to determine whether significant differences existed between Qatar, Singapore, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and Poland, that led to radical margent in the final effect that brought implementation of contact tracing apps in those countries. In order to assess the effectiveness of contact tracing applications each example was verified by the analysis of the political environment and demographic data that are representative for each country mentioned here. The analysis is based on a comparative study. The analysis covers data gathered from the period of the covid outbreak until now. The conclusions were based on effectiveness of contact tracing applications measured by total cases and deaths per million people.

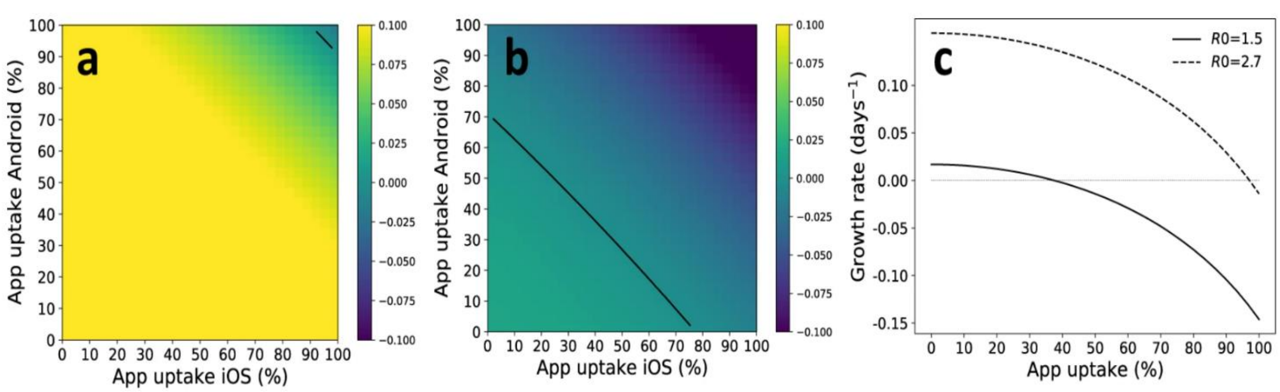
Technology of digital contact tracing apps

Because of a “tech-solutionist” point of view– the concept that technological products and services can solve even the most complicated problems of the humankind, by simplifying complex social phenomenon and ambiguity concerning the forms of algorithms- and a need for alternatives to lockdown measures that limit citizens freedom and strain the economies and scholar systems (Morozov, 2014). Therefore, high hopes have been placed by both local administrations and national governments in apps and devices which aim was to suppress the outbreak of the COVID-19 through automation. After more than a year since the launch of the first such app, findings and evaluations on the effectiveness and impact of digital contact tracing apps in actual responses to the COVID-19 pandemic differ so much that it is almost impossible to present an explicit outcome. Data varies significantly between countries and studies. Moreover, it was hardly workable to define the term of "effectiveness" in the above-mentioned situation of a digital contact tracing app.

In the article "Digital contact tracing, community uptake, and proximity awareness technology to fight COVID-19: a systematic review" George Grekousis and Ye Liu show that digital contact tracing can be viewed as both "the number of contacts identified through digital contact tracing", and – as they prefer to do – "the actual effect of digital contact tracing on reducing the effective reproductive number, or the number of infected individuals" (Grekousis & Liu, 2021). The choice of interpretation of this technology leads to very diverse conclusions that are drawn when asking about its effectiveness.

In this paper, to assume definition of possible effectiveness I used research that provides actual contact data set, collected during the launch of the first Norwegian contact tracing app "The Smittestopp app" in the Spring of 2020 by Ahmed Elmokashfii et al. (2021). The authors emphasize this technology can be used as a supplement to manual tracing and other measures, so digital tracing can be helpful in controlling the pandemic. Presented findings can help understand pandemic and society influenced by it, and thus, support public health policies in the future. This analysis illustrates that digital contact tracing apps are potentially able to help prevent COVID-19 and other disease outbreaks, especially the ones related to highly connected individuals and super spreading events (Elmokashfi et al., 2021).

Fig. 1: The impact of app uptake on the spread of SARS-CoV-2.



Source: Elmokashfi, A., et al. (2021).

“The plots show the estimated growth rate r as a function of app uptake among Android and iOS users. We have assumed 90% efficacy of case isolation and a 4h delay of both case isolation and contact quarantining. picture A Shows the situation for $R0 = 2.7$ and B shows $R0 = 1.5$. Figure C Shows the same data, but assuming identical app uptake among iOS and Android users. Note that R0 denotes the initial reproduction number of the pandemic, which is the expected number of new cases that are caused by an infected individual.” (Elmokashfi et al., 2021). First figure shows that with number $R0 = 2.7$. app will not be a significant change in pandemic growth. However, the situation is completely different assuming the case of $R0 = 1.5$, which is more representative of a current situation with other controlling measures in use. In this case, the uptake at 40% level sustains the control of the epidemic and allows for the achievement of a decline in the number of cases.

According to data published by authorities the best representatives that support upper stated thesis are countries like Qatar- 91% level of uptake and Singapore- 86% level of uptake but it’s an exception to the global trend and in both countries its use is mandatory (in Qatar its mandatory to install by residents, in Singapore check-ins must be performed using an app or special token in places where visitors are exposed to "higher throughput" of people, such as malls, workplaces, places of worship, etc.). Other countries show that the uptake of applications is drastically different, when the use of apps is not mandatory. Among these countries there are mostly European countries such as: Italy (31%), Switzerland (42%), Germany (47%), the Netherlands (32%) and Poland (6%). As the authors of the document quoted before, it is assumed that manual contact tracing identifies all non-random contacts. However, the number of downloads has not necessarily corresponded with the effective contact tracing responses in either country.

Experts from Finland (49% uptake) claim that the “Korinavilkku” app has not brought many benefits so far (YLE NEWS, 2021). The report by Douglas J. Leith and Stephen Farrell, Trinity College Dublin researchers, focused on analysing six months of data from the Irish “Covidtracker” app (45% uptake), from October 2020 to April 2021, only to find that, “Over that period only 25% of the expected number of tested-positive app users uploaded keys, which are required for that user’s app instance to fulfil its primary function as part of the contact tracing system. For recent months we see only 15% of expected uploads” (Leith & Farrell, 2020).

The data supports conclusion presented by George Grekousis and Ye Liu that effectiveness of digital tracing depends strongly on app downloads, (however significant results are possible to achieve from moderate uptake numbers) but not only, because "the success of digital contact tracing depends on a complex interplay of app uptake in the community, proximity awareness technologies, and public's trust" (Grekousis & Liu, 2021).

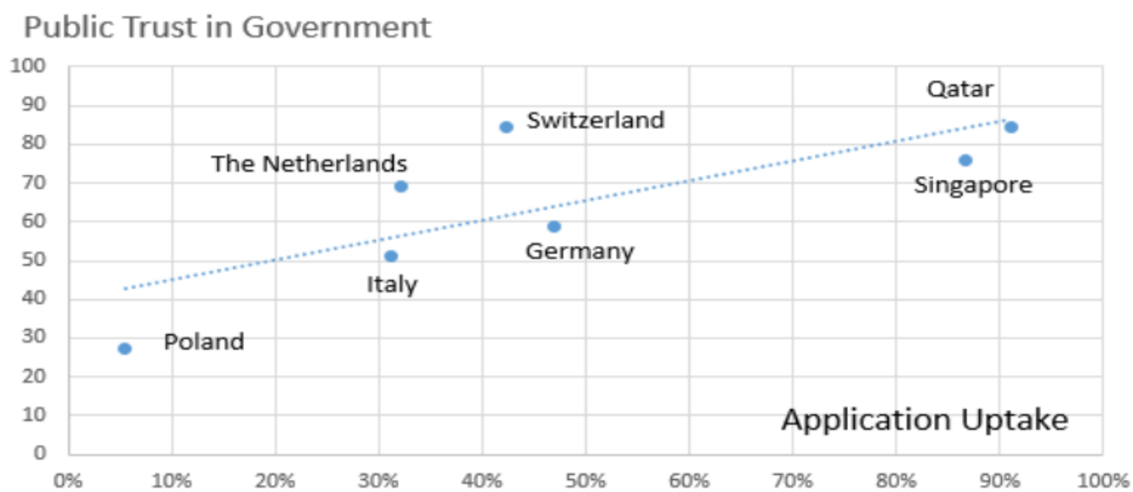
One of the factors mentioned here can be influenced by authorities providing and managing information not only about apps but also the Pandemic in a way that will encourage society to trust them and their solution. One of the crucial aspects of managing the COVID-19 crisis was utilizing data and information systems. These efforts were seen in every country fighting virus, among them, Poland was not an exception. Information policies are different in every country mostly because of the degree of centralization but also social trust. Albert Meijera and C. William R. Webster (2020) in their article assume that we can distinguish among the countries where official information policies connected to COVID-19 were highly questioned by the media and society (the United States, Brazil, Mexico) and countries where due to strong institutional dominance departures from official policies were not possible (Singapore, South Korea, China) as well as countries where we could see democratic models of information policies, which were mostly accepted by the media and society, but at times criticised (Canada and most European countries including Poland).

Each information system should be considered as an element of wider actions with political and symbolic meaning. Research shows that there is no better or more effective solution of creating informative narrative and decentralization does not always guarantee credibility, at the same time centralization of information can result in high credibility, such as the example of Singapore. Credibility of governments information policies is connected mainly to historical and cultural factors in specific countries. In the face of COVID-19 authorities in each country launched many actions which can be included in information policy, such as contact tracing apps and other apps devoted to COVID-19.

It's important to answer the question if those actions have reached all social groups, especially the most vulnerable section of the population. Sometimes information provided by the government could be perceived as too official for certain groups of the society. People tend to use fewer formal sources that are broadcasted by, for example, social media. There often can be found communities that are denying the epidemic or its meaning to the world, these communities are growing and becoming more institutionalized. Every government should take into consideration the way information is formed and evolves so as to take steps in order to increase the level of rationality and trust in public discourse around COVID-19.

This analysis took into consideration political factors that could influence contact tracing app uptake. According to analysed data one can notice strong correlation between public trust in government and application uptake (OECD, 2021).

Fig.2: The relationship between trust in government and government contact tracing application uptake



The lowest level of application uptake is shown in Poland, where simultaneously the level of public trust is drastically lower than in other considered country. One can also see a trend that shows higher uptake level in countries where the app is mandatory, the public trust in government is high. Another factor that might influence the described phenomenon is the political system. In European democratic countries the rate of uptake does not exceed 50%. In monarchy countries (like Qatar) and where the political system has been dominated by one party (Singapore) the level of uptake drastically differs.

Tab.1: Gathered demographic and political parameters for chosen countries

Country	Political system	The median age	Rate of internet adoption (%)	Application
Qatar	Absolute monarchy	32.3	99.0	Mandatory
Singapore	Republic and a parliamentary democracy	38.2	88.5	Voluntarily
Italy	Parliamentary republic with a multi-party system	47.3	73.3	Voluntarily
Switzerland	Semi-direct democratic federal republic	43.1	88.3	Voluntarily
Germany	Federal state and a parliamentary democracy	45.7	94.0	Voluntarily
The Netherlands	Parliamentary representative democracy	43.3	95.0	Voluntarily
Poland	Republic and a parliamentary democracy with a parliamentary and cabinet system	41.7	84.5	Voluntarily

Not only the political system is an important factor, but demographic parameters also influence uptake of contract tracking apps. The digitalization of society is also a necessity in introducing technological solutions. Among all analysing countries the level of digitalization is high, the lowest level is recorded in Italy and Poland. Another important aspect is the median age in society. Countries with the highest uptake level simultaneously show lowest median age.

The effectiveness of contact tracing applications measured by total cases of COVID-19 and deaths per one million people show that high uptake rate corresponds especially with lower death rates. It also makes an impact by lowering total cases among citizens (Worldometer, 2021).

Tab. 2: Comparison of uptake of contract tracking apps, total cases and deaths in chosen countries

Country	Uptake	Total cases/1M pop	Deaths/1M pop
Qatar	91.00%	88 480	219
Singapore	86.58%	46 931	139
Italy	31.25%	94 118	2 267
Switzerland	42.30%	139 615	1 386
Germany	46.99%	83 369	1 320
The Netherlands	32.15%	178 955	1 206
Poland	5.53%	107 314	2 497

Source: Worldometer (2021).

Comparing five, mentioned in this paper, European countries with countries where the level of uptake is significantly higher (Qatar and Singapore) the death rate in Qatar and Singapore is 90% lower. Impact of application uptake is also visible in total COVID-19 cases, but the total effect is not so significant.

Polish contact tracing app STOP COVID-ProteGo Safe

Work on the Polish version of contact tracing app started in March 2020, by IT specialists voluntarily working to bring technology supporting the fight against the spread of the virus (Romanów, 2021). First version was released in March the same year; it was mostly a collection of information about COVID-19 and health diary. Work on an app that would focus on contact tracking features was initiated by the Ministry of Digital Affairs (*STOP COVID - ProteGO Safe,* n.d.). The version based on this technology was launched at the end of April 2020. This app was heavily criticized by IT experts and civil society organizations, mostly because of its centralized system and scruples about possible privacy issues (Szymielewicz et al., 2020). There have been growing concerns about the functioning of this kind of apps not only in Poland but also in other states. These concerns were reasonable when we look at the mechanisms used in some of these apps. Some apps were seen as threatening civilians' privacy even though experts were assuring that apps are safe. In March 2020 a group of Polish non-governmental organizations experts prepared an appeal in which they formed the most important rules to follow while projecting technological devices and apps in agreement with RODO and bringing social trust. Those were:

- Minimization and data correctness
- Limiting the duration of data keeping
- Data storage on citizens devices
- Safety, encryption and sensitive data
- Legible information for citizens
- Code availability and algorithms legibility
- Public control over tools (Napierała, 2020).

First App released by the Ministry of Digital Affair (then under the name ProteGo Safe) in contrast to the model proposed by Google and Apple generated user identifiers by downloading data from the Ministry's server while they were not generated locally on users' devices. In practice it meant that identifiers which in theory were supposed to be anonymous could be linked to an IP address-which enables app administrators to track a specific person, as the government servers are able to request this type of data from operators. What was more, if one would mark themselves as infected, they would have to verify their phone number, so it breached privacy even though the app was advertised as "data-free" (Potiuk, 2020). Together with releasing this version of the app the Ministry of Development introduced a plan of loosening restrictions in the form of privileges for persons using the app (10% higher number of people that can be admitted to the place if they have the app, queuing privileges if there are no crowds in the shop, need to place a device that register by Stop COVID (then ProteGo) entrance to the facility or printing QR code generated from app to be scanned by customers).

Those propositions met with social discontent and protests due to which the Ministry of Development deleted the proposal from their website. As a response to social pressure in April it was confirmed that there was going to be a new version of the application, based on Exposure Notification principles (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). This solution released in June 2020 works on systems that constantly broadcast random IDs over the Bluetooth channel. At the same time the surroundings are being scanned and IDs of other devices within a distance of a few meters are remembered. Devices registered presence of one another, but the IDs broadcasted were random and changed every quarter-hour, so in this variant of the system users remained anonymous. In case of diagnosis of COVID-19 owner of the device who provided this data would receive a PIN code that would allow them to send their uploaded "sick IDS" to the Ministry's server. Automatically other user devices would check whether they had been in contact with the sick person in the past two weeks by downloading the "sick IDs". In that situation the user got a notification about contact with someone who had been diagnosed positively for COVID-19. A person who tested positive for COVID-19 might voluntarily upload a data to send an anonymous warning to other users of the STOP COVID-ProteGO Safe.

2.098 million – that's the number of downloads of the government application STOP COVID -ProteGO Safe from the end of April 2020 to the end of July 2021 it's impossible to precisely estimate how many users are still active and use the application regularly because of the earlier mentioned the system secures users anonymity (Cronin et al., 2021, 66-69). In this period only 7,042 users uploaded special code PIN that was brought from sanitary-epidemiological station to confirm COVID-19 infection. Putting these numbers in perspective up to today (21.11.2021) 3.46 million of cases were confirmed in Poland from approximately 37.95 million citizens. Assuming that the percentage of cases confirmed in Poland is equal to the percentage of app users who got positive test results, less than 0,5 percent of sick users shared this information with the application.

The cost of development and operation of the STOP COVID-ProteGO Safe application estimates around 5,944,344 PLN (about 1,316,664 EUR) (Joński, 2020). In November 2021 based on the data cited here, it can be stated that potential of such technologies, especially in application STOP COVID-ProteGO Safe were not used at all in Poland. Portal Spiders Web on 5th August 2021 published the article in which it declares that Digital Affairs – Chancellery of the Prime Minister (used to be the Ministry of Digital Affairs) admitted that there had been an inquiry sent to the Main Sanitary Inspectorate to consider whether it was worth to cease STOP COVID-ProteGO Safe app (Czubkowska, 2021). The app is still working.

One of the reasons for the above was certainly the initial criticism and heated debate that arose in April 2020. Back then, many IT experts and programmers expressed their concerns and distrust in it. Even though the Ministry of Digital Affair joined the discussions with critics, set up an expert group of ProteGo Safe (Klicki & Szymielewicz, 2020) and presented a comprehensive privacy policy risk analysis for protection of personal data, FAQ and report on security audit the first impression that was presented to publicity left a non-removable connotation (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, n.d). Research published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development shows that in 2020 trust in the Polish government was declared by 27% of respondents. (OECD, 2021)

Promotional campaign launched on Twitter in June 2020 which might have worked with the younger part of the population that has easier access and greater understanding of technology proved to be a huge failure as it was conducted by posting tweets using fake accounts. Dry statements posted with fake signatures of doctors or professors were quickly pointed out by the users "fluent" in social media language. Instead of encouraging, the whole campaign became more of a scam or just a joke. Instead of separating this action from political accounts, the same bots that were used in the presidential campaign the politicians of the Law and Justice (PiS) (Kardys, 2020).

Some people also found the first version of the name of the app "ProteGO" confusing and not easy to decipher, especially older users, who were supposed to be the main targeted group. As a name itself it means nothing to the average internet user, it sounds unfamiliar, it is difficult to be repeated by the older users. It had not been until the fall of 2020 when the act of rebranding and adding more understandable part "STOP COVID" took place.

Another great concern for app administrators was fake news that started to arise around apps linking apps to protests that had been taking place all over Poland since 22nd of October 2020 that were reaction to the verdict of the Constitutional Court. Even though the app at that moment could not serve its purpose (it did not use geolocation data, did not track users and did not have access to any files and data on users' phone) post published on Twitter went viral (on 27th of October 2020 it had 2,800 retweets and 2,700 likes) and it warned people that the whole purpose of the application was "to send everyone from strike to quarantine and by that silence everyone" (Julus, 2020). As mentioned before, the campaign on twitter shows the administrator of that app had a problem with communicating information about the app to the younger part of the generation. To put the whole issue in perspective, the answer to this tweet made by the profile of Digital Affairs – Chancellery of the Prime Minister has 9 retweets and 59 likes. People, even if they did not believe in this conspiracy theory, started to worry and became suspicious which resulted in general distrust.

The plan of the Ministry of Development I have mentioned before which aimed at loosening restrictions in the form of privileges for persons using the app was received in Poland as categorization between better and worse citizens. First narration that was used to talk about ProteGo-STOP COVID following global trends suggested that the app by itself could stop the pandemic. Today we know that the belief in the agency of those apps was naive. We have been taught a lesson that instead of statements: “Everything it's up to you” (Polish: *Wszystko w twoich rękach*) there should have been a greater focus on showing people how effective and self-protective it is to use digital contact tracing (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). It seems like now the apps themselves and the way they are managed have gone two different directions.

Conclusion

This technology is a meaningful support in suppressing the pandemic of COVID-19. Analysed examples of countries with high uptake rate of contact tracking applications emphasize advantages of this solution. First of all, the political conditions are most important, especially trust in government. Demography of society also makes an impact, but it is not so significant. The most important result of effective implementation is lowering death rates in countries.

Taking into consideration data gathered in this research, the introduction of the Polish equivalent STOP COVID-ProteGo Safe from the beginning was challenging. Poland in comparison to mentioned countries has significantly worse records of factors mentioned as crucial. Except for the main factors, implementation of the app was connected with many faults, imperfections and questionable decisions. As examples in other fields show, new technologies might yield different results. Highly developed digital banking, other government solutions supporting health systems (such as for example online prescriptions) might suggest that citizens in Poland are ready to use new technologies and innovations. This exact application is still meeting strong resistance and hate on social media. Regarding circumstances at the moment of launching the app in Poland (cultural, social, economic, political) its success was highly dependable on a form of communicating about it. In these social surroundings the must have been a comprehensively prepared communication strategy. Government could have cooperated more closely with the media. Lack of trust in the government and low-quality information policy resulted in failure. Authorities had the possibility and tools to prepare society for innovation. Analysing the process of implementing and functioning of this app on the market one can assess those actions concerning communication were delayed and did not have cohesive structure. It is important to remember that at that moment every action taken by the government was a race against time. As Marek Zagórski, former Minister of Digital Affairs, said in interview in 2020: "Referring to controversies, I have to admit we met with unjust accusations, when it comes to this technology. We started work on ProteGO Safe as one of first countries in Europe, in situation, when no one did not have yet defined vision of how this application should work"[1] (Kozłowski, 2020).

Undoubtedly, creating STOP COVID-ProteGo Safe was possible thanks to cooperation and high investment of people from many different groups, among them voluntary workers, yet, it proved to be insufficient. There has not been enough information policy, and the political surrounding was unfavourable to create a safe environment in which those efforts could bring an actual result to COVID-19 crisis. Previously mentioned mistakes enabled sceptics to increase disinformation work, their narration turned out to be more successful than timid centralized authorities' information.

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[1] Original: "Odnosząc się do kontrowersji to muszę przyznać, że spotkaliśmy z kompletnie niesprawiedliwymi zarzutami, jeśli chodzi o to rozwiązanie. Pracę nad ProteGO Safe rozpoczęliśmy jako jedno z pierwszych państw w Europie, w sytuacji, w której nikt nie miał do końca sprecyzowanej wizji jak taka aplikacja w ogóle powinna wyglądać."

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Orange is the New Blue? Case study of Four Orange County Constituencies that were won over by the Democrats in 2018

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Abstract:

The 2018 midterm elections brought many surprises when talking about election results on Congressional level. One of them was definitely Democrats picking up four seats in the Orange County, which for many years was a Republican heartland in California. What happened? Was this just a one-time thing or a sign of blue wave in Donald Trump's era? The four case-studies of Democratic political campaigns will not only try to answer these questions, but also predict how should Republicans respond taking the example of 2020 elections.

Keywords: political campaign, social media, Orange County, Democratic Party

Introduction: What's so special about Orange County?

The ongoing development of new interactive campaign strategies transformed the way voters perceive Congressional Elections. In 2018, many Americans and people from all over the world, became very interested in campaigns, also because of the fact that most of them wanted to check how Donald Trump's popularity may influence the outcome. Being such a controversial figure and a political celebrity, Trump not only encouraged his opponents to organize against him, but also fueled the process of political polarization among the US society to the extreme (at least that is what many thought before the elections in 2018, history shows that this was just the beginning of the growth of this trend). The emergence of Trump-as-a-politician persona also meant that the elections and the campaign would deliver entertaining content, which has always been the part of American political culture and which (used in a right way), could make more people interested in political processes in their own country. Politics in the era of social media allow the receiver of the political content to get involved with it, politicians through such platforms look as if they are closer to their voters, by creating virals they can attract wider audience. This all gives political marketers tools to create an interesting campaign and at the same time create a situation in which a campaign staff's efforts can be damaged by one tweet or one Instagram post.

Political campaigning is also closely related to the subject of political communication, especially when taking into consideration the rather wide subject of media use and media coverage during the campaign. It is also quite important to stress how important during this process is the role of local media, especially during local and congressional elections. Of course, Senate and House of Representatives primary and general races can be covered nationwide if they attract enough attention or when the candidates know how to create buzz through fundraising and social media (Beto O'Rourke, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in 2018), but in most of the cases, academics need to rely on social media presence and local news outlets in order to get a grip of how the candidate's campaign was run.

Why choose Orange County? Mainly because of the fact that the 2018 Congressional Elections results drew attention to this region since it has been a Republican stronghold for many years. Even though California as a state is liberal, Orange County has always been a symbolic place for the Republicans. Richard Nixon was born there, Ronald Reagan once said that O.C. is where the "all good Republicans go to die" (Kilgore, 2018). Anti-communist organization John Birch Society acted fast back in the 1960s in this area, which combined with the suburban migration, used to be a hotbed for right-wing movements in southern California (Mozingo, 2018). Many white middle-and-upper class members of society migrated from Los Angeles or Midwest and South throughout 20th century, which led to a self-segregation leading to an extremism. Even in the 90s, the resentment in the O.C. was an answer to liberalization and multiculturalization of the society, that is where the Proposition 187 was authored, anti-immigration legislation which was supported and passed by the 59% of voters, before being ruled unconstitutional (Wisckol, 2016).

What has changed then? The origins of the ethnic diversification of the O.C. society can be found in the 1960s, when the white-collar defense industry professionals started to move to Orange County, which added to the big part of economy in Southern California by the end of the decade. As soldiers were establishing relationships with Asian women overseas when in service, this led to changes in immigration policies starting from the War Bride Act of 1945. According to the last census, 36% of Asian Americans in the O.C. were registered as Republicans and 27% of Democrats with Vietnamese Americans comprising the biggest group of right-wing voters (Reft, 2013). However, this means that almost 40% of them were not party affiliated, as many Asian Americans are not that involved in politics, making them for some pundits „the last undecided voters" (Hsu, 2020). On the other hand, Proposition 187 and its repercussions initiated a significant growth of Latinx activists in California, as thousands of young people demonstrated against it in biggest cities in the state. According to Manuel Pastor, "the biggest demographic change in the state happened between 1980 and 2000", as California "went from 66% of white residents towards 53%" (Marrero, 2019). Political awakening? Gentrification and rapidly changing demographics? Or maybe anti-Trump public sentiment combined with smart use of modern campaign tools? All of these factors could help Democrats during 2018 midterm elections.

Actually, the last factor seemed to be the most predictable. How is that possible? Midterm elections tend to "reflect the approval ratings of the president in charge" (Tomaszewski, 2019, p. 37). What is interesting is that this trend is especially emerging during president's second tenure with examples from midterms in 1938, 1966, 1986 or 2006, when the party of an incumbent president faced congressional losses. These types of landslide losses were also observed during first terms: in 2010, Democrats lost sixty-three House seats, six Senate seats and six Governors (Kilgore, 2015, p. 3).

Political entertainment: how new media shape modern campaigns

Just like in the previous articles that explored the specifics of 2018 voter shift in the United States, the most important part of the methodology, was comparing the sources from traditional media to social media and the analysis of profiles on popular internet platforms. Since none of the four elections in the presented case studies gained nationwide traction, the analysis of local media was crucial to find information about the campaign trail. The article tries to answer the question, whether four Congressional flips were the beginning of a wider trend in the Orange County, or just a smart one-time event that was possible because of the level of political polarization.

The aim of the research is to try finding patterns, whether the candidates from the Democratic Parties tended to use new ways of political campaigning to attract voters, especially social media tools. Study focuses on how the candidates looked for ways to reach out to the voters and create more buzz around them in order to become more recognizable, especially around young people, who tend to obtain political news from the internet. Although each of the campaigns is a separate story, since each of the constituencies has its own specifics, some comparisons can be drawn from these campaigns to find out which ones may have been the most effective, media friendly or allowed to attract wider interest. It would be hard to assume that a campaign for House of Representatives was successful only thanks to the increased use of social media, but presidential campaigns in the United States and the Senate campaigns have proven that they help to attract the attention of internet users and mobilize them to get out the vote. Additionally, it would be interesting to check how does the voter segmentation work in the world of social media campaigning, especially in areas that are more ethnically diverse.

Modern political campaign strategies are closely connected to the development of new media, described by Logan as “those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication and involve some form of computing” (2010). Their main advantage is that they allowed its recipients to engage in content and create it by sharing, commenting on it and evaluating it. From that moment, marketing staffs started to play less important role in campaigns, on contrary to the role of voters, who could engage more in this process. Because of that fact and thanks to the development of social media platforms, politicians could use less money and time to generate more content and reach wider base of potential voters (Tomaszewski, 2017, p. 137-138). Web 2.0 tools transformed politics by allowing internet users to get to know more information about the candidates and meet their more personal side. Further theories focusing on these aspects of political campaigning also recognise the importance of online imagesharing, which allows user to “perform, feel emotions and engage with each other” (Serafinelli, 2018, p. 4). Elisa Serafinelli argues that modern social marketing strategies tend to rely on “users’ voyeuristic interests in watching and being watched and it is that which motivates the practice of photo sharing” (2018, p. 6) That is especially interesting when the political marketing campaigns are involved, as such visual practices are becoming nowadays a hot trend. Finally, new media allow grassroots organising to thrive, as citizens want to be more politically empowered and finally have tools to do that. Because of that fact, politicians can create long term communication with the citizens, since new technology allows to encourage civil engagement and political participation (Lees-Marshment, 2013).

Is running on a progressive ticket really this risky? CA-49

The analysis starts with the CA-49 constituency, mainly because of the fact that Democrats won a Congressional seat there, while running on a quite progressive platform. Although for many years, this district leaned Republican, since redistricting in 2010 it was becoming more and more competitive. According to the official census data, between 2000 and 2010, in the northern parts of CA-49, where a part of Orange County is located, population increased by 5,000-10,000. (2010 census) The elections in 2016 have proven that it is more and more likely for the Democrats to win this seat from the Republicans, as the incumbent Darrell Issa won only by over 1,600 votes. (ballotpedia.org, 2020)

Mike Levin's campaign gathered nationwide attention since the very beginning. Issa was an easy target, as during his tenure he was the richest member of the Congress. Since the narrow win, locals were pressuring him to attend a town hall meeting, by raising $6,00 on GoFundMe to buy a full-page ad in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* (Schatz, 2017). As a matter of fact, Levin, after announcing his candidacy via e-mail and on Twitter on March 8 2017, went viral by crashing the Town Hall meeting. The video was shared by *NowThis Politics* fanpage on Facebook and up to date received over 13,000 reactions. Being an Orange County raised attorney focusing on clean energy, Levin "trolled" Issa during his speech by mentioning that he sent a book called *Climate Change for Beginners* to the Congressman, as over his numerous tenures he denied the climate change claims (NowThis Politics, 2017). Week later, on March 26 2017, Democratic candidate visited MSNBC's AM Joy in order to talk about his campaign and talk about Issa's relationship with Trump (Levin, 2017).

In order to tackle a rich candidate, Levin took to grassroots campaigning to distinguish himself and position as an underdog with support from ordinary folks. This tactic was crucial, as from the very beginning he started to receive quite impressive donations. Since Bernie Sanders's presidential bid back in 2016 it seemed quite clear that small donations can be an ideal weapon in hands of progressive candidates. Between March 7 2017 and March 31 2017 Levin managed to raise both eyebrows and over $275,000 from individual donors with over 87% of the contributions $100 or below (Levin, 2017a). In second quarter of 2017 Levin raised $333,902, showing a really good level of grassroots support (Levin, 2017b). Actually, when analyzing the materials from the campaign trail tracking back to the end of 2017, media news outlets were surprised how eager the citizens were to flip this seat for the Democrats. An article on KPBS San Diego Public Radio & TV from December 19, 2017 mentions the fact that it was (at that time) very rare to organize on such level having slightly less than one year to elections. *Flip the 49th Neighbors in Action* Super PAC at that time had already 200 neighborhood leaders trained across the 49th and began contacting voters by door-to-door campaigning and phone banks (St John, 2017). What is also interesting is the trend that began in Sillicon Valley shortly after Donald Trump's win in 2016. Many engineers and data analysts started to engage in political campaigns, by sharing their technological knowledge. *Tech for Campaigns* organization, which brought together volunteers with such experience, helped Levin set up a campaign website, donation portal and social media accounts ahead of the start of his campaign (Thadani, 2017). The project lasted four weeks and the volunteers created a digital identity kit for use on various channels, mobile-optimized website with event calendar and social media targeting framework (apart from the tools mentioned in previous material) (Tech For Campaigns, 2018).

There is also one thing that helped Levin unseat his opponent. According to the 2010 census, 26% of CA-49 residents were of Latinx descent. Levin himself is a grandson of immigrants from Mexico and because of this, he very quickly earned the endorsement from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, which shows how important his candidacy was when talking about bouncing back the House of Representatives from Republicans (Levin, 2017). He also managed to distinguish himself from his biggest opponent on the Democratic side, Doug Applegate (who ran against Issa back in 2016), even though they both had rather progressive policies. Levin ended 2017 having raised $1.225 million from 11,000 contributions, having the best results among the Democratic candidates (Levin, 2018).

Then 2018 came and it began with shocking news that Issa would not seek re-election (SCTimes, 2018). This meant much easier job for the Democrats and Levin seemed to be leading in the party polls. Although his Instagram profile and campaign may not seem impressive, it is interesting how he tried to unify the content from the three most important platforms (meaning Twitter, Facebook and Instagram), by sharing screenshots of Facebook events or tweets there. The analysis of social media activity also shows that his profile tended to share images depicting endorsements, campaign rallies and calls for volunteers. There is a really good work by Jacob R. Ausubel related to this subject, which analysed the Twitter posts of House of Representatives candidates back in 2018. Levin appears as one of the most active Twitter users among candidates (at least the one that knew how to use keywords in order to attract buzz). For example, word "Trump" appears in over five hundred tweets of Levin; what is more, "gun violence" term also appears in his tweets more than the median (2019: 59).

Levin also got endorsements from Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters, or Ironworkers Local 229, which shows why attracting the votes of key local labor organizations is important in order to win he votes (Levin, 2018a). The fundraising numbers were still showing that Levin is the only candidate, who ran a grassroots campaign, with Applegate's numbers getting worse and Sara Jacobs being dependent on her money and $250,000, which her grandfather transferred to her SuperPAC (Levin, 2018b).

After nonpartisan primary for CA-49 on June 5, 2018, it became clear that Mike Levin will be running against Diane Harkey, who emerged as the strongest Republican opponent. It is worth mentioning that Levin only won with Jacobs by 3,000 votes and Applegate's result was only 8,000 votes worse, which shows how divided Democratic voters were (Ballotpedia, 2018). Although there was only one survey ran by Public Opinion Strategies that shown Harkey winning in the polls, Levin's campaign was still getting nationwide traction because of the number of small donors and in-district volunteers. Furthermore, it became one of the symbols of upcoming competitive midterms, which were supposed to show the level of support for Trump's administration (Levin, 2018c). By the near end of campaign, 93% of Levin's funds came from individual donors and he has consistently been refusing the support from corporate PACs. Levin outraised Harkey by $3.1 million over the campaign trail, having earned $4.3 million for the campaign. What is more, independent groups spent 500,000 on campaign materials supporting him (Castellano, 2018).

NBC 7 San Diego ran a debate between the candidates on October 2, 2018, which perfectly presents Levin's policies and how he managed to present Harkey as a congresswoman with strong links to Trump even though over the campaign trail she tended to distance herself from Trump's most controversial stances. Over the 56-minute material, Levin stressed environment and immigration issues as the most important for the district, also highlighting his ability for bipartisan work on legislation (C-Span, 2018). Eventually, Levin won by nearly 13% margin.

CA-39: funding political campaign with money from the lottery

What did CA-49 and CA-39 have in common in 2018? The retiring incumbents and Hillary Clinton carrying these districts during presidential elections in 2016. This district consists of parts of Orange, Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties and has 32.6% Hispanic population. Incumbent Ed Royce announced his retirement via Twitter on January 8, 2018, which increased the Democratic chances to flip the seat. This was quickly confirmed by The Cook Political Report, which changed the status of the race from Lean Republican to Lean Democratic (CPR, 2018). Cisneros's campaign was not as interesting as Levin's, but it shows both similar and different approach to campaign financing. On one hand, he refused the help from Super PACs and focused on small donations, but on the other hand self-financed his campaign with over

$9,000,000 (Bowman & Pathé, 2018). How would that be possible? In 2010, Cisneros won in a lottery, which allowed him to engage in politics and establish scholarships for Latinx students at GWU and the University of Southern California. Along with his wife, he also established a Generation First Degree Pico Rivera organization, which's goal was to earn at least one college degree in each household in Pico Rivera (Cisneros, 2019). Cisneros announced his candidacy on July 17, 2017 and stressed that Royce's vote to repeal 2010 health care law was the main reason for him to run (Garcia, 2017).

Just like in CA-49, some of the Democrats were afraid that the number of Democratic candidates in the open primary may be too large, which would result in two Republican candidates going into the final battle for the Congressional seat. This was especially worrying, as Cisneros and his main rival – Andy Thorburn (also a millionaire!) focused on negative campaign ads aiming at each other. Candidates focused on TV ads and flyers, taking rather aggressive approach (Schneider, 2018). Cisneros also got endorsements from labor unions and organizations, such as Orange County Labor Federation or California Labor Federation. The materials from his official website depict mostly the endorsements earned by the candidate. It is worth noticing that the website has Spanish and Chinese version and is integrated with candidate's profile on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Flickr (!), on which he has 0 followers and follows 0 accounts. With Latinx and Asians being nearly half of the voters in the district, it is crucial to deliver the message in as many ways as possible.

Cisneros managed to create one campaign ad that can be coined as "viral" as up to date it has 147,530 views. It is a negative campaign ad aimed at his Republican rival Young Kim, showing that she has taken over $223,000 from insurance companies. It also links Kim to Donald Trump's policies (Gil Cisneros For Congress, 2018). It is worth noting that Cisneros's Instagram campaign account, although not very popular (slightly over 1,400 followers by the end of 2020 campaign trail), has been posting consequently campaign material such as endorsements, photos from rallies and graphics encouraging voters to register. Since September 2018 the account started to get little traction, as the posts started to receive more than 40 reactions (Cisneros, 2018).

Being previously a member of the Republican Party (until 2008), Cisneros stressed that he is an independent and first-time politician. At that time, the Democratic Party decided to target Asian voters in Orange and Los Angeles Counties, which usually tended to split the votes rather evenly between the Democrats and Republicans. Some might even say that they are the "last undecided voters” in the US. Nic Jordan, who worked for Cisneros as a campaign manager was one of the few Asian Americans having such position in a congressional race. Cisneros targeted Asian American voters both through digital campaigning and ground campaigning, for instance, his staffers contacted voters on social media platforms popular among described communities: Chinese staffers used WeChat or Line and Korean staffers contacted potential voters via KakaoTalk, which is popular among Korean diaspora (Hsu, 2020). Asian American staffers also kept him company during canvassing in order to reach out as many people as possible, also those who may previously have felt excluded.

CA-48: country clubs and big donations from uncle Bloomberg

The third case study in this article is Harley Rouda's 2018 campaign to unseat Dana Rohrabacher in CA-48 district. What's impressive is that Rohrabacher was a 15-term incumbent, however, just like in previous districts won over by the Democrats, a wind of change started to blow in 2016, when Hillary Clinton won in this district by 1.7%. The *National Commitee for an Effective Congress* (2018) deemed CA-48 as a pick-up opportunity because of the quite high level of Hispanic and Asian voters in the district: proportionally 13.9% and 18.0%. This district lies along the coastal strip of Orange County and is full of marinas, housing estates and country clubs (Gumbel, 2018). This seemed like a perfect environment for the Republicans, but it appears that the combination of the demographic shifts and Trump's policies started to have affect on the decision-making patterns of the voters.

Rouda did not have any exceptional campaign and no medium mentions that, but being a Republican-turned-Democrat (he supported Kasich's presidential bid in 2016), it was easier for him to reach out to moderate Republicans and Independents. Without a doubt it helped that Rohrabacher himself has quite many controversial stances, such as supporting Putin's work or endorsing the idea of property sellers refusing to sell houses to homosexual buyers. The number of registered Republicans has also been decreasing in this district from around 44% in 2014 to near 40% in 2018 (Gumbel, 2018).

Before the primaries, Democrats were worried that they could miss out the general elections, once again due to the fact that California law organizes nonpartisan primary in which top-two candidates reach the general election. Rouda's main opponent, Dr. Hans Keirstead, lost narrowly to him, receiving only 125 votes less and securing the third place (Lemieux, 2018). It is worth noting though, that Rouda has also stressed the importance of grassroots organizing and refused the support of corporate organizations, he got the endorsement of Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (on contrary to state party structures, which supported Keirstead) (Lemieux, 2018). In May 2018, Rouda was helped by DCCC with an ad buy on TV; the organization has poured $1.7 million into the race in order to support him (Golshan, 2018).

During the nonpartisan primary, Rohrabacher got 30% of the vote, which was the lowest share of any incumbent in California. What is more, he got around 52,000 votes, similar number to the 2014 midterm primary, even though the turnout in 2018 was doubled (Mai-Duc, 2018). Rouda in his political programme adapted quite liberal stances such as Medicare for All, free tuition in public colleges and $15 federal minimum wage, however, instead of framing it as a progressive agenda, he was trying to convince the voters that such moves are fiscally responsible (Medina, 2018). During the final stage of the campaign, Michael Bloomberg helped Rouda by fueling his bid with $4.4 million spent on ads targeting Rohrabacher. Millionaire also helped Katie Porter with her bid, which will be studied in next subchapter (Finnegan, 2018). Eventually, Rouda won by a 7.2% margin.

His Instagram account was posting plenty of campaign material, especially photos from rallies, along with some videos on which Rouda was tackling policies he wanted to take care of once winning the elections. Pictures of him speaking to the crowd received the biggest amount of reactions, but it is also worth noting that there was a picture of an Australian Shepherd posing with Rouda's banner, which received quite a lot likes (161, compared to usual rate of 80-100) (Rouda, 2018).

CA-45: single mom against the establishment

The final district that resides in Orange County and was won over by the Democrats is CA-45, in which Katie Porter has made an upset by winning with the incumbent Mimi Walters. CA-45 covered south-central Orange County and was won by Hillary Clinton during presidential elections in 2016 by 5% of votes. According to the 2010 census, 21% of citizens living in this district were Asian and 18.7% of Hispanic descent (Ballotpedia, 2018). Inarguably, of all the politicians presented in this research, Porter is the most progressive one: she ran on a platform of ending the corruption in Washington, by getting big money out of politics, limiting outside spending and implementing full disclosure and making the Congress and Representatives available and accessible to people. What is more, she has been a protegee of Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris, who both appeared in her first TV ad called *Two Senators* on May 2, 2018

(Porter, 2018). By the end of 2017, Porter managed to raise $740,000 in donations, outnumbering Mimi Walters (Kwiatkowski, 2018). Erica Kwiatkowski, her campaign manager stated that traditional ways of campaigning were a key aspect of winning the votes, as people in CA-45 were not really used to door-to-door campaigning or phone calls. Technology was the leading factor allowing the volunteers to be met with greet during such visits, as people working on Porter's campaign were asked to install the app that had maps showing on which door should the volunteers knock on (mostly Democratic and Independent). What is more, the app was collecting data on the degree of support for the candidate (Gonzalez, 2018). Porter has also raised the biggest amount of money from small donors, when compared to other three cases, as she received $1.17 million, making them 23% of fundraisers (Burns et al., 2018).

Although many Democrats believed that in order to unseat the Republicans in Orange County, the candidate needs to run on a rather moderate ticket that would appeal to undecided voters, Porter was openly supporting Medicare-for-all, which shows a dramatic change in how the Democratic Party started to perceive the healthcare system. This would not be possible if it was not for Bernie Sanders's presidential bid in 2016, who was the first progressive candidate, who was this close of winning the presidential primaries. Porter's main opponent, Dave Min was the only Democratic candidate from this district to be not on board with single-payer healthcare system (Scott, 2018). Min, who ran a negative campaign on Porter and got the state party's support, lost to Porter during the nonpartisan primaries by slightly over 5,000 votes (Ballotpedia, 2018). Democratic candidate could easily play with the anti-Trump sentiment that more moderate voters may have had, as Walters had almost a 100% track record of voting with him and supported the Republican health care replacement (Cadelago, 2017). This was crucial, as many women (as a response), started to engage in politics when the Trump era began. Female candidates in Democratic primaries were surging in 2018; in primaries that featured at least one woman and man (not incumbent), women were winning in 71% of cases (Ball, 2018). Being a single mother with three kids, Porter could appeal to suburban women and her voice was much more heard.

Her Instagram posts from 2018 campaign are quite interesting, considering the fact that on most of the posts, Porter is posing with women endorsing her, to underline the empowering message and show which group would she be representing. Barack Obama is the first man to be posing with her and it is the sixty-third post on this profile (along with the copy informing about the endorsement from a former POTUS). In April, 2018, the account started to post *I'm with Katie* graphics, which shows various women and organization (such as Moms Demand Action or Emily's List) endorsing the Democratic candidate (Porter, 2018).

What also attracted my attention regarding this campaign, was the use of celebrity endorsement power in order to get out the vote. It is not that common in lesser media-covered Congressional districts to have one's campaign events attended by the celebrities – however, Porter had the Olympic figure skater Michelle Kwan appearing at the Ballot Drop Off Rally on October 30, 2018. It is especially interesting taking into consideration that this can be perceived as aim at attracting the attention of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, who are leaning Democratic, but are not really representing this at the polls (Goodyear, 2018). It is also worth noting that Katie Porter was the first candidate supported by EMILY's List, the political action committee supporting pro-choice female candidates (EMILY, 2017). Eventually, Porter won the elections with Walters by 4.2% of the vote.

How to tackle Republicans during future elections? How can Republicans respond?

What lessons can be learned from these four cases? Without a doubt each of them should be treated separately, but there are some patterns that can be seen, especially if one compares it to the 2020 Congressional elections. Out of four freshmen, only Mike Levin and Katie Porter successfully defended their seats during the 2020 campaign trail. Although 2020 meant a brand-new campaign, it is quite easy to connect the dots having analysed this material, as both of them really looked as if they are running for Congress to make a change; this helped them to organize grassroots movements and fundraisers consisting of small single-donor payments. Of course, Cisneros and Rouda were also focusing on such campaigning tactics, but their bids were also largely financed from their own wallet.

Of all the candidates, Mike Levin can be argued as the one, who knew best how to present himself in the social media during the campaign. From the very beginning his goal was to generate buzz, so he would be recognizable; what is more, he used the help of social media specialists to create a key visual of the campaign and to target the voters. However, the analysis of these four campaigns shows that all of the candidates focused on traditional ways of canvassing, which seems to be more effective when talking about local elections. Without a doubt, the way that Gil Cisneros's campaign reached out to the voters through messengers typical for their surroundings should be set up as an example on how to diversify the digital communication with voters. Of course, it needs to be taken into consideration that this is a US campaign, where ethnic diversity plays an important part in the analysis of voting patterns.

What is interesting is the fact that two candidates that managed to defend their seats in 2020 were the ones, who were running for a rather progressive agenda, which, having in mind, specifics of Orange County politics show how grassroots organizing is especially working with more liberal program. Katie Porter is currently one of the most recognizable congresswomen, working closely with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and one may assume that progressive organizations will push for her expanded role in California politics, especially having considered the fact that there would be an available Senate seat after Kamala Harris' becoming a vice-president. A conclusion can be derived from these four cases, suggesting that the candidates that have more clear political views, can energize the political base in much better way. This of course depends on the constituency and its specifics plus demographic determinants, as in conservative states like Wyoming or Louisiana, moderate ticket would be more efficient. Furthermore, Cisneros and Rouda are millionaires and ex-Republicans, so it would be much harder for them to position themselves as progressives. Even though they managed to run on a grassroots platform and got really impressive share of small donations from voters, they mostly used their own money to fund their campaigns.

Obviously, this study mainly focused on the use of new media during political campaigns and when analysing the whole effect the campaign may have on the electoral outcome, one needs to consider political climate, demographic tendencies, economy and local issues that may be of bigger importance than in other constituencies. Nevertheless, from most of the cases, one can extract some fruitful conclusions, as candidates tried to reach out to different groups with different tools. It should be strongly advised to future campaigns to have a look at these cases, as on one hand, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook may be the easiest platforms to share political content and engage with the followers, but among some communities, different message sharing platforms may be the key to reaching out to the voter.

Where does the Democratic Party in the Orange County stand in 2021? Efforts to turn Orange County blue, once quite possible to imagine, two years later provided Democrats with not-so-much optimistic views. Of course, O.C. can be perceived as “purple” and California is going to be more and more diverse, but Republicans already learned their lesson and knew how to respond to this trend. That is why Cisneros's and Rouda's seat was picked up by two Korean-American GOP-affiliated women, who became the first Korean-American women in the history of Congress. This turn of events may be for some surprising, but let's not forget the fact that being an ethnic minority does not mean voting for the Democratic Party. Plenty of factors need to be taken into consideration when counting on either Asian-American, Hispanic-American or African-American vote, but it is important to stress that these groups should not be perceived as one organism and its voting patterns can only be tracked after a broader study is conducted.

Actually, Young Kim's and Michelle Steel's success in CA-39 and CA-48 show how the Republicans should be responding to the party's crisis. They reached out to Democrats and Independents and targeted Asian-American voters through messages, mails and e-mails in Korean, Chinese or Vietnamese (Sragow, 2020). Without a doubt, Orange County will still be competitive for both of the parties, having considered both changing demographics and the issue that Republican candidates did not have Donald Trump on their ticket in 2020 and (most probably will not have) in 2024, which in some purple districts may have been a kiss of death in 2018 and 2020.

Overall, although there are signs that competitive races for the seat in the House of Representatives may gather at least statewide attention, the modern interest in American politics is not that decentralized yet. Only three years ago in 2018, national news outlets and media from abroad started to get interested in Senate toss-up races, thanks to the growing role of internet and image as a part of politician's campaign. Incoming midterm elections in 2022 should keep up with this trend with Governor races in Georgia and Texas being predicted as the most interesting ones, as Stacey Abrams and Beto O'Rourke will definitely want to establish themselves as not only one of the most recognizable and media-oriented members of the Democratic Party, but also the ones that can set an example how to win in states that are not particularly easy for the Democrats. This may be especially hard having considered rather weak ratings of Biden's administration, but changing demography and modern migration patterns within the United States can have the influence on the eventual results.

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Influence of public policy actors on the development of eGovernment in the Slovak Republic and other European countries

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Abstract:

Information and communication technologies have undergone substantial development in recent decades. These changes have been manifested not only in the economy, but also in people's everyday life, as modern technologies have fundamentally transformed working methods, leisure activities, and administrative processes. The strong influence of advanced trends has also left changes in public administration. The international concept of eGovernment has come to the fore, known in Slovakia due to the development of the Internet public services under the "informatization" of public administration. In Slovakia, as well as throughout the world, the primary objective of electronification is to increase the obligations of the state administration, reduce corruption, improve communication within the public administration itself, increase transparency, save finances, eliminate empty bureaucracy, and simplify the contact of citizens with the authorities. eGovernment allows individual states a range of options for delivering public services electronically, such as interactive collaboration or providing information online. In spite of all the advantages brought by information and communication technologies, the Slovak Republic still lags behind in the implementation of computerization in public administration. In the field of electronic public administration, individual processes are constantly influenced primarily by external changes (political), but also by internal changes (organizational). These are precisely the types of changes that can be described as limiting factors for the development of eGovernment. The objective of the present paper is to analyze how public policy actors in three studied countries influence the development and implementation of electronic public administration. The analysis will then culminate in the proposal of appropriate solutions to remove the identified barriers for the conditions of the Slovak Republic.

Keywords: administration, citizen, eGovernment, factors, service, public administration

Introduction

Electronic public administration is in a constant state of development. Consultation documents, reports, brochures, and various other documents are constantly being produced. While there are different national interpretations of the term, it undoubtedly crosses borders with ease, likely making it one of the fastest spreading public sector reform ideas in history. In keeping with ongoing progress, terms that begin with the letter 'e,' such as *e-mail*, *e-banking*, *e-commerce*, etc. are typical features of the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. We can also include the term *eGovernment* in the bundle of modern, e-chic international terms. In linguistic terms, eGovernment is an abbreviation of "electronic government," which would be translated as *elektronická vláda* or *elektronická verejná správa* into Slovak language. Today, however, this term is no longer a novelty for the Slovak public, which is why it is not usually translated. At the same time, there is a variety of ways to write the term *eGovernment*. In the current modern period, the form without the hyphen, written "eGovernment," has become more and more entrenched. The development of eGovernment, to a considerable extent, depends on political factors, especially political actors. The passive or negative approach of these actors may significantly slow down the development in eGovernment. If there is no adequate support during the implementation of the necessary changes in the sector, stagnation comes and, subsequently, proportionally decreases the trust of the public in such kind of service. The present research paper aims to analyze how political actors in the three countries under examination – the Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, and Switzerland – affect the development and implementation of the electronic public administration system. Afterward, based on the compiled analysis, we present possible solutions to eliminate the obstacles for the implementation of eGovernment in the Slovak Republic. As a partial method for achieving the aim, we have identified four research questions: To what extent do political factors affect the development of eGovernment, and should they be perceived as insurmountable issues? Is the success of eGovernment related to the political and institutional environment in a given country? Do political actors contribute to strategic eGovernment reforms positively or negatively? How can the Slovak Republic use the knowledge of neighboring countries to further develop its eGovernment capabilities?

eGovernment as a contemporary phenomenon

There are many definitions of eGovernment, as there is no homogeneous conception of the word in terms of its content. Different authors highlight different aspects and different scopes for the term. The broadest definition is given by Heeks who understands eGovernment as "*all uses of information and communication technologies in the public sector.*" (Heeks, 2006, p. 1). The

United Nations (UN), in turn, defines eGovernment as "*the continuing obligation of public administration to improve the relationship between citizens and the public sector by providing low-cost and efficient services, information and knowledge. It is the practical realization of the best that public administration can offer.*" (2008, p. 10). In addition to its membership in the UN, the Slovak Republic belongs to the European Union (EU) family, so it is appropriate to comment on the EU's own perspective on eGovernment. This integrated conglomeration defines it as "*a way of improving public services, democratic processes and strengthening support for public policies through the use of information and communication technologies combined with organizational change and new skills.*" (eGov.sk, 2008). Among the definitions of eGovernment, it is also possible to find certain analogies, as Špaček argues: "*eGovernment can be defined as a tool for reducing public administration failure, as a factor enhancing the adaptability of a trusted administration, or generally as an internal factor of its efficiency that can be influenced to some extent by the public administration*." (2012, p. 49). All of the above definitions capture the role of eGovernment in society with relatively good quality. In synergy with them, we can simplistically say that eGovernment should primarily contribute to the efficient functioning of public administration and the use of public services through information and communication technologies. At the same time, it should reduce the time spent in individual offices, save finances, eliminate bureaucracy and the duplication of paper tasks, and eliminate the costs of running public administration.

The key pillars of eGovernment are explicitly information and communication technologies, which enable the government and the citizen, the individual authorities with each other, the public and private sectors, the employees and leaders of public authorities, as well as the bureaucratic administration to interact with each other in a communicative manner. We can therefore state that eGovernment is primarily about communication. According to the communicating parties and stakeholders, there are six forms of eGovernment, namely:

- G2A (Government to Administration) – electronic communication between public administration and the administrative side, i.e. problem solving within an individual public administration institution. This area includes electronic mailroom, back office, and front office. In addition to the abbreviation G2A, G/inside or G/internal are also commonly used.

- G2G (Government to Government) – the issue of communication between two or more public administration institutions,
- G2E (Government to Employees) – communication between public administration and employees of institutions falling under public administration,
- G2B (Government to Business) – electronic communication between government and the commercial sector,
- B2G (Business to Government) – electronic communication between the commercial sector and public administration,
- G2C (Government to Citizens) – communication between public administration institutions and citizens,
- C2G (Citizens to Governments) – the issue of communication from citizens to the public authorities.

History of eGovernment

eGovernment has come a long way from its developmental stage, yet its history is relatively young in terms of time. The concept began to come to prominence in the 1990s when "*the Internet became a symbol of the new economy, based on a historic revival of the American economic environment*." (2006, p. 15-19). This period was more about the theoretical definition of electronic government, i.e., alternatives were sought for what could be achieved with the help of eGovernment. The United States of America became a pioneer and a major player in the field of computerization of public administration when the National Performance Review was adopted in the country in 1993. According to this, public administration was to be reorganized, in particular through eGovernment services. The main agitator and promoter of the project was then-Vice President Al Gore. The gradual implementation of the approved concept was only possible thanks to the spread of the Internet, which became the springboard for the real use of eGovernment services. The community of electronic public administration services first created by the United States of America began to be joined by other countries, such as Australia and the Netherlands. At the end of the 1990s, European countries began to deal with the issue of eGovernment, and the European Union also responded to the term electronic government by coordinating and setting up legislation in this area among its Member States.

In 1999, the first unified document called was created, called *eEurope: An Information Society for All*. This European stimulus followed on the informatization programs of virtually all developed countries. Coping with such a European initiative was first and foremost a social and economic challenge. In conjunction with the Lisbon Strategy, the priority of eEurope was to achieve competitiveness, particularly with Japan and the USA. In addition to the eEurope document, eGovernment issues were incorporated into other strategic frameworks, e.g. eEurope Action Plan 2002, eEurope Strategy 2005, and i2010 Initiative – A European Information Society for Growth and Jobs. These projects have been financially supported as part of the Action Plan, within the legislative framework. The EU Commission developed an Action Plan for the period 2011-2015 that focused as a priority on improving policy instruments, in particular on the cooperation of electronic public administration services at the local, regional, national, and European level. The EU's subsequent strategy in the area of information and communications technologies was eEurope 2020, which consisted of seven pillars. The latest strategy is for the period 2021–2027. It simplifies and defines the five main objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy. These include a smarter, greener, more connected, and more social Europe. The last point of this strategy is the sustainable and integrated development of cities and municipalities. Although the European Union is trying to coordinate the development of eGovernment through the strategy documents it issues, there are significant differences among its Member States in the development and application of eGovernment in public administration practice. Slovakia is among those countries that lag significantly behind other EU countries in the use of electronic public services.

Slovak Republic

The introduction of eGovernment into public administration practice has become not only a complicated process for Slovakia, but also a "never-ending story" since its independence. The first signs were partial studies that dealt with the ability to apply individual eGovernment tools to the Slovak environment in both qualitative and quantitative terms (Kupka, 2008). It took another twenty years for our country to adopt a law on eGovernment during the period of its own independence. A draft was approved in May 2013 and came into force as Act No. 305/2013 Coll. on 1 November 2013. As a result, it is now possible to handle some official matters through the web and Internet applications, such as reporting a change of residence, paying and reporting taxes, setting up a company, or canceling a trade license. These services are provided through the central public administration portal Slovensko.sk. The prerequisite is to log in with a new ID card with a chip, which have been issued by the authorities since December 2013. The new Slovak ID card, the so-called eID card, was inspired by successful concepts from European countries such as Switzerland, Germany, and Estonia. The latter one has one of the most developed electronic public administration systems in the world. Slovakia and Estonia were on a common starting line in the 1990s in the course of their independence, but tiny Estonia took a different path right away in the transition process. As early as 1998, it outlined the use of electronic communication in public administration and has persistently developed this idea to this day. On the other hand, the Slovak Republic not only lags very far behind Estonia, but also its long-time ally, the Czech Republic, in the area of eGovernment.

Contemporary Slovak society is characterized by the fact that significant changes in the field of public administration are taking place in a very short space of time. This radical transformation is primarily due to the implementation of eGovernment with the help of an increase in financial resources. Great expectations were attached to the initial application of electronic government and great potential was attributed to electronic services projects. Due to the implementation of eGovernment in the practice of public administration, over the last twenty years the Slovak Republic has adopted a number of legislative measures, increased the state budget, ratified a number of strategic documents, and adapted to European legislation. However, it turns out that projects that try to change many things at once suddenly fail, and thus "*gradual methods of introducing eGovernment may be less effective*, *but more efficient and less risky than big bang methods*" (2006, p. 240). The expected results of implementing eGovernment are not as exceptional for citizens as expected, and most of the planned innovations in public administration have brought only modest changes. For this and other reasons, the Slovak Republic needs to implement more new measures, to which every unit of public administration needs to flexibly respond and adapt. Thus, it can be said that the operation of Slovak public administration is determined both by external stimuli (political) and internal changes (organizational). All these circumstances clearly influence the development of eGovernment, and in the vast majority of cases also become the structural obstacles to its further development.

With the advent of the Internet, cheap computing devices, and increasing availability of broadband access in offices and homes in the late 1990s, governments around the world began to discuss how to use ICT to enhance government. Electronic government characterizes the beginning of the digitization of governments as a new mindset of technology-inspired civil servants. The first strategic objectives were set by the Lisbon Strategy in 2000. They focused on general innovation, information and communication technologies (ICT), and particularly on promoting economic progress. The Strategic Memorandum paved the way for more detailed action plans for electronic government. Political factors are a relatively large barrier to the effective deployment of ICT and to harnessing the potential of these modern features to improve the efficiency of public administration. "*Institutional barriers in the form of reluctance on the part of political leaders or public actors can present significant obstacles to the implementation of eGovernment.*" (2010, p. 2). It is precisely political factors that have played a very significant role in the development of Slovak eGovernment. Therefore, it is the task of the political elites to legitimize the system and eliminate these perceived barriers. There must be sufficient support across the political spectrum to stand behind the project and not only promote its credibility, but also motivate citizens to change their behavior and switch to the new electronic model. In the early days of the development of electronic government, public policy actors clearly erred, when an area as important as eGovernment was given such an ill-conceived and incorrect institutional arrangement. Responsibility for the growth, accountability, and implementation of electronic public administration has also been shifted several times. Consequently, the government made several legislative changes in 2002, 2003, and 2004 to improve the conditions for the implementation of eGovernment in Slovakia. Despite these efforts by the government, Slovakia achieved a below average score in these years according to the EU assessment. On the basis of these results, a Government Council for Informatics was created. It was composed of representatives of the ministries, the private sector, academia, and civil society and was tasked with developing proposals for the concept of the state information system and its components, as well as proposals for inter-ministerial projects and proposing standards for the state information system. Standards for networks, accessibility, and data in information systems were led and developed by the Commission for the Standardization of Public Administration Information Systems, which fell under the Government Plenipotentiary. It was composed of representatives from the government, local regional governments, the private sector, and civil society. This commission focused on the security of communications using online services. In 2006, the Law on Public Administration Information Systems (*zákon o informačných systémoch verejnej správy*, or ISVS) was also approved. Another important step forward in terms of political will came in 2013 when the eGovernment Act was passed, which was just the beginning in building a unified legal framework. And yet laws were still lacking that could have managed the development of the ISVS more effectively. This same year also saw the creation of a new structure of local government bodies, referred to as the ESO Reform, which stands for *efektívna, spoľahlivá a otvorená verejná správa* ("Efficient, Reliable, and Open Public Administration"). The substance of this reform was the integration of specialized local government bodies into a single state office now called the District Office, which has had a major impact on the positive development of eGovernment in Slovakia.

In this context, the computerization of society represents an important element in the creation of a knowledge-based society. As a part of its economic policy the government proclaims the necessity of ensuring systematic, coordinated, and interconnected action through the various departments that directly influence and shape it. These include, in particular, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Finance (informatization of public administration and the capital markets), and the Ministry of Transport and Construction (information and communication infrastructure). It is precisely the lack of coordinated action at the government level in this area to date that forms one of the main reasons for the weak development of the digital economy in Slovakia. The Government identified some problems and ways of solving them in its Program Statement for 2010–2014. An effort by the government has also been declared in the area of promoting the competitiveness of the business environment. These efforts are primarily focused on reducing the administrative burden of doing business in the relationship between public administration and the private sector. According to the Government (2010, p. 11): *"By computerizing state and public administration, the Government will eliminate multiple repetitive requirements for the information, documents, and data of entrepreneurs. By accelerating the introduction of eGovernment services, it will streamline processes in all areas where public administration interacts with business entities. The Government of the Slovak Republic will thus create stimulating conditions for the widespread use of electronic communication between entrepreneurs and state administration, including an electronic verification system, with the aim of reducing the administrative burden on business."* In the subsequent period, electronic public administration in the Slovak Republic underwent two more important changes, namely in 2016 and 2020, when central authorities of state administration were established to coordinate the management of eGovernment. At the same time, the strategy for the computerization of public administration determines the method of financing eGovernment, which presumes a combination of state budget resources, EU structural funds, and other sources (municipal budgets, funds from EU Community programs, public-private partnerships, grants, etc.).

Chart 1. Total amount of eGovernment expenditures in the Slovak Republic (mil. EUR)

Source: Author's calculations based on the document *Revision of Expenditure (MFSR*, 2020), 2021.

Total IT spending has been increasing over the long-term, with an average of EUR 703 million budgeted for 2020–2022. The largest item in the long-term consists of the operating costs financed by the state budget, which doubled between 2016 and 2019 from EUR 170 million to EUR 337 million. From 2019 onwards, expenditures are expected to increase by leaps and bounds due to the implementation of EU co-financed projects.

Switzerland

Electronic public administration in Switzerland is a tripartite organization. It includes the Federal Council, the Conference of Cantonal Governments, and the Union of Swiss Cities. The Federal Office of Information Technology serves as an advisory body. The latter one in turn consults with the ministries and the Federal Chancellor, particularly in cases of the specific issuance and approval of exemptions relating to compliance with technical data. Coordination is the responsibility of the eGovernment Switzerland Programme Office. It serves as an administrative unit of the Steering Committee, and as a Federal IT Steering Unit (FITSU) is directly responsible for it. Furthermore, the Interdepartmental Information Society Committee (IISC) is involved in coordination. Its task is to coordinate the realization of the national level objectives of the information society in Switzerland as well as its implementation efforts. The Steering Committee is responsible for implementation. The Steering Committee manages electronic public administration from a strategic perspective and is responsible for the implementation of an electronic public administration strategy for the entire Confederation. The Committee has a total of nine members, three representatives each from the Confederation, the cantons, and the municipalities. The Committee is chaired by the Head of the Federal Ministry of Finance. Another committee involved in implementation is the planning committee. This committee manages the electronic administration from an operational perspective, plans and coordinates the implementation of the electronic public administration strategy, and is responsible for its implementation plan. The committee is composed of three members who are experts in electronic public administration, each from the Federal Administration, the cantons, and the municipal administration. The eGovernment Switzerland Programme Office serves as support to the Steering and Planning Committees. The office is responsible for the communication and monitoring of the organizations involved in electronic public administration in Switzerland. The Federal Administration unit acts as the main actor in the field of eGovernment support. The FITSU coordinates cooperation between the Confederation, the cantons, and the municipalities, and manages reports and analyses for information security (Digital Inventories of Switzerland, 2020).

The strategic objectives of the Swiss government regarding electronic public administration were very much in line with the strategy that was implemented in the EU, even though they are not members of the EU. The Swiss Federal Council, confronted with rapid technological and societal changes, began its transformation in 1997. The aim was to devise a strategic plan and set priorities for the emerging information society, as well as to reallocate responsibility for oversight and the coordination of ICT efforts at the federal level (eGovernment Action Plan, 2010).

In conjunction with these discussions, the Swiss Federal Council ordered a complete reorganization of federal ICT efforts, leading to the creation of a new Federal IT Steering Unit in

1999. It was responsible for the overall management of the ICT program and for the first federal strategy. This strategy included the preparation of an online platform for citizens and businesses, known as the Virtual Counter, which became operational in 2005. This also included an electronic voting project. This project was made available in the initial phase only to Swiss expatriates. FITSU launched other initiatives in 2002; the first was designed to increase interoperability and strengthen cooperation between the confederation, cantons, and communities (eGovernment in CH, 2015).

To this end, a non-profit association, the eCH Association, was established. It consisted of volunteers from all levels of government, industry, and academia. It defined technical and non-technical promulgation standards. It further focused on exemplary process models as well as data to facilitate the deployment of electronic public administration services. It created a common platform for information exchange among stakeholders, increased the visibility of successful public administration projects, and evaluated the impact of digital services (Mettler, 2019).

On 21 October 2008, the Swiss Federal Council passed an updated Identification (ID) Act and subsequently legislation was created that served as a precursor to the definitive implementation of the e-passport. Subsequently, the Federal Law on Temporary Employment was adopted by the Parliament. This law brought economic stabilization measures in the areas of the labor market, ICT, and purchasing. The main objective was to promote a reliable and functional electronic economic space. Facilitating the secure authentication of identities on the Internet during electronic transactions was relevant both for businesses and the public. In 2009, the Federal Department of Justice and Police introduced a new service to make it easier for citizens and businesses to order electronic, digital, and signed criminal records. The relevant digital services were implemented in the form of modules in cooperation with the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (eGovernment in CH, 2016).

In November 2010, the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) implemented ID at the national level as part of short-term stabilization measures. At a meeting of the Swiss eGovernment Steering Committee held in 2010, each member of the committee received a personal ID as proof of the first secure electronic authentication at the national level. The committee also implemented the program for public administration in the electronic environment and appointed the leading partners in these priority projects. Subsequently, in November 2011, the Swiss Federal Council approved a new framework agreement between the confederations and the cantons in the field of electronic public administration. This plan aimed to promote targeted projects and a set of measures to strengthen cooperation and coordination at the federal level (eGovernment, 2021).

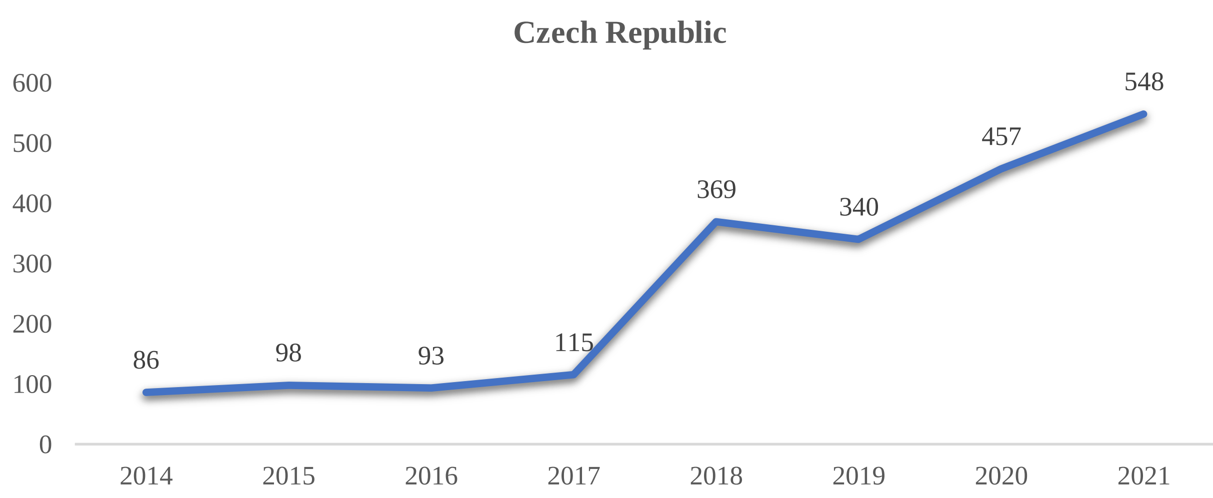
Subsequently, political actors created the Open Government Data Strategy, which was adopted on May 16, 2014. It determined the focus of the federal government's activities and was implemented in relevant departments and federal offices. The value of Swiss cooperation in the field of electronic public administration is also represented by the specific actors representing the highest positions in the country and their vision for how electronic public administration should evolve. The Swiss eGovernment is led by Federal Councilor Ueli Maurer as chair of the committee. According to Maurer (2021), administration has not escaped the trend in improving mobility and digitalization. Information should be accessible at any time, no matter where people are. Another important actor in electronic public administration is the Federal Chancellor. Responsibility for electronification will shift to digital public services from 2022, and will be a more advanced structure that is even better equipped to deal with the challenges of digitizing public services. Overall, as the digital transformation progresses, government communication is increasingly influenced by various forms of media, including social media, and adapts through these factors (Swiss Government Cooperation Values, 2021).

Czech Republic

The origins of the electronification of public administration in the Czech Republic date back to 1998, when the Council for State Information Policy was established. The Council was appointed as an advisory body to the government in the field of information institutions (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017). In 2000, a very important act took place in the form of the establishment of the *Office for Public Information Systems*. Its role was to replace the former *Office of State Information Systems*, which managed strategic planning in the field of information systems in public administration and their cooperation while respecting the state information policy. In 2000, the government approved Act 365/2000 Coll. on Public Information Systems (Act No. 365/2000 Coll.). The government then adopted the first version of the *Action Plan for the Implementation of the State Information Policy*. This plan defined the objectives for the years 2000 to 2002, in the three basic spheres of public administration (*Action Plan for the Implementation of State Information Policy by the End of 2012*, 2000).

Subsequently, in 2003, responsibility for eGovernment was transferred to the newly-established Ministry of Informatics. It held responsibility for the coordination and development of the electronification of public administration, telecommunications, and postal services, and the promotion of an information society. Then, in March 2004, the government adopted the *State Information and Communication Policy*, also called eCzech 2006. eCzech was a strategy aimed at the development of an information society. In 2007, the Ministry of Informatics was dissolved and in May the members of the *Government Council for the Information Society* were appointed. And yet the primary competencies were transferred to the Ministry of the Interior. The competency of this office covered areas of expertise for government decisions concerning eGovernment and information and communication technologies (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2017). Czech political actors subsequently adopted Act No. 300/2008 Coll. on Electronic Actions and permitted document conversions on 17 July. This legislation is also known as the Czech eGovernment Act. Subsequently, the Minister of the Interior and the Director of the Czech Post signed a contract for the implementation of data mailboxes, which has resulted in significant savings for state funds. The Ministry's goal was to implement these mailboxes by the third quarter of that same year. At that time, Act No. 300/2008 Coll. was coming into force, also known as the Czech eGovernment Act (Act No. 300/2008 Coll.).

Chart 2. Total amount of eGovernment expenditures in the Czech Republic (mil. EUR)



Source: Author's calculations based on the document *Costs for Information Technology (MPSV,2018)*, 2021.

In the Czech Republic, the share of spending on electronic public administration has been increasing steadily since 2014. The largest increase occurred in 2017, when spending tripled. In the subsequent period, spending grew by an average of EUR 73 million per year. In the current spectrum, the share of expenditures relative to the Slovak Republic is roughly 30% lower.

Another important factor in shaping Czech electronic public administration was the signing of the Basic Registers Act by Václav Klaus (then-President of the Czech Republic). This Act interconnects 4 basic registers and entered into force on 1 July 2010. In 2012, the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic launched a unified Public Administration Portal. And yet perhaps the biggest noticeable change for the country's population was the Ministry of Interior's *Co dělat když* ("What to do when") project, designed to assist people in using the newly-provided eGovernment services. The software provides information for processing various documents, navigating to the nearest government offices or police station, as well as how much the entire process will cost. The Government of the Czech Republic, or specifically the Ministry of the Interior, also decided to introduce the mascots eGON and Klaudia, who have already followed the example of other countries by assisting the citizens of the country in the implementation of various electronic services. Currently, the Strategic Framework for the Development of the Public Administration of the Czech Republic for the period 2014–2020 is in force in the Czech Republic. This strategic plan reflects the current action plan of the European Union and is also in line with the strategic documents of the Czech government (MoI, 2017).

Results

Electronic public administration has been identified as one of the key contributors to the development of the information society and governments worldwide. Most countries have seen rapid developments in this area, which have been pursued through integrated approaches to the planning and implementation of public sector reforms. However, the application of ICT in electronic public administration should not be considered an end in itself. Where there is the political will to implement eGovernment, individual countries can achieve better results. eGovernment is not merely the simple use of information technology to provide services to citizens, but a significant role is played to a large extent by the political environment in which eGovernment needs to operate. The overall success of electronic public administration depends on a deeper understanding of the increasingly complex political and institutional environment.

The introduction of electronic public administration is closely linked to the changing nature of the relationship between public administration and the general public, which is linked to developments in today's rapidly evolving and interconnected society, where the role of technology has grown exponentially in recent decades. A shift in public administration relations has led to a new, less authoritarian era, more focused on service and information. This new, less authoritarian nature of the relationships between public administration and its clients is linked to previous efforts to reform public administration.

Table 1. Comparison of political factors in individual countries

Variables	*Slovakia*	Czech Republic	Switzerland
First mention of eGovernment	1998	1998	1997
First legislative changes	2002	2000	2005
Adoption of law on eGovernment	2013	2008	2008
Establishment of a ministry	2020	2003	1999
Number of competencies transferred	7	4	1
Number of important reforms	4	4	4

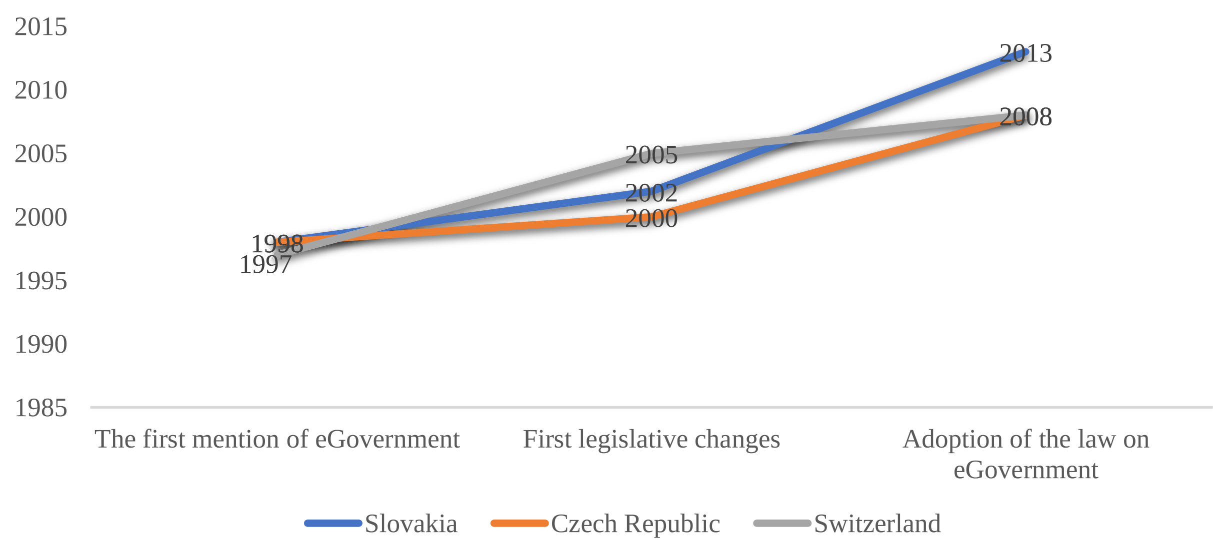
Source: Author's calculations based on data analysis, 2021.

The first references to electronic public administration in Slovakia and the Czech Republic date back to 1998. As both countries formed a unified administrative territory for a long period of time, it is understandable that the contribution of modern technologies from neighboring European countries reached them at the same time. In Switzerland, on the other hand, the first confrontation with eGovernment came somewhat earlier. Even though Switzerland is not one of the member states of the European Union, the initial influences and implementation of the strategy relied heavily on the form that was implemented in the EU.

Each of the countries observed approached the implementation of electronic public administration from a different angle. The Czech Republic appointed the *Council for State Information Policy*, at the outset, to act as a decision-making body in the field of electronification. However, this office was replaced in 2000 by a more comprehensive body, the *Office for Public Information Systems*. Among the main priorities of this change were to take a firm grip on computerization and assume responsibility for strategic planning in the field of information systems in public administration and their subsequent integration with the national information policy. In 2003, the Czech Republic (CZ) decided to take a drastic decision and shifted leadership of electronic public administration to yet another authority. However, in this case it was the newly-established Ministry of Informatics. This authority performed its function until 2007, when the Ministry was abolished and the management of eGovernment in the Czech Republic was transferred for the last time, specifically to the Ministry of the Interior. In Slovakia, the process of transferring competencies for eGovernment was a bit more complicated. Initially, as in the Czech Republic, the government reacted flexibly and entrusted the Slovak Statistical Office with the responsibility for electronic public administration. However, after a short period of time, the leadership of the electronic reform was again transferred, this time to the Ministry of Transport, Posts, and Telecommunications of the Slovak Republic. Subsequently the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, which had only a very limited capacity to deal with the issue, became the next representative body. For this reason, in 2003 the issue of eGovernment was again delegated to the Ministry of Transport, Posts, and Telecommunications of the Slovak Republic. However, even this step did not prove to be the right solution. In 2004, another change came; following the adoption of the document *Strategy for the Informatization of Society*, the post of Government Plenipotentiary for the Information Society was created and the competencies for electronic public administration were transferred to the organizational portfolio of this post. After a period of two years, specifically in 2006, the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Finance. A number of advisory bodies was also created to deal with informatization during its tenure. Until 2016, the responsibility for the competency of this office was stable. This year saw the creation of a new central state administration body. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization was created to strengthen competencies in the area of management, coordination, and supervision of EU funds, as well as covering the overall informatization of society. The last transfer was recorded in Slovakia in July 2020, from which time eGovernment has been under the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development, and Informatization of the Slovak Republic. Of the countries surveyed, Switzerland is the best performer in this respect. Responsibility for managing electronification leadership was transferred only once in the initial years of implementing the changes, but as the country operates as a federal republic, responsibility for the overall leadership of eGovernment is delegated to a number of public authorities.

In terms of important reforms, strategic or otherwise, the countries are on par. In Slovakia, the most important reforms took place in 2006 (OPIS), two reforms in 2008 (SIVS and NKIVS), and the last important strategy was adopted the period 2019–2022. The Czech Republic adopted its first major strategy in 2006, namely *eCzech*. Subsequently, in 2010, the strategy *Digital Czech Republic* was launched, and later its update *Digital Czech Republic v. 2.0.* Another important strategy focused on the programming period 2014–2020 under the title *Strategic Framework for the Development of Public Administration of the Czech Republic*. The current strategic plan of the Czech Republic is influenced by the Digital Agenda of the European Union. It reflects its priorities and, in terms of content, focuses on implementing its goals and adapting it to the situation in that country (MoI, 2017). In Switzerland, it is difficult to define a clear framework for important reforms, as developments have taken place in different places at different times. Nevertheless, the national electronic public administration strategy was first launched in 2007, with further important updates applied in 2012, 2015, and 2019. Current goals for eGovernment in Switzerland include improving cooperation and coordination between the federal departments and adapting the architecture to implement the Tallinn Manual.

Chart 3. Comparison of political factors in individual countries



Source: Author’s calculations based on data analysis, 2021.

The Czech Republic was the first country that had to make certain legislative changes to move forward with the implementation of eGovernment. In 2000, it passed Act 365/2000 Coll.

on Public Information Systems. This law defined rights in the area of creation, management, transfer, use, and development of information systems. In Slovakia, the first amendment to this Act was implemented in 2002. This was the Act on Electronic Signatures and on Amendments and Addenda to Certain Acts. This Act primarily corrected the relationships arising in connection with the creation and use of electronic signature itself in the field of public administration information systems. In Switzerland, this consisted of a law that entered into force on 1 January 2005, defining the conditions under which certification service providers can be recognized on a voluntary basis and regulating their activities in the field of electronic certificates. It also sets out the requirements that an electronic signature must meet in order to achieve the same status as its handwritten alternative. In addition, it regulates the issue of liability on the part of certification service providers, supervisory authorities, and owners of signature keys. Within the countries observed, the Czech Republic and Switzerland are on par in terms of the adoption of the eGovernment Act. Both countries adopted an amendment to the Act in 2008 and have thus created better conditions to move forward more efficiently in implementing the individual pillars of electronic public administration. In this respect, Slovakia lags significantly behind. The Act on eGovernment was adopted in our country a full eight years later, in 2013.

In closing, we observed that a separate ministry was created in each country to manage the development of electronic public administration. In Switzerland, based on working group discussions, the Federal Council mandated participation in the reorganization of the military ICT effort, which led to the creation of a new Federal IT Steering Unit in 1999. The latter was responsible for the overall management of the ICT program and the first ICT funding resources. In the Czech Republic, a separate Ministry of Informatics was established in 2003. It was responsible for the coordination and development of the electronification of public administration, telecommunications, and postal services, and the promotion of the information society. The Slovak Republic again lags behind in this factor. Although the management of eGovernment has been transferred several times, the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development, and Informatization of the Slovak Republic was only established in 2020. However, even in this case, it is not a separate ministry that would exclusively manage matters related to electronic public administration, but only a grouping of several units under the umbrella of this authority.

Conclusion

The factors that limit the possibilities of implementing ICT in public administration should not be seen as insurmountable obstacles, rather quite the opposite. Public policy actors, office managers, and public administration employees themselves should continuously search for and learn about the nature and origin of the barriers, which will not only make them easier to overcome, but will also help to pave the way for the success of eGovernment projects. However, this is not easy in many cases; it is enough to compare the implementation of Slovak electronic public administration with other European countries. The research paper aimed to analyze how political actors in the three countries under examination – the Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, and Switzerland – affect the development and implementation of the electronic public administration system. In the following section, we offer appropriate solutions to eliminate the obstacles identified with the help of research questions for the implementation of eGovernment in the Slovak Republic. Combined with the intensity of political and legal barriers, the Slovak Republic is facing a significant time lag in the implementation of eGovernment. Therefore, new challenges need to take concrete form as soon as possible, from making the Internet accessible to the widest possible layers of citizens, through portable capacity building and project management, to ensuring education and promotion among citizens and politicians. Building eGovernment cannot be an isolated, standalone process, but must follow trends and directions both in our country and throughout the world. The Slovak Republic can benefit from the experience of other neighboring countries such as Estonia, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland, which are similar to us in many factors. In particular, we can draw inspiration from Estonian electronic public administration, particularly with their establishment of a single authority to run the given area, as well as the establishment of a showroom. The latter serves as an information and support center for eGovernment. This institution provides citizens with consultation either in person or electronically and also acts as a coordinator between G2B, B2G, and G2C/C2G communication. In Czech electronic administration, the promotion of electronicization is coming to the fore particularly in the form of the mascots eGON and Klaudia, who follow the example of other countries and have already assisted citizens in the implementation of individual electronic services. The same applies in the area of digital technology integration, where the Czech Republic performs above the EU average, mainly due to its good results in the area of e-commerce. Factors enabling the successful implementation of the tools of electronic public administration include a legal framework that is sufficiently open. The developed countries that achieve the highest scores are clear evidence that open legislative structures, and not overly defined technological details, are useful for the development of electronic public administration. Another important factor is political consensus. It is generally the case that, in the absence of strong opposition, tools of electronic public administration are implemented much more smoothly and are more widely used. The absence of partisan or political conflict is, therefore, an accelerating factor in the development of electronic public administration initiatives. User-friendliness is also an important aspect. If electronic eGovernment applications are easier to use than traditional forms of communication, their diffusion is significantly faster and wider. The lack of user-friendliness seems to be a hindering factor in the development of tools for electronic public administration. In terms of the underlying infrastructure, it is essential for the development of electronic public administration in Slovakia that the responsibility for leading electronicization is not constantly shifted to different government authorities. Following the example of Switzerland, we can implement a test environment when introducing new e-services, for example piloting to smaller municipalities and cities. We also need to compare experimental solutions with other countries that have had more success with implementation and develop national strategies aimed at achieving the best possible implementation and harmonization—all the more if this can provide a user-friendly environment, which is proving to be one of the important factors for the successful introduction of these services. Only in this way can the eGovernment become an innovative revolution in Slovak public administration.

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