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POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND THE POWER OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN NATIONAL CRISES RELATED TO COLOR REVOLUTIONS^{}**

Resume

This research focuses on social networks and their activist role during political crises within nation-states. Demonstrations and other forms of civil protest become more expressive with increased media coverage, where specific political demands are often hidden under the guise of nonviolence. The author identifies five characteristic phases of message creation that, through various digital formats and modalities, contribute to increased visibility in the traditional public sphere. This amplifies the intensity of the crisis, increasing the risk of escalation and internationalization. The nation-state and social networks are often incompatible during times of crisis, meaning that public opinion becomes divided over possible solutions and consequences. The nation-state and social networks during national crises related to color revolutions are often incompatible, so public opinion is divided over possible solutions and consequences. In a networked society, this leads to increased fear and moral panic, along with the spread of fake news, disinformation,

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and rumors. These dynamics can result in numerous incidents and further mobilize youth, representing a particularly vulnerable group. The new audience is increasingly overlapping, polarizing, shifting, and restructuring by changed social contexts and a digital environment that enables actor anonymity. Through digitalization and artificial intelligence, media technology is becoming a *conditio sine qua non* for managing specific spaces and political relationships within a community. This means that the course of action during crises changes to nonviolent activities.

Keywords: political communication, social networks, propaganda, algorithms, trolls, moral panic, national crises related to color revolutions.

The whirlwinds of political, economic, ecological, religious, security, and other crises strike the planet daily, and the illusion that we are in control merely conceals the collapse of traditional relations between the state and society. A changing world also implies a new concept of community and its groups, which complicates the study of communicative flows and political interactions, especially in times of crisis. Analyzing the *colored revolutions*, we observe that their number increases alongside the popularity and widespread accessibility of social networks, and that they readily exploit every form of public dissatisfaction (low living standards, rising fuel or food prices, cases of corruption, disasters with large numbers of casualties...). Contemporary protests, featuring a range of improvised nonviolent activities on the ground, develop a broad spectrum of intensity and involve many participants (especially young people, the most frequent Internet users), spreading reaction and discontent. In an atmosphere of distrust, party exclusivity, and a discourse of mutual exclusion, political communication abandons the bounds of tolerance, transforming into covert political propaganda. The crisis of liberal democracy has shaken numerous national political systems, resulting in increasingly frequent civil discontent and “street” revolutions, creating different “political patterns and relationships between parliamentary representatives and representatives of society” (Castells 2022, 14). Even in earlier political history, we witnessed similar scenes, but the impression is that we have never experienced such inflated media bubbles that, by spreading fear, panic and hatred, dig trenches of intolerance, anger, and social disintegration. New communication

patterns permeate every corner of society, with various actors (from political parties, civic initiatives, trade unions, universities, churches...) voicing their demands in search of solutions both within and outside the political system.

The corporately commercialized media structure is designed to enslave individuals' free time through interaction, with miniaturization and spatial fragmentation striving to leave no one beyond its reach. At the same time, it is essential to understand that "the Internet and digital media are not the cause of the stress and pressures of modern life" but rather a part of the solution that reveals possible paths out of the crisis.¹ In this conceptual consideration, it is worth mentioning the thoughts of Snježana Milivojević, who argues that the Internet is essentially "a virtual space with all the attributes of a social space, inextricably linked to real space" (Milivojević, 2017). For further research, this means that in crises, new media should be interpreted as social institutions that cannot be reduced merely to their technologies, but rather viewed as "part of a much broader social, technological, and cultural landscape of change; in short, as part of a new technoculture" (Lister et al. 2009, 11). The buzzing environment of the Network conceals numerous political and propaganda activities, including new concepts of message framing relevant to the psychology of the masses, which is of extraordinary importance for communication in times of crisis.²

In current political crises and civil protests, structural changes within society are being quietly provoked - changes that Milašinović and Kešetović describe as "a qualitatively altered social condition marked by changes in the social structure, interpersonal relations, social relations, the system of social values, and patterns of cultural development" (Milašinović i Kešetović 2011, 104). From the introductory part of the paper, it is already evident that the subject of our interest encompasses a current, publicly engaged, and communicatively open field of crisis management, while at the same time also touching on the more specific

¹ Mary Chayko, speaking about technological changes, also points to the need for human adaptation: "In technologically rich societies, rules and values are constantly changing. Sometimes they become completely disrupted - undergoing such fundamental and rapid change that what once was no longer applies at all." (Chayko 2019, 221).

² Robert Entman argues that frames "introduce or enhance the prominence of certain ideas; they are framing schemes that encourage the target audience to think, feel, and decide in a particular way" (Entman 2007, 165).

domains of political science, sociology, media psychology, conflict studies, communication studies, and security sciences.

Political Communication in the Online Society

Taking into account that, through its function of directing and organizing the social system, politics must ensure control and stability during the processes of profound change we have discussed, it follows that authorities are expected to formulate, aggregate, and implement socially agreed-upon decisions. That is why theorists such as Schulz consider any exchange of messages among political actors to be political communication. “For example, most of what politicians do is political communication. Likewise, citizens engage in political communication when they talk about political topics with friends or family, call into political radio shows, or participate in political debates online. Demonstrations and other forms of protest are more expressive -sometimes even violent forms of political communication” (Schulz 2015, 460–461).

The internet and social media have enabled the emergence of new communities that “build networks of personal relationships” (Rheingold 1993, 5). Through new platforms, applications, and digital tools, online groups are being formed – self-connected and self-organized – with their own dynamics and high mobility. The once sluggish, disinterested, and semi-educated print, radio, and television audience has now evolved into a hyperactive public, with the ability for any individual with modem access to produce their own information. Unlike analog media, where editors and newsrooms function as filters for the information reaching the public, messages mediated through social networks by actors involved in crisis events and by ordinary citizens often have specific goals that do not necessarily align with the public interest! “The virtual communicator on social media is his/her *gatekeeper*, as they select from the vast array of information and choose what they consider useful for constructing their self-image” (Filipović 2012, 87). This change is both profound and global, as messages are now sent “by everyone”, “from everywhere” and “to everyone”. In this environment, information is freely shared, sold, requested, connected, enhanced, and digitized - distributing a mosaic of topics, content, and interests. The key point lies in the transformations reflected all around us: the information system has digitized the concept of news content usage, and given the scope of artificial intelligence and

software applications, crisis management concepts, including those with political consequences, are rapidly being adapted and implemented.

This paper explores the digital environment, political communication, and its power as mediated through the influence of social media. The research topic is based on new insights and a typology of the observed forms of political communication on social media during civil protests. Each identified phase methodologically implies a higher indicator of digital effectiveness, which, in shaping public opinion, offers a higher level of mobilization. The focus is on the characteristic narratives identified during the “color revolution” in Serbia in 2025, but the structure of changes theoretically indicates their global character. The rapid and sweeping changes occurring daily in the symbolic sphere demand new skills and knowledge in managing information content, as audiences increasingly overlap, shift, and restructure in new social contexts. “They have democratized information by transforming people from content consumers into content creators” (Solis 2010). Through digitalization and artificial intelligence, media technology has become a *conditio sine qua non* for managing spaces and relationships within communities. At the center of this transformation is a redesigned Gandhism that simulates high moral virtue in acts of political upheaval, which are cunningly concealed behind protests. Gajić and Despotović recognize in this the organizers’ ability to “direct and define concrete goals,” echoing Gandhi’s approach of identifying the weaknesses of colonial rule and demanding from his followers “enough courage and moral strength” to build a new society (Gajić i Despotović, 2025, 129). Social media are becoming the pillars of rallying provoked masses, playing a crucial role in the rapid mobilization of protest participants (Tufekci and Wilson 2012). What’s new is that messages to dissatisfied citizens are now delivered at the micro level - that is, individually to each actor. This means that the concept of the old media (the meso level), where print, radio, and television addressed everyone simultaneously in digital crisis communication, has been archived.

An increasing number of nonviolent attempts to bring about regime change continue to be based on the theory of “noncooperation,” which was succinctly explained by American professor Gene Sharp nearly three decades ago: “If people cannot obey, rulers cannot rule”.³Protests

³ “Nonviolent struggle is much more complex and diverse than violent struggle”, observed the ideological strategist, concluding that it is waged “with psychological,

and persuasion, noncooperation, and intervention constitute the three fundamental methods of overthrowing power, with the creator of the nonviolent strategy having outlined around two hundred revolutionary activities implemented on the ground. With the advent of the internet and social media, civil revolutions have gained new dimensions, primarily by adapting propaganda and manipulative influence techniques to digital tools. Unlike analogue media, which have a rigid hierarchical structure, social networks are less institutionalized and informal and respond quickly to every development in the field. Some experts in political communications argue that this is the essence of the transformation, as it strategically changes the meaning of public space: communication “takes place from *the bottom up*, rather than hierarchically from *the top down*” (Schaaf and Quiring 2023, 204). Social networks offer anonymity, apparent openness, warmth, criticality, opportunism, morality, an escape from political apathy, mobility, change, and a sense of alternative perspectives along the scale of social mobility.

News presented in this way gains significance because, by enabling ideological self-linkage, it creates a reservoir of resentment unleashed against the ruling order. For society to be divided, it is necessary to have opposing mainstream media that, by transmitting social media content, emphasize difference, discredit, and criticize the *Others*, proclaiming their own identity as the only moral and democratic political viewpoint. New digital tools, strengthened by artificial intelligence, increasingly personalize user content, meaning that false information can be integrated into dispersed digital platforms and social networks every second. Speaking about the metaverse, Evgeny Pashentsev and Sergey Sebenkin warn of a new possibility for psychological manipulation that will amplify destructive influence wherever great powers desire.⁴

social, economic, and political weapons employed by the population and societal institutions” (Sharp 1999, 34).

⁴ “Metaverses can revolutionize the field of data and its generation, processing, transmission, and analysis. Here (“mega-large data”) will be generated, accumulated, processed, stored, and analysed almost every second in real time. But most importantly, it will be qualitatively different types of data – a new generation of data, colossal arrays of data.” (Pashentsev and Sebekin 2023, 44–45).

Civil Protests and Forms of Nonviolent Communication

Since the social processes examined in this paper are ongoing, it is natural that different ideological interpreters offer varying interpretations regarding the nature and character of political events. Conceptually, we distinguish between a “color revolution” and a “coup”: the former refers to a broader, plebiscitary movement inspired by the intention to align public policy with the desires and interests of the demonstrators through a change of power. A “coup,” on the other hand, also aims to change power but serves the interests of a much narrower group. A color revolution is a nonviolent, open process with generally known initiators and participants, while the core operates discreetly and from the shadows.⁵ A coup is a hidden maneuver of a closed nature, with an operational core that acts conspiratorially and often conceals its techniques and methods of operation. In the Serbian language, the concept of *rebellion* is also closely related, which throughout national history has frequently led to “significant social changes, either through reforms or through violent revolutions or counter-revolutions”.⁶

The first “color revolution” occurred on April 25, 1974, in Portugal, when a group of junior officers overthrew the regime of Marcelo Caetano and removed the right-wing government through a coup. Although the national radio had urged people to stay home, crowds gathered in the streets, offering carnations to soldiers and police as a symbol of affection and support for the change - hence its name, the “Carnation Revolution”.⁷ The authoritarian dictatorship was replaced by liberal democracy, and this day is celebrated as a national holiday in Portugal. However, revolutionary events on the global stage began and accelerated in the 1990s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the “spontaneous”

⁵ *Color revolutions* are named after different types of flowers whose colors symbolically represent them. For example, in Georgia in 2003, the Rose Revolution took place; in Ukraine in 2004, the Orange Revolution; and in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, the Tulip Revolution...

⁶ Goran Matić, while researching *uprisings, rebellions, conspiracies, riots, and protests* in Serbia from 1815 to 2006, identified their characteristics according to their content as: “social; political; ideological; anti-monarchist; anti-communist; anti-globalist; cultural; social; labor, youth; student; military; pupil; and ecological” (Matić 2025, 217–221).

⁷ The signal to commence the revolution was the broadcast of two songs on the radio: first, the melody “E Depois do Adeus” (And After the Farewell), and then the composition “Grândola, Vila Morena”. Both were of non-political content, but were considered subversive by the public.

gathering of citizens that paved the way for the reunification of East and West Germany and the collapse of the post-Soviet ideological-military alliance. Soon after, a series of “velvet” revolutions replaced the ruling socialist regimes in several countries – from Romania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Poland, through the October 5th changes in Serbia, to waves of “color” revolutions that toppled the remnants of Soviet states (Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, etc.), and finally to the “Arab Spring” and several similar nonviolent revolutions that removed rulers and ruling families who had shaped the destinies of their compatriots for decades (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya...). The primary goal of these changes was the overthrow of communist regimes, and in later stages, the democratization of society, the fight against corruption, and the defense of human and civil rights. In more recent times, civil protests aimed at destabilizing the nation-state and changing governments have been attempted in Slovakia, Hungary, Turkey, and Serbia. Theorists understand the essence of every crisis as “a serious threat to the fundamental structures or core values and norms of the social system which, under conditions of time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances, demands the making of critical decisions” (According to Lučić and Dašić 2015, 280).

Initially, Facebook stood out among social networks due to its influence, where liking appealing content gave rise to a new form of political activism. In times of crisis, an important feature is creating propaganda-oriented content (statuses, photos, video materials), combined with the option to share it with interested followers. Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasques see this as a new way of mass mobilization of social and political movements: «Mobilizing structures refer to mechanisms that enable individuals to organize and engage in collective action» (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasques 2011, 196). Later, power shifted to Twitter (X) and other social networks. Stefan Stieglitz and Linh Dang-Xuan highlight Twitter as a frequent channel of political communication because it is capable of «reliably reflecting collective emotional trends and thus possesses predictive power regarding political events» (Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan 2013, 219). In the execution of nonviolent revolutions, we can observe five characteristic phases, with the influence of social media being assumed at each of these levels. The first phase is the psychological preparation or «mobilization» of the masses, which involves the gradual education, preparation, and raising of awareness about the necessity of social change through peaceful resistance and the widespread diffusion of hatred toward the system. Every incident or

tragedy is a potential provocation against the authorities, highlighting their incompetence and evading responsibility. In the case of the Arab Spring, the spark was the brutal act of self-immolation by Mohamed Bouazizi, a young fruit vendor from Tunisia, who was accused by the police of lacking a permit to work. Because of the excessive use of force by a police patrol, the young man poured paint thinner over himself, but the video, shared on social media, went viral across the Arab world, sparking intense reactions (West 2011). From smaller towns, columns of dissatisfied and suffering people began to march, ready to endure civilian casualties, and the brutality of the police could not stop the fall of the regime.⁸ Reactive communication from government representatives only worsened the crisis: President Ben Ali's promises to create hundreds of thousands of jobs, increase wages, and lift internet restrictions encouraged the protesters! In terms of communication, the "corridor of action" was significantly transformed, implying "a kind of mixture of systems of competition and negotiation" (Mayntz and Scharpf 1995, 12).

Public discourse became increasingly polarized and adapted to the evolving crisis, while the number of interpretive news reports about police brutality and the arrogance of government officials increased. In the Arab world, the internet has replaced the hearth and traditional family conversations within just a few years. In combination with the power of analog media, it created an «information cloak» that enveloped the Mediterranean. However, this does not mean that digital networks are always the primary drivers of social transformation in political communication. In Belarus, an attempt to overthrow the government in 2006, organized via email, was quickly suppressed, just like the 2010 "Red Shirt" demonstrations in Bangkok, where social media was flooded with revolutionary calls. For political communication to have an impact, the central story must be recognizable within the national context, with as many emotional elements as possible that ignite defiance in ordinary citizens.⁹ In the case of Serbia, these were tragedies caused by mass shootings at the «Vladislav Ribnikar» elementary school (May 3, 2023); in the villages of Malo Orašje and Dubona near Mladenovac

⁸ Buzizi set himself on fire on December 17, 2010, while the regime was overthrown on January 14, 2011, after less than a month of street protests.

⁹ *Political resistance*, Sharp saw as "the action of the population striving to regain control over state institutions from the hands of a dictatorship by persistently attacking its sources of power, while employing deliberate strategic planning and operations" (Sharp 1999, 9).

(May 4, 2023); as well as the horrific accident in Novi Sad (November 1, 2024), when 14 people lost their lives due to the collapse of a canopy at the railway station. A web of symbolically connected events provoked public outrage, visible through numerous comments and reactions on social media and political protests in the streets, which continued with the involvement of students, high schoolers, and even some elementary school pupils.

In the second phase, concrete activities are undertaken to internally mobilize numerous social agents, thereby organizing and connecting various formal and informal groups or organizations tasked with coordinated and coherent action. It is a mistake to divide the population nationally by organizing counter-rallies, as differences are loaded into the media framing of reality. For example, when Mubarak in Egypt tried to calm tensions by gathering his supporters, it produced unexpected reactions from protesters who interpreted the promised concessions as their victory. Measures of coercion resulted in an expansion of repression in which about 840 people lost their lives, while over 6,000 were injured (Radinović 2018). Images from social networks have limited reach, but only through their constant sharing and adoption by mainstream media do they become popular. At the height of dissatisfaction during the Arab Spring, “the number of tweets daily was 250,000, that is 175 per minute, or approximately three tweets per second” (Stojanović 2025, 430).

Digitalization has reshaped the human environment, which only becomes recognizable with the image on the screen. That is why leaders of political protests “introduce the audience into a realm of imagination where they believe they ‘know’ the imposed ‘constructs.’ The artificial closeness arising from this relationship can be used to convert people in the audience into followers” (Lou 2013, 151). Now, organized marches of dissatisfied citizens begin, symbolically marking the conquest of public space, accompanied by brief speeches from the organizers so as not to disperse the participants’ attention. They take selfies at sit-in protests, while riding bicycles or motorcycles, and during vigils in front of religious temples (if the society is religious); flags are displayed and concerts with patriotic songs are organized (if national consciousness is strong), as well as entertaining sports competitions. The intention is to create social energy necessary for change, so participants frequently promote nonviolent communication for building and strengthening collective identity through clips and videos. Freedom and respect for human rights take center stage, with a tendency toward social liberation

from fear. At the same time, representatives of the state are criminalized and accused of corruption and abuse of power. The style and rhetoric of communication adapt to the psychology of the masses, so protest messages are brief, emotional, and visually intense. The logic of social media is not the same for each network, which in practice means that the principles of operation are the same. Still, the forms and methods of directing content depend on “platform characteristics and affordances” (for example, when an algorithm favors content with photos) (Hase et al. 2022).

The third phase already demands confrontation and massive demonstrations and campaigns to fuel dissatisfaction and turn citizens against their own state. The audience on social networks is characterized by a narcissistic enthusiasm in which assumptions about *Others* are imposed as facts. The power of messages on social media does not lie in their truthfulness but in their combination with images and sounds that lull the user’s rational thinking. Each network has its users; for example, short video content is central to gatherings on TikTok and Instagram, while convincing messages dominate on Facebook. It is also essential to know that young people worldwide primarily use social networks as their sources of information. For instance, 48% of young Americans aged 18 to 29 get political information through social media (Mitchel, Jurkowitz, Baxter, and Shearer 2020).

Nothing in political communication is accidental: the formatting of the message aligns with its intention, and greater visibility means a higher number of visitor comments. Neven Obradović, while researching contemporary forms of political divisions in public communication, observed that “social networks contribute with the help of their algorithms that create so-called ‘echo chambers’” (Obradović 2025, 42). Actions of controlling and restricting discourse on social networks are largely predictable, more like orientation signs that should lead us to conclude that the conveyed information is the truth. Cunningly hidden algorithms serve users of social networks with information, photos, and videos that correspond to their political views and those of their “friends” on the networks. This process creates an illusion that everyone in that community thinks the same and shares the same political views (Martinoli 2017). The creation of dominant narratives is based on so-called troll farms, special technological complexes with several thousand computers and servers that, with the help of special software, can open

thousands of new accounts and post predetermined video clips and photos on them every day.

Thanks to social networks, public space is opening up to all those who previously did not have access to the arena where socially relevant decisions are made. By undermining authority, manipulative publicity, and the image of the impotence of state institutions are promoted. Strikes, performances, marches, and boycotts are organized; concerts, exhibitions, and briefings are improvised; traffic blockades are caused, disrupting the normal functioning of the government and institutions; awards and honors are principledly refused and returned... Along with the expected rebellion of participants and the massing of protests, a symbolic image of defenders of freedom, democracy, and justice is glorified, spreading the distinction of *Us* versus *Them* in society. On the public stage, populism and patriotism with explicit ideological connotations prevail, with each side creating its semantic code necessary for the dominant narrative. Žebeni and Salojärvi see this as a rhetorical-performative process, a new form that needs to be given meaning: “According to populist logic, it is necessary to build a sense of belonging to the people, opposed to others who are perceived as enemies. This involves constant and repeated negotiation of the meanings of various concepts that may combine collective memory, cultural aspects, values, and affects throughout this process” (Szebeni and Salojärvi 2022, 815–816). The nation-state is becoming increasingly weaker, the population is losing confidence and retreating into closed groups, while the hope that a solution will be found seems to be disappearing from the public sphere. On social media, narratives multiply, and elections appear as a possible solution to the crisis, but sophisticated actions that secure international support for the protest actors are also promoted. Vajdijanatan explains that the starting points of such tactically crafted deceptions are deliberately created websites that produce enticing stories. They “use Facebook and Twitter to lure readers to their sites, where they earn revenue from advertising services. Twitter is full of bots that spread false information and other forms of disinformation or distract critics of authoritarian leaders by overwhelming them with various irrelevant content” (Vajdijanatan 2018, 96). This means that the noise in rumor communication on social media can be created by algorithms and bots located hundreds or even thousands of kilometers away from the place where the crisis is unfolding. The nation-state controls its communication sovereignty through the media with national frequency. Still, with the

emergence of social networks, even the idea of viral oversight over information is lost, meaning that public opinion becomes vulnerable to misinformation. Kenneth Thompson, analyzing the crisis experiences of British citizens, pointed out the relationship between moral panic and the media, emphasizing that “the media themselves use this and other social science concepts when presenting their views on these phenomena”.¹⁰ There are numerous examples of aggression, ideological fanaticism, unfounded labeling, and spin in public discourse, which only raise the boiling point of public opinion. Reckless and harsh media rhetoric polarizes society, often leading to unpredictable situations, so it is the responsibility of the participants in the public debate to reconsider the tools, organizations, mindsets, culture, and processes of tolerance by which public speech can be adapted to a culture of peace and political activism for a better life for everyone in the community.

The black-and-white dichotomy logically leads to the next phase, which involves the official refusal to obey authorities. Groups of activists from the field and social networks engage in propaganda through cunningly concealed actions that, by producing rumors, gossip, disinformation, and fake news, disrupt the system’s normal functioning. Theoretically, this is nothing new. According to Perloff, the Internet and social networks have “seized power from the media and given it to the people, enabling them to participate more actively in public dialogue. This is beneficial when it connects citizens with leaders in civilized dialogues or allows people to communicate about politics with others through Facebook or Twitter. To dispel fear, witty, sarcastic, and cheerful clips and messages are massively produced, while political opponents receive threatening and harsh messages. Hence, the role of internet platforms in political communication is ‘quite frightening and controversial when partisan activists from hidden profiles launch sinister criticisms fueled by prejudices against public officials or other users with whom they politically disagree’” (Perloff 2014, 41).

In the final, fifth phase, there is an insistence on the formation of parallel institutions expected to take over government functions (“transitional governments”, “expert governments”, and the like). In a divided and aggressive society, heated disinformation is spread, which can explosively trigger escalation, including physical conflicts. The step from political change to policy change during color revolutions is small.

¹⁰ More in: Thompson, Kenneth. 2003. *Moral Panic*. Belgrade: Clio. p. 6.

Managing information in the digital environment is also a security issue. The media system offers primary publicity through fake news, even if it later denies it, which is why every unverified post on social networks and portals is dangerous. At that point, *disinformation* from the networks easily transforms into so-called *spin* - a classic manipulation technique redesigned electronically. A war of disinformation, fake news, spin, and misinformation has begun on social networks, digital platforms, and ideologically divided media, producing disorientation, passivity, and even moral panic among the population.¹¹

Contemporary television, as a mass medium of political communication, “plays a central role in the constitution of today’s democracies” (Gavin 2007). This is also the reason for the changing relationship with the audience, so during protest gatherings, success is no longer measured only by ratings, shares, or the number of viewers, readers, and listeners, but by deeper and longer-lasting connections established between media content and the consumer/audience. “Increasing the audience’s connection with our content, creating more loyal subscribers, growing a sense of loyalty, creating dependence on our content... We develop our audience and consider who might be interested in the stories we tell in different formats and platforms” (Lichterman 2015).

Colored revolutions cleverly conceal their political-ideological background to increase their chances of success. Nonviolent actions and methods of attracting citizens, gaining media attention, and creating an image in influential media are essential in gaining support, especially if analog media in society are controlled. Strategies of nonviolent action can be effective only if they produce civil disobedience, which means that, in practice, they use mechanisms and methods to withhold any support from the state. Structural changes are represented “in the extra-institutional pressure of civil organizations, which weakens the institutional system founded by the state and reduces the influence

¹¹ “It seems that societies from time to time are subject to periods of moral panic. A certain condition, event, individual, or group appears and is soon labeled as a threat to social values and interests; their nature is presented by mass media in a stylized and stereotypical way; moral prohibitions are established by editors, clergy, politicians and other right-wing oriented people; socially recognized experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; methods of resolving the problem are proposed (and more often resorted to); that state then disappears, is suppressed, or worsens and becomes more evident.” (Cohen 1972, 2).

of authorities on public policies in favor of ‘counterpowers’” (Đukić 2023, 13). The emotional sphere then becomes the core of nonviolent communication, as care, dissatisfaction, anxiety, fear, anger, rage, revolt, sadness, and fury transform into reflections of the political atmosphere. Protesters have the task of preserving, spreading, and producing discourses that ritually attract new followers, which is why, in risky situations, they may sacrifice truthfulness to impose an effective image. Hence, during political protests, societies within nation-states are discursively deeply divided - each side does not hear the other, and each holds its narratives. Foucault explains this order of discourse as follows: “Apparently, the only necessary condition is the recognition of the same truths and acceptance of certain rules (more or less strict) of agreement with discourses declared valid. The doctrine links individuals to a certain type of statement and forbids them from making others. Still, it is also used, in return, by certain types of statements to link individuals to each other and thereby separate them from all others” (Foucault 2019, 27). The most essential thing to notice is that other people and situations do not evoke emotions in us. Instead, it is the way social networks present them! Strategies and tactics of colored revolutions are structured so that the use of any form of violence by legitimate authorities causes unrest and reaction. At the same time, in cases of repression, there is a risk of harsh condemnation by influential parts of the international community. That is why social media becomes a significant actor, influencing the quality and nature of informative reporting by promoting clickbait and spin.

New elites emerge from the mutual relationship between the bearers of economic, political, and media opposition, ready to carry out assigned tasks. Facebook, Twitter (X), YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other networks are used to modify and disseminate ideas. At the same time, the demonstration and gathering of citizens in squares, streets, in front of university buildings, prominent media offices, or government (ministries) “pumps” energy to paralyze the system. The meaning of messages is created through sequences of configured performances, often captured by mobile phones but omnipresent at event sites, which dulls the stronger reaction of the police. Due to the limited scope of this work, we also draw attention to the increasingly frequent use of artificial intelligence, especially machine learning, as a tool within the spectrum of analytical artificial intelligence, which enables the creation of deepfake content - a method often used to manipulate videos and

photographs on social media (see Đorić and Kazić 2021, 216). Actors in political communication during protests thus assign themselves a proactive position because the authorities are forced to deal with the message's effect, rather than the meaning. The nonviolent movement further spreads, incorporating non-governmental organizations, so-called "independent intellectuals", as well as public figures (actors, athletes, singers, writers...), union leaders, representatives of religious communities, officers, and even members of various security services.

In some cases, political protests may be organized by the state itself for the purpose of national mobilization. For example, the ruling party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość – PIS) was the main promoter of protests marking the sixth anniversary of the plane crash near Smolensk, Russia, in which Polish President Lech Kaczyński and 95 others died, including high-ranking Polish officials such as religious, political, and military representatives (Glišin i Simić 2024, 216–217).

Concluding Remarks

The transition from the society of electronic media to the world of smartphones and social networks highlights the importance of media culture and understanding the communicative nature of the digital environment. The change pointed out in this work is especially visible in the realm of crisis communications because if we do not quickly grasp the revolutionary changes brought by evolutionary processes, we will find it harder to understand the political revolutions that are yet to come. Unverified, unfiltered, and unreliable news from social networks, combined with closely connected television images and the intense participation of ordinary recipients, directly imprints political narratives into our consciousness, thereby securing support for the actors involved in political events.

The mechanisms and patterns of attracting audience attention characteristic of various media genres in crisis situations must be incorporated into the digital mechanisms of narrative production and distribution. The atomization of content corresponds to the scattered attention of the audience, as it enables easier sharing through social networks, whose power is even greater, faster, and more expressive. Bots (trolls, spammers) become activists who, by actively supporting opposing sides, participate in crises. The sponsors of such cyber activities pay 'spammers' to write thousands of comments daily. Spammers create

group chats (forums) in order to issue instructions to prepared trolls and algorithms about which platforms and news stories should be targeted. Public opinion then shifts toward the views of selected groups who choose the desired content, which trolls are directed to flood with lies and commissioned comments, using both real and fake accounts.

The practice in the case of Serbia, as well as in a number of other countries where “color revolutions” have taken place, shows that the “revolutionary” forces skillfully exploited outdated normative regulations and fragmented, functionally unconnected, and uncoordinated public services and institutions – socially, tactically, technically, and practically. By applying traditional propaganda models from the era of analog culture, the authorities failed to realize that by taking a reactive approach, they were using available communication tools merely to address their own electorate, with no chance of winning the support of new target groups, especially the youth, through their ideas and programs. It seems that it was slow to be understood that nonviolence is not passivity, but rather an activity which, through creativity, energy, and dynamism, becomes deeply intertwined with crisis, whereby online dissatisfaction on social networks, amplified by manipulative news, quickly transforms into an offline reality. Research has shown that on social media, individuals and groups are more likely to believe and share information that aligns with their already existing beliefs, which means that instead of moving toward dialogue, we are heading toward political divisions and conflicts. The propaganda effect of the “echo chamber” merely reinforces already existing xenophobic attitudes, deepens misunderstandings, and fuels aggression toward *Others*.

In color revolutions, group communication on social networks intensifies because it is symbolically organized as a new social territory that creates its own rules and relationships, which can be organized from within and without, based on its security criteria. In this context, social media platforms such as Facebook or X can be understood as mechanisms of *reterritorialization of identity*, as they contribute to transforming the anonymous space of the Internet into a familiar and open environment - but only for members of that vast brotherhood. At the same time, through the exteriorization of messages using television images, this becomes a specific kind of propaganda capital. The generation and spread of fake news aim to create an atmosphere of fear, doubt, distrust, anger, and national fervor, leading to the perception of revolution as the only solution. It should not be forgotten that every government has

quality teams that thoroughly understand the architecture and logic of political communication on social media, seeking ways to manage content by their political goals. Algorithms and datafication are built into every platform, but the actors themselves choose deliberate strategies and tactics, and they have decisive importance in shaping networked consciousness.

The power of media in constructing narratives about political protests, especially in situations where they can trigger, develop, or accelerate social crises, has been further amplified by social networks, which have accelerated the unfolding of crises. This can seriously affect public opinion, democratic processes, and national stability. The information bubble appears full of content, but it lacks political debate among those with differing views. This results from the sophisticated engagement of algorithms and artificial intelligence, which have been digitally designed to prevent genuine dialogue from occurring on popular media platforms. Social media during civil protests enables participants to control their narratives, thereby becoming an effective channel of political communication, especially in situations where traditional media are inaccessible to them.

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ПОЛИТИЧКА КОМУНИКАЦИЈА И СНАГА ДРУШТВЕНИХ МРЕЖА У НАЦИОНАЛНИМ КРИЗАМА ПОВЕЗАНИМ СА ОБОЈЕНИМ РЕВОЛУЦИЈАМА**

Сажетак

У средишту истраживања налазе се друштвене мреже и њихова активистичка улога током политичких криза унутар националних држава. Демонстрације и други облици грађанских протеста су експресивнији уз наглашену медијску покривеност, при чему се под плаштом ненасиља скривају конкретни политички захтеви. Ауторка издваја пет карактеристичних фаза креирања порука које укључујући бројне дигиталне форме и модалитете утичу на повећање видљивости у традиционалном јавном простору, чиме криза добија на интензитету са већим ризицима ескалације и интернационализације. Национална држава и друштвене мреже током кризних ситуација често нису компатибилни, што значи да се јавно мњење дели око могућих решења и последица. Отуда у умреженом друштву расту производња страха и моралне панике, уз ширење лажних вести, дезинформација и гласина, што може резултирати бројним инцидентима и још већом мобилизацијом

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младих који су посебно рањива група. Нова публика се све више преклапа, поларизује, мења и реструктурира у складу са измењеним друштвеним контекстима и дигиталним амбијентом који омогућава анонимност актера. Медијска технологија са дигитализацијом и вештачком интелигенцијом постаје *conditio sine qua non* управљања неким простором и политичким односима унутар заједнице, што значи и да се мења коридор поступања у кризним ситуацијама у смеру ненасилних активности.

Кључне речи: политичка комуникација, друштвене мреже, пропаганда, алгоритми, тролови, морална паника, националне кризе повезане са обојеним револуцијама.

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