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Trump obsession: the impact of US election on Europeanization of public spheres

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The latest US presidential election campaign gained immense attention from all over the world. Donald Trump masterfully used logics of mediatization, performing so controversially and scandalously, [1] that he made major world leaders and public deeply worried about the future [7, 8]. Also he extensively used social media, and discussion of his debates with Clinton involved the biggest amount of people on twitter during political event ever [9]. Thus, Trump's victory marks the increasing role of social media in politics.

A lot of research would be made on this campaign, but this work will focus on another aspect of "Trump phenomena". I will use this huge event to test whether social media enhance the quality of democracy by examining if election of Trump facilitated Europeanization of public spheres within European countries.

Democracy is impossible without political communication, taking place in public spheres - *institutionalized communicative spaces that are accessible to all citizens and that help to promote the development of public opinion and political will-formation* (Coleman, 2015: 21). In other words, deliberation and discussion of public issues are prerequisites of establishment of trust, social sharing, formation of political identity and democratic political community [2].

European Union is prominent example of democratic deficit due to the lack of political communication between representatives, media and EU citizens, characterized by asymmetrical relationship, lacking transparency and accountability [3]. The way to improve this problem - Europeanization of public spheres which implies deliberation of common issues, thus creating common European identity and community, sharing common interests and keeping representatives accountable [5].

Emergence of social media empowered citizens to express their opinions, share alternative visions, communicate with politicians without a medium of traditional media, and enhanced transnationalization of communication and political participation [1, 4, 5]. Thus I will look at Facebook posts to test influence of social media on democracy on selected case.

The choice of Trump presidency explains by several reasons. First, Trump gains a lot of attention both in traditional and social media, so it can be assumed that the majority of EU internet-users are acknowledged about his actions and follow them. Second, Trump's foreign policy and policy toward NATO might be concerned as a threat to EU security, and alteration from Obama's line will impact states' cooperation (for example, in Syria, toward Russia and Iran). Third, his intolerant rhetoric is far from liberal values common for US and EU discourse and identity. All this factors will influence rearticulating EU attitude to USA and self-identification.

I will use Risse's conceptualization of Europeanization. He argues that Europeanization indicators are salience of EU issues in public spheres, presence of European actors in national and issue-specific public spheres as both speakers and listeners, and use of same frames of reference. Additionally Risse points at polarization as a factor enhancing Europeanization of public spheres, taking place when there are different opinions on EU salient issues, provoking debates [5].

Risse was speaking about internal EU events, that are discussed vertically and horizontally within EU, but Donald Trump is an external factor, so I will slightly modify his logic. Thus I will look:

1)   - If Donald Trump policies became salient issue among European actors by comparing average number of 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' to post mentioning Trump and other posts, and separately proportion of posts with direct connection between Trump and European countries:

2)   - If all the actors are involved in discussion by looking at proportion of posts about Trump, comments to them, links to media in comparison with other posts. Additionally I will look if there are posts mentioning European actors attitude to Trump

3)   - If there is a common frame of reference by comparing average number of comments to all the posts about Trump and other posts (indicate understanding points of others)

4)   - If opinions are polarized by coding comments as positive, negative and neutral, and looking at their proportion

For this research I selected public pages representing EU institutions - European Commission, European Parliament, Council of European Union, and European External Action Service, and influential EU politicians - Angela Merkel, Theresa May, Francois Holland, and we will also include Jens Stoltenberg as a Secretary General of NATO and former prime-minister of Norway.

Thus, I assume that if posts about Trump on all selected public pages will satisfy the criteria of salience, involvement of all actors, common frame of reference and polarization, there is impact of Trump 'danger' on Europeanization of public spheres. If the results justify this hypothesis, thus it will indicate improving role of social media for quality of democracy.

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