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“TWITTER POLICY” AS A PHENOMENON OF THE MODERN POLITICAL PROCESS

The article highlights new trends in the modern political process in the era of information technology. The phenomenon of formation of the social network Twitter as one of the main information channels of political events is considered.

Key words: *social networks, Twitter, digital diplomacy, politics, information technologies.*

Modern realities are such that an ordinary citizen can no longer imagine every-day life without the use of information technology. Virtual communication in all kinds of chats and messengers displaces conversations on mobile phones and even that with the help of Skype video communications. Online shopping and online shopping are thriving, getting more and more orders from people shopping online. The sphere of household services, housing and communal services, also moved to the information space, leaving behind paper receipts and queues at the cash desk. Schoolchildren fill out electronic diaries, and pre-school children skilfully use modern gadgets. The latest political and economic developments in the world, the weather forecasts and the currency rates are also recognized thanks to a global network that provides the latest and most up-to-date information. All this is no surprise. Imperceptibly, the Internet has become an integral part of our lives.

According to the statistics of the authoritative source internetworldstats, the number of Internet users according to the latest data presented at the end of 2017 amounted to more than 4 billion, which means that more than half of the world's population are Internet users.¹

¹ Internetworldstats. – URL: <https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm> (accessed 27.04.2018).

The first place among the users of social networks, by right, belongs to the brainchild of Mark Zuckerberg Facebook with an audience of 2.20 billion active users monthly as of March 31, 2018. Many prominent politicians of our time have Facebook accounts.¹ Among Facebook accounts of many prominent politicians we would like to note the accounts of the following politicians with the most number of subscribers and active publications: President Barack Obama (53.3 million subscribers), President Donald Trump (24.5 million subscribers), the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko (759 thousand subscribers), President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan (8.7 million subscribers), Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Sen (a little less than 10 million subscribers), the Prime Minister of India Modi Narendra (over 43 million subscribers)² and many others. As you can see, one social network – Facebook unites politicians, completely different from each other, who representat different political regimes from different continents and parts of the world and different religions.

However, we would like to dwell on the social network “Twitter,” headquartered in the United States of America, which is a microblogging system that allows you to exchange short messages within 140 characters for public exchange using a web interface. Created by a young American programmer Jack Dorsey in 2006, “Twitter” soon gained popularity around the world. Since April 26, 2011, the Twitter interface began to support the Russian language.

Researchers predict that by the end of this year, 2018, the number of active Twitter users will reach 400 million people,³ which is an impressive audience and can compete with many other sources of political information.

Official Twitter accounts have such high-ranking politicians as: Mexican President Enrique peña Nieto (@EPN 7.2 million subscribers), Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Prime Minister and Vice President of the United Arab Emirates (@HHShkMohd 9.24 million subscribers), Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev, has two accounts in Russian and English (@medvedevrussia while 5.42 million subscribers, @MedvedevRussiaE 1.13 million subscribers), Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil (@dilmabr with just over 6.1 million subscribers), Prime Minister of India Narendra modi (@narendramodi more than 42.8 million subscribers), and of course the forty-fifth President of the United States Donald trump (@realDonaldTrump 52. 3 million subscrib-

¹ Facebook States. – URL: <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/> (accessed 29.04.2018).

² URL: https://www.facebook.com/barackobama/?ref=br_rs (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://www.facebook.com/petroporoshenko/> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://www.facebook.com/RecepTayyipErdogan/> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://www.facebook.com/hunsencambodia/> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://www.facebook.com/narendramodi/> (accessed: 29.04.2018).

³ In 2018, 400 million people will use Twitter. URL: <http://www.rutwitter.com/v-2018-godu-tvitterom-budet-polzovatsya-400-millionov-chelovek/> (accessed: 27.04.2018).

ers)¹. Profiles have also such people as Pope Francis (@Pontifex 17.8 million subscribers) in blogs which spiritual guidance, wise advice on a variety of issues from parenting to economics; the Dalai Lama (@DalaiLama 18.8 million subscribers), on whose the page there are practically no official messages, mostly spiritual guidance and advice on how to achieve happiness and harmony.²

On the official Twitter site, the developers give a definition that sounds like this: "Twitter is a platform where you can find out what is happening in the world right now and what people are saying about it."³ Indeed, the main distinctive feature of obtaining information on Twitter is its lightning speed, and in our age of breakneck speeds, this type of communication is becoming increasingly popular. What is happening in the world here and now you can only find out by opening your profile in the social network by logging into the application from your smartphone. Perhaps, information has never been so accessible to the general public. No need to wait for the "fresh" morning newspaper, the next news release or announcer on the radio, as it was before. And even political information has become available to every Internet user. For example, you can tap one button to subscribe to the account of US President Donald Trump and one of the first to read that, for example, the American leader took a decision on a military intervention in Syria.

"Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and "smart!" You shouldn't be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it!" (3:57 – 11.04. 2018. U.S. President Donald Trump's official account)⁴.

Or the thoughts that relations between Russia and America "is worse now than it has ever been, and that includes the Cold War."

«Our relationship with Russia is worse now than it has ever been, and that includes the Cold War. There is no reason for this. Russia needs us to help with their economy, something that would be very easy to do, and we need all nations to work together. Stop the arms race?» (4:37 – April 11, 2018 U.S. President Donald Trump's official account)⁵.

No news channel is able to keep up with such lightning-fast events and news, but there is a solution, it is published and every Twitter user can see it.

¹ URL: <https://twitter.com/EPN> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://twitter.com/HHShkMohd> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://twitter.com/MedvedevRussia> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://twitter.com/dilmabr> accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://twitter.com/narendramodi> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump> (accessed: 29.04.2018).

² URL: <https://twitter.com/pontifex> (accessed: 29.04.2018); URL: <https://twitter.com/DalaiLama> (accessed: 29.04.2018).

³ Official Twitter page. – URL: <https://about.twitter.com/ru/company/brand-resources.html> (accessed: 29.04.2018).

⁴ URL: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/984022625440747520> (accessed: 27.04.2018).

⁵ URL: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/984032798821568513> (accessed: 27.04.2018).

The media have only to announce the news releases with the following phrases: “the US President Donald Trump wrote in his Twitter account...”

The American President has repeatedly used the phrase “Fake news” in his speeches. “Fake news” means forgery, lies, and he used this phrase referring to the leading American news channels. During the first three weeks after becoming President Donald Trump in his Twitter account six times criticized the New York Times, twice opposed the CNN, once criticized the ABC, NBC and The Washington Post.¹

Perhaps it is partly for this reason that the American President prefers to make loud statements in person and directly using Twitter.

Whether he has become closer to his supporters and voters is an ambiguous question, but the number of subscribers to his Twitter account is growing steadily. For example, only within the framework of our study from May 8 to May 30, 2018, in less than a month, the audience reading the messages of the American President increased from 51.3 million to 52.3 million², this indicates the great interest of the Internet community to this account. But not all subscribers of Donald Trump are his supporters, one may also see tough criticism, to which the head of the White House, at times, also reacts harshly. The U.S. Supreme Court heard the case on whether the President of the United States has the right to block his Twitter subscribers. According to New York Daily News³, Manhattan Federal Court Judge Naomi Buchwald concluded that Donald Trump’s @realDonaldTrump account is a “public forum” and users are protected by the First Amendment to the US Constitution guaranteeing freedom of speech. Blocking subscribers because of their political statements is discrimination. One of the blocked subscribers was Rebecca Buckwalter from the Center of American progress. She had the temerity to comment on Trump’s statement that he would not have won the election if he had relied on “fake” media. She replied: “To be fair you didn’t win the WH: Russia won it for you”. After a short time, she was blocked by the President of the United States and for this reason went to court.

In our opinion, it is simply impossible not to note the importance of President Trump’s posts if there is such a precedent as an appeal to the court because of a message on the social network, which seemed unthinkable just a few years ago.

However, there is a different point of view regarding the currently so popular account of the head of the United States, which was voiced by the Russian publicist and well-known blogger Maxim Kononenko. The Boston Globe with ref-

¹ «Fake News Front: how the Donald Trump administration fights with journalists» (Feb. 08, 2017, 20:47). – URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/08/02/2017/5899ec759a7947456745947e> (accessed: 27.04.2018).

² URL: <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump> (accessed: 27.04.2018).

³ Rich Schapiro. «Trump can no longer block users on Twitter as judge declares his feed a public forum» / New York Daily News, 23 May 2018. – URL: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/trump-no-longer-block-users-twitter-judge-rules-article-1.4005573> (accessed 15.06.2018).

erence to two mysterious informants writes about how actually President Donald Trump’s Twitter account is arranged. It turned out that the American President himself does not write on Twitter. It turns out that he has special media aides who write tweets in several options, of which President chooses those he likes. Now listen carefully, because it is worth hearing: these same media aides write tweets to Donald Trump the way they think he would have written them himself. That is, put a lot of exclamation marks, write in capital letters, put any commas and even make special spelling mistakes that bloggers and the press around the world are so fond of discussing. And when bloggers and the press around the world are horrified because Donald Trump is such a chump, his media aides rejoice and drink Bourbon because that’s what they really wanted. Because such a President is closer to the people. And it means that there are non-illusory chances for a second term¹.

This point of view is also very interesting and is there due to the fact that “being closer to the people” is not the worst strategy and “being a good chap” for a large number of voters thanks to the social network is a possible key to success. It is impossible not to recall and draw a parallel with the models of interaction with the population, with the voters of American presidents 10 or 20 years ago. A suit, a tribune with the American coat of arms or an Oval office, carefully prepared speech memorized or read from paper, accurately verified on time. President Trump decided to rebel against the established system and build his communication channel using Twitter messenger. However, there are hitches with the feedback so far, such as an appeal to the court and complaints of American citizens, considered by us earlier, but nevertheless, it works, people write, respond and comment, make reposts and retweets of the President’s statements to their page.

An important difference between Twitter and other social networks is that here the emphasis is not on communication between friends, but on the need to be aware of the events that occur in their lives. Brevity, convenience, efficiency, a wide range of readers, all this makes “Twitter” the most popular blogging service, note experts on the study of modern social networks.²

«Twitter» becomes a mechanism for creating political events, with the active participation of citizens. And this process is of particular importance when it comes to creating policy in the international arena. All of this led to Matthias Lufkens, managing Director of Burson-Marsteller, that may be considered a pioneer in the study of diplomacy in social media, suggested the term Twiplomacy («Twitter plus diplomacy»). The term Twiplomacy refers to the use of Twitter by heads of state, heads of international intergovernmental organizations and

¹ Maxim Kononenko. “Trump’s Twitter is a complicated thing!” Radio Vesti FM of 23.05.2018. – URL: <http://radiovesti.ru/brand/60948/episode/1794832/> (accessed: 15.06.2018).

² Social networks from A to Z. Guide to social networks of the Internet. – URL: <http://www.social-networking.ru/soccat/twitter> (accessed: 27.04.2018).

diplomats to bring together positions on international issues. In 2011, Matthias Lufkens showed at the conference how presidents and leaders used Twitter to maintain diplomatic contacts with other political actors. In addition, he noted that Twitter is an important system of diplomatic interaction, along with other similar services, such as Facebook-diplomacy and Youtube-diplomacy.¹

In our opinion, we can start talking about “Twitter policy”, the birth of which we are witnessing now. Important political issues, official congratulations and other messages are sent by the world political elite to each other in the global network just as the future meetings and possible deals. All this is happening in front of a multi-million audience and each user feels a part of it, can leave a comment, “like” it or save the page for discussion with colleagues and friends. The involvement of ordinary citizens in the global world political process is growing, which, in our opinion, is an excellent prerequisite for increasing the interest of the general population in politics and, perhaps, an effective mechanism in the fight against political absenteeism inherent in modern youth.

In conclusion, we would like to note that recent political events clearly demonstrate that the global Internet is increasingly penetrating all spheres of society, including political life. Modern information technologies are developing so rapidly that it is simply impossible to resist it or deny the scale captured by the information space. There are new forms of interaction between political actors, new channels of communication and interaction between the state and the citizen. Modern realities are such that those wishing to succeed in the political field, to have supporters, to enlist the support of potential voters, it becomes necessary to be open for communication, to have accounts in social networks and messengers.

Twitter has become an innovative tool of public policy, changing the form and scale of involvement of ordinary citizens in the modern world political process.

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