

POLITICAL COMMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIETY DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

The multiple approaches to the role of the press in a democratic society, generated by political specialists, sociologists, journalists and common information consumers, managed to induce a certain amount of confusion in society, due, not only to the variety of discussions on the same issues through the media. Whether it is a TV show, radio program or newspaper article, they are no longer understood only as sources of information and communication. Most of the times, there is added an entertainment element based on the relationship between “characters” involved, on certain rituals, conventions, values and types of behavior. Political comments, often conducted by political specialists, politicians and journalists in recent years, tend to resort to the same spectacular media presentation, accompanied by drama, tension, and irony or ridicule on any political event, more than any other information presented.

Keywords: *political comments, public opinion, political analyst, communication technologies, mass-media, infotainment.*

The development of new information technologies and their accessibility to consumers of information generated major changes in the possibilities offered by the media, influencing also media practice. Political media issues have become more dynamic, interactive, diverse, considering the theme, understandable and even interesting, despite the programs’ political character, often appreciated as a monotonous one. In this respect, an important role is always played by the moderator and his guests, who share the diversity of opinions through media by different levels of approaching the same event, by the level of documentation reached by each of them and everything creates the atmosphere of dynamism and action, which is perceived by citizens through the media too. At the same time, we must recognize that the multiplicity of opinions and views, expressed by political scientists, sociologists and journalists have managed lately to induce a certain amount of

confusion in society, due to the power of their performance, exactly the way the political programs are created and demonstrated in the country, including the “characters” participating in these shows.

The novelty of the recent years is the “show” element the political programs include nowadays. This type of programs was initially perceived as being very deep, rigid and serious, but in the last years these qualities have started to be considered secondary elements by specialists, because of the importance of the influence of the message conveyed to the ordinary citizen. It is about *political comment*, which means an assessment carried out by a competent person regarding an issue, an event or a political decision with explanations and interpretations on the issue addressed. Thus, the guest in the program should focus on value, reliability and good appreciation of the message for the general public. However, the competitive spirit, characteristic to an alert century, in terms of sharing information, but also being an indirect battle between media units to attract a wider audience forced directors to look for and create new formats of programs with for the sake of popularity, and we must admit, which is necessary especially for political programs. In this context, spectacular presentations, accompanied by drama and suspense, irony and mockery over any political event can destroy very often the rational, documented and balanced report on the political event. These days, a political event may be presented either as less important or as an outrageous event from Hollywood, for example. Some specialists consider this situation to be a consequence of the general phenomenon of new communication technologies, which interprets the world as

a spectacle itself. [Beciu, p. 179]. Some elements related to this phenomenon, are seen by the author as the result of media tabloidization; the combination between political element and entertainment (infotainment); media conversation, indicating a fundamental transformation of the journalist's role, who became an entertainer today; the way media constructs today the image for the public opinion, focused on consumption, regardless of the nature of the latte.

The practice of creating and broadcasting the political issues in our country in the recent years includes multiple variations of confrontation of opinions and personalities in this field. That is why, most often, moderators use to place the political opponents face to face, to give a tensed atmosphere to the show, accepting also a colloquial language in order to attract audiences and thus advertising the program. We shouldn't also forget that representing political programs this way may be considered an indicator of the level of the freedom of expression in the political field of opinions. At the same time, the press holding a partisan editorial policy may not collect audience but needs to attract votes. This type of interaction mentioned above, called in the specialized literature "*type duel*" provides moderator the opportunity to participate as a judge in the debates on the subject. Such an active verbal interaction risks for the characters involved as well as for the moderator to get to a physical confrontation. We may mention in this respect, the recent violence demonstrated by a well-known Moldavian politician, O. Onishchenko, who being confronted with another politician from an adverse political camp, the political analyst R. Mihaies, sprinkled him with water from a glass in a live TV program from Publika TV. The offensive program's guest was dissatisfied with a certain verbal labeling made by the other politician that, in his opinion, was expressed rigidly and ironically referring to him. The atmosphere in the studio, in these cases, is extremely tense. However, further views on the show confirm experts' opinions that such topics increase the public interest for political issues, even if they were not originally meant for entertainment. In this way, there appears the need for a correct representation approach to political problems on TV or in radio broadcasts,

especially since the opinions that are verbalized by the media are considered to be a real basis for decision-making by common people in the time of elections. Most of the times, the public perceives media as mediators between him and politicians who want to gain access to the power. The role of the media in this respect is even greater, as any disappointment later evident in the national policy, is identified later with media failure. In this sense, journalists and politicians must agree on general rules of making a political comment on a matter of public interest.

A strong political commentary, exposed in the media, should contain information on the subject discussed, extracted from documents and materials, but not from rumors and political propaganda. Information gathered by the author must be checked before being presented in the media, regardless of the position and status of their transmitter. The information should be examined in the context of phenomena and events that take place in society, arranged and related to the consequences likely to have a certain political decision. The language of the text should be accessible to the common citizen, according to grammatical rules in force and the author should avoid the ultra-colloquial expressions in his hidden desire and intention to approach the citizen, who might be less educated. The non-verbal expression of the person invited in the studio to express certain political views must be a sober and a temperate one, without eccentricity and arrogance, but appropriate to a balanced presentation, thoughtful, and austere in mimics and gestures. Sometimes, the answers to the moderator's questions need to have a wider scope, avoiding verbal attacks on person and demonstrating decency regarding the behavior of other political figures.

Such a possible performance of guests invited in a program with political topic would give the broadcaster extra seriousness and professionalism in choosing commentators and specialists for certain themes with mass interest. It would also give him the possibility of attracting a more elevated public, interested in political issues, and from here, the choice of a decision assumed by common citizens to have a well thought vote to potential candidates in a poll. The new configuration of the political life in democratic

countries is characterized by the fact that the media is involved in politics as much as the politicians themselves. In other words, journalists should demonstrate profound and strong knowledge regarding the political events, sometimes, even stronger than that of the politicians themselves. Remy Rieffel's opinion, expressing that in the last decade, due to media possibilities, politicians are undoubtedly under the pressure of the media and social events, has a sufficient support to be justified [Rieffel, p. 19]. Politicians as well as political analysts are required to respond to the requests coming from journalists to participate in a program or another, to build their image in accordance to the different survey results and to take into account any element of logic media in an electoral strategy.

Mark Wheeler considers that the appearance of the "show" element in broadcasters' productions is the consequence of mass communication globalization. This phenomenon has produced a varied picture of Western media whose main purpose is to attract investment, meaning, in our case, advertising. It didn't stop the producers to create and broadcast TV shows out of genres that initially were not designed for containing spectacular elements [Wheeler, p. 207]. It is about political commentaries. This has implications for the role of the press as a public watchdog as it has been steadily incorporated into the political mainstream. Anyway, the role of the political scientists, analysts and journalists, competing with the one the politicians have, should be considered if not definitive or decisive, then a strong - minded one, for sure. That is why, we should be aware of the responsibility for what is

presented on large screens, coming in studios as an alternative to the information presented by politicians as always being interested persons. The opinions expressed, ideally, would help citizens to have access to free and accurate information that would allow them to pursue their rights. In this way, citizens can use the communication possibilities towards criticism and alternative solutions for further actions. Finally, we should agree that the above mentioned ideas involve promoting people, through media, to have a real and objective perspective on political events, a high dose of the sense of responsibility towards the social obligations and a patriotic attitude.

The new information and communication technologies are becoming increasingly available. They allow a wider distribution of information and, which is most important, interactivity for this technologies to become a reality [Lazăr, p. 32]. This leads to political implications, for sure, and the liability that should be common to those expressing political views, especially media, according to the country legislation and regulation that guarantees the realizing of the media's democratic potential.

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