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SOME PRAXIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE SO-CALLED 'OVERTON WINDOW OF POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES', 'FRAMING' AND RELATED PROBLEMS

Keywords: praxiology, political manipulation, framing, window of political possibility.

ABSTRACT: The so-called 'Overton Window of Political Possibilities' originates from a concept named after Joseph P. Overton and is based on the assumption that any collection of public policies within a policy area can be arranged in order from more free to less free. At any one time, some group of adjacent policies along the freedom spectrum fall into a 'window of political possibility'. Policies inside the window are politically acceptable, meaning officeholders believe they can support the policies and survive the next election.

Numerous authors emphasize the problem of effectiveness of manipulation. Another interesting problem is connected with the 'threshold of effectiveness'. J.N. Druckman applies the expression: 'competing frames' in connection with 'political programs' (programs of political parties). All this means that any manipulations are subject to unpredictable, unforeseen factors, events etc. On the other hand, there are researchers, such as B. Bueno de Mesquita or G. Friedman, who present political forecasts and prognoses.

From the viewpoint of common sense and praxiology, there is an obvious discrepancy between such ways of manipulation as 'windows', 'frames' (applied in numerous sectors and countries, on different levels of political, social, financial etc. structures) and the 'political forecasts' of this kind. Perhaps, it would be useful to focus the research on the predictability of

the results of short and long-term shifting of windows / frames of political possibilities / opportunities.

THE 'OVERTON WINDOW', 'FRAMING' AND RELATED PROBLEMS – DEFINITIONS, OPINIONS, SUGGESTIONS

The so-called 'Overton Window of Political Possibilities' originates from a concept named after Joseph P. Overton (vice president of the MackinacCenter for Public Policy (a think tank / 'research and educational institute' in Midland, Michigan, USA), died in 2003 in a plane crash).

I would like to present some praxiological remarks on this concept in a broader context¹. As J.G. Lehman (president of the MackinacCenter) recalled in 2010: 'He (J.P. Overton – B.Zb. Sz.) observed that any collection of public policies within a policy area (...) can be arranged in order from more free to less free (or alternatively, from less government intervention to more)...At any one time, some group of adjacent policies along the freedom spectrum fall into a 'window of political possibility'. Policies inside the window are politically acceptable, meaning officeholders believe they can support the policies and survive the next election. Policies outside the window, either higher or lower, are politically unacceptable at the moment. If you shift the position or size of the window, you change what is politically possible².

The Overton's concept is presented in some variants. For example, four years earlier, in 2006, N.J. Russell described the Overton's theory in the following way: 'Imagine (...) a yardstick standing on end. On either end are the extreme policy actions for any political issue. Between the ends lie all gradations of policy frame one extreme to the other. The yardstick represents the full political spectrum for a particular issue. The essence of

¹ CfB.Zb. Szalek, *Studium metodologiczno-prakseologiczne w zakresie wybranych struktur manipulacji politycznej*, Working paper, University of Szczecin, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Political Science and European Studies, Chair of Praxiology, Heuristics and Political Marketing, 2012.

² J.G. Lehman, *An Introduction to the Overton Window of Political Possibility*, 2010, p. 1, <http://www.mackinac.org/12481> (accessed: 2011.03.24).

the Overton window is that only a portion of this policy spectrum is within the realm of the politically possible at any time. Regardless of how vigorously a think tank or other group may campaign, only policy initiatives within this window of the politically possible will meet with success³.

J.G. Lehman and N.J. Russell differ in their opinions with regard to the concept of ‘moving (or: shifting) the window’.

According to N.J. Russell: ‘...if a think tank’s research and the principles of sound policy suggest a particular idea that lies outside the Overton window, what is to be done? ‘Shift the window’. Since commonly held ideas, attitudes and presumptions frame what is politically possible and create the ‘window’, a change in the opinions held by politicians and the people in general will shift it. Move the window of what is politically possible and these policies previously impractical can become the next great popular and legislative rage... When the window of political possibilities is moved along the political spectrum, the impossible becomes desirable and the simply desirable becomes imperative’⁴.

However, J.G. Lehman does not share this optimistic opinion about ‘moving the window’: ‘Many believe that politicians move the window, but that’s actually rare. In our understanding, politicians typically don’t determine what is politically acceptable; more often they react to it and validate it. Generally speaking, policy change follows political change, which itself follows social change. The most durable policy changes are those that are undergirded by strong social movements’⁵.

In my opinion, the linear sequence: policy change < political change < social change (or: social change > political change > policy change) is not satisfactory and should be replaced by a circular or spiral (screw-like) sequence of changes. The latter approach (continuity + different levels of changes) seems to correspond with reality.

³ N.J. Russell, *An Introduction to the Overton Window of Political Possibilities*, 2006, p.1., <http://www.mackinac.org/7504> (accessed: 2011.05.19).

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁵ J.G. Lehman *op.cit.*, p. 1.

The Overton's concept ('window of political possibilities') belongs to the realm of 'influencing'⁶. In the following part I would like to present some reflections on related issues. First of all, let us recall the opinion of N.J. Russell: 'Politicians are constrained by ideas, even if they have no interest in them personally. What they can accomplish (...) is framed by the set of ideas held by their constituents – the way people think (...). A politicians success or failure stems from how well they understand and amplify the ideas and ideals held by those who elected them'⁷.

Therefore, let us pay some attention to the problem of 'framing'. *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* defines a 'frame-up' as: 'an act or series of actions in which someone is framed'⁸. A.M. Colman, in his *Dictionary of Psychology*, explains a 'frame' as: 'an underlying assumption or set of assumptions that suggests an interpretation or a concept and that functions as an interpretative frame of reference for thinking about the concept'⁹. As for the 'framing effects', A.M. Colman points at A. Tversky and D. Kahneman. According to these researchers: 'Prospect theory distinguishes two phases in the choice process: a phase of framing and editing, followed by a phase of evaluation... The first phase consists of a preliminary analysis of the decision problem, which frames the effective acts, contingencies, and outcomes. Framing is controlled by the manner in which the choice problem is presented as well as by norms, habits, and expectancies of the decision maker... Variations in the framing of option yield systematically different preferences'¹⁰.

A.M. Colman defines the 'framing effect' as: 'an effect of the description, labelling, or presentation of a problem on responses to it... A framing effect on a decision is called a 'decision frame' (...)'¹¹.

⁶ cf R. Cialdini, *Influence: Science and Practice*, Boston 2001; R. Cialdini, *The Psychology of Influence*, New York 2006.

⁷ N.J. Russell, op.cit., p. 1.

⁸ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*, Cologne 1993.

⁹ A.M. Colman, *A Dictionary of Psychology*, Oxford 2003, p. 286.

¹⁰ A. Tversky, D. Kahneman, *Rational Choice and the Framing of Decisions*, "The Journal of Business" 1986, No. 59, 4, p. 257.

¹¹ A.M. Colman, op.cit., p. 287.

The problem of ‘framing’ and ‘framing effects’ appears in a series of works by J.N. Druckman¹². According to this researcher: ‘politicians, activists, and the media constantly frame issues in one way or another... Citizens appear to consciously weigh the considerations suggested by elite frames, compare these considerations to their predispositions and information, and contemplate about the source of the frame. This all suggests that citizens deal with elite frames in a relatively competent and well-reasoned manner’¹³. J.N. Druckman distinguishes two kinds of frames: ‘frames in communication’ (‘words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker uses when relaying information to another (...)’) and ‘frames in thought’ (these frames describe: ‘an individual’s perception of a situation; the frame reveals what an individual sees as relevant to understanding a situation. For example, an individual who evaluates candidates based on their economic issue positions is said to be in an economic frame of mind (...)’¹⁴. According to J.N. Druckman: ‘(...) public opinion often depends on which frames elites choose to use’¹⁵.

Of course, his understanding of ‘elites’ is hazy (in fact, ‘elites’ originate from ‘élire’ = ‘to elect, choose’ in French). Nevertheless, J.N. Druckman associates the so-called ‘elites’ with the first kind of frames (‘frames in communication’): ‘frames in communication often play an important role in shaping frames in thought. This process – which is the focus of this

¹² J.N. Druckman, *The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence*, “Political Behaviour”, 2001, vol. 23, no 3; J.N. Druckman, *On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who Can Frame?*, “The Journal of Politics”, 2001, vol. 63, no 4; J.N. Druckman, K. Nelson, *Framing and deliberation: How citizens’ conversations limit elite influence*, “American Journal of Political Science”, 2003, vol. 47; J.N. Druckman, *Political preference formation: competition, deliberation, and the (ir)relevance of framing effects*, “American Political Science Review”, 2004, vol. 98; J.N. Druckman, D. Chong, *Framing public opinion in competitive democracies*, “American Political Science Review”, 2007, vol. 101; J.N. Druckman, R. McDermott, *Emotion and the framing of risky choice*, “Political Behaviour”, 2008, vol. 30; J.N. Druckman, C.L. Hennessy, K. St-Sharles, J. Weber, *Competing rhetoric overtime: Frames versus cues*, “The Journal of Politics” 2010, Vol. 72.

¹³ J.N. Druckman, *The Implications...*, op.cit., p. 246.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 227–228.

¹⁵ J.N. Druckman, *On the Limits...*, op.cit., p. 1041.

article – is typically called a framing effect'¹⁶. His opinion with regard to the effectiveness of 'framing' is not too optimistic: 'Many view work on framing effects as evidence of citizen incompetence (...) evidence that citizens base their preferences on arbitrary information and / or are subject to extensive elite manipulation'¹⁷. But he adds: '(...) framing effects are remarkably complex. Sometimes they work and other times they do not, and, despite common practice, it is just as important to document cases of failed framing effects as successful framing effects... Sometimes framing effects serve as evidence of incompetence and other times they do not'¹⁸.

It may be heuristically useful to add to the above definitions, opinions and suggestions an amazing quotation from E.L. Bernays' *Propaganda* (published in 1928 in the USA): 'The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country (E.L. Bernays (a relative of S. Freud) was born in Austria in 1891 – B.Zb. Szalek) ... We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society...' ¹⁹. This communist-like opinion was published in 1928, in a 'healthy' (or: in 'the healthiest' ?) democracy – in the United States of America.

¹⁶ J.N. Druckman, *The Implications...*, op.cit., p. 228.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 225.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 245–247; cf R.M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and US Foreign Policy*, Chicago 2004.

¹⁹ E.L. Bernays, *Propaganda*, New York 1928 (>2005), p. 10.

SOME PRAXIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Of course, the above concepts ('the Overton window of political possibilities', 'framing' and 'propaganda / manipulation'²⁰) belong to the same realm and are interrelated²¹. Let us deal with the problem of 'success' in this field.

It is tempting to follow the path of reasoning of E.L. Bernays, J.G. Lehman, N.J. Russell, A. Tversky, D. Kahneman, J.N. Druckman:

- 1) in the case of the 'Overton window of political possibilities': act within the window or shift it
- 2) in the case of 'framing': choose and use the right (suitable, appropriate) 'frames in communication' in order to achieve the right 'frames in thought'
- 3) in the case of propaganda / manipulation: understand the mental processes and social patterns and mold the minds, form the tastes of the masses²².

However, is this path the correct one? I will present my remarks on the above opinions and concepts following the '7 golden questions' (who, why, where, when, what, how, by means of what?).

WHO?

According to the above-mentioned researchers, the masses (citizens, constituents, recipients) are manipulated by 'elites', politicians, officeholders, activists, think tanks and other groups – and the media. E.L. Bernays mentions an 'invisible government' (in a 'democratic' society!).

²⁰ cf A. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*, New Haven 1978; A. Zwoliński, *Propaganda*, in: *Encyklopedia Białych Plam*, Radom 2005, p.73–79; J. Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, New York 1979.

²¹ cf the book of M. Karwat, *Sztuka manipulacji politycznej*, Toruń 2001; M. Karwat distinguishes (open) persuasion from (hidden) manipulation.

²² J.G. Lehman, op.cit., N.J. Russell, op.cit., J.N. Druckman, op.cit.; E.L. Bernays, op.cit..

Let us focus on the so-called 'elites'. According to J.N. Druckman: 'Manipulation occurs when an elite influences a citizens preference in a deleterious way, meaning, for example, that the influence induces preferences that either are based on incorrect or biased information..., differ from what preferences would be if they were based on the best available information..., or cause the person to act against his or her interests...' ²³. According to Webster's Dictionary, 'elite' is: 'a minority group or stratum that exerts influence, authority, or decisive power...' ²⁴.

In fact, 'elite' can be interpreted in several ways. Let us mention here two of them:

- 1) democratically elected groups,
- 2) selected (in this or another way) groups (cf the Bilderberg Club, the European Commission, the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations).

One could add here such cases as the pseudocommunist dynasty of North Korea (Korean People's Democratic Republic). This matter is not so simple (eg A. Hitler came to power in 1933 as the winner in democratic elections). Some of these 'elected' or 'selected' 'elites' can be described as psychopathic (eg the 'elites' headed by Stalin in the Soviet Union (> famine / mass starvation, purges, genocide) and Pol Pot in Cambodia (1975–1979; genocide).

It seems to be obvious to distinguish the main manipulators from their human and organizational 'tools' (eg experts (such as J. Sachs, J. Stiglitz, F. Fukuyama²⁵), think tanks (eg The Tavistock Institute, The RAND Corporation), institutions (eg International Monetary Fund, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development), the media (owners), etc.). However,

²³ J.N. Druckman, *The Implications...*, op.cit., p. 233.

²⁴ Webster's..., op.cit., p. 736.

²⁵ J. Sachs, *The End of Poverty. How We Can Make It Happen In Our Lifetime*, 2005 (Polish ed.: Warsaw 2006); J.E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2002 (Polish ed.: Warsaw 2004); F. Fukuyama, *State Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, Cornell University Press, 2004; F. Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, Profile Books, 2011; F. Fukuyama (the Monitor Group, Cambridge, MA; previously a member of the RAND Corporation's Political Science Department) advised Muammar Gaddafi (2006–2008).

some researchers (eg N.J. Russell, J.G. Lehman) practically raise such organizations as ‘think tanks’ to the level of main manipulators.

WHAT?

The above-mentioned concepts are connected with ‘attitude change’.

According to A.M. Colman, ‘attitude change’ is: ‘the process whereby an attitude (...) towards a person, object, or issue becomes more or less favourable, usually as a consequence of persuasion’²⁶. In particular, ‘attitude change’ may lead to ‘less freedom’, ‘less democracy’, ‘less money for more work’ etc.

However, it seems to be useful to mention here ‘temporary attitude stabilization’ (sometimes it is better to hide the real intentions – for example, in the course of an electoral campaign)²⁷.

According to E.L. Bernays: ‘... we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons... who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind’²⁸. L. Beinhart calls it: ‘wag(ging) the dog’²⁹.

WHY?

The question ‘why?’ is associated with knowledge (eg with regard to such issues as: frames, real (visible and invisible) mechanisms, pacing (manipulator – recipients of manipulation), foreknowledge³⁰, illusions and mental health / state of mind (cf the cases of J.B. Bokassa, Idi Amin, Pol

²⁶ A.M. Colman, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

²⁷ cf M. and R. Friedman, *The Tyranny of Status Quo*, New York 1983; Polish ed.: Sosnowiec 1997.

²⁸ E.L. Bernays, *Propaganda*, *op.cit.*, p.10.

²⁹ B. Levinson, *Wag the dog*, New Line Productions 1997; L. Beinhart, *Fog facts*, Nation Books, 2006; D. Lakhani, *Subliminal Persuasion: Influence & Marketing Secrets They Don't Want You To Know*, 2008, Polish ed.: Gliwice 2010.

³⁰ cf Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Oxford 1963, p. 144; C. Coker, *What Would Sun Tzu Say about the War on Terrorism?*, “Royal United Services Institute Journal” 2002, Vol. 1.

Pot etc.). In fact, we live within numerous, more or less fuzzy, frames (eg political and geopolitical, religious / pseudoreligious, social, scientific, economic, ethnic frames). Some of them are artificial (cf such terms as: ‘frame building’, ‘frame setting’ > ‘frame shifting’)³¹, some semiartificial, and still other are natural.

In certain cases particular frames are more or less ‘contradictory’³². Some researchers tend to regard them as ‘living organisms’³³. For example, J.N. Druckman uses the term: ‘competing frames’³⁴. In certain cases one could speak of ‘hostile frames’ (eg hostile ideologies, religions / cults, etc.).

WHEN?

My impression is that the US researchers pay little attention to ‘time’. E.L. Bernays speaks of continuous manipulation (in a democratic society!)³⁵. M. and R. Friedman suggest the importance of the first 6–9 months for introducing significant and unpopular reforms³⁶.

However, it may be useful to mention such terms as: ‘short / long-lived frames’, ‘fast / slow shifting of the Overton window of political possibilities’, ‘fast / slow (gradual) manipulation with regard to political, social, religious frames’, etc³⁷.

³¹ cf D.A. Scheufele, *Framing as a theory of media effects*, “Journal of Communication”, 1999, Vol. 49, pp.103–122.

³² cf the ‘dual requirements’ in the European Union (eg: less emissions and more competitiveness); cf. B.Zb. Szalek, *Some praxiological remarks on the problems of the European Union*, “Reality of Politics” 2011, Vol. 2, pp.181–201; B.Zb. Szalek, *Kilka prakseologicznych uwag na temat Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej w Unii Europejskiej*, in: B.H. Toszek, A. Wojtaszak (Eds.), *Perspektywy rozwoju Wspólnej Polityki Rolnej po 2013r.*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 29–54; B.Zb. Szalek, *Kwestia wyzwań przed Unią Europejską w świetle prakseologii*, in: *Prezydencja jako wyzwanie dla Polski oraz szansa promocji jej interesów w Unii Europejskiej*, Szczecin 2011.

³³ cf the concept of ‘memes’: R. Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford 1989.

³⁴ J.N. Druckman, *The Implications...*, op.cit., p. 244.

³⁵ E.L. Bernays, op.cit., p. 10.

³⁶ M. and R. Friedman, op.cit.

³⁷ cf the slow ‘self-evolution’ of ‘religious frames’ – eg: the Christianity in the 1st century and now.

Another important aspect is: ‘the best moment / time’ (cf the remark of Jo Moore (a UK government press officer) on the 11th of September 2001: ‘It’s now a very good day to get at anything we want to bury’)³⁸. The question: ‘when?’ is associated with ‘situation’ (peace, crisis (financial, terrorist attacks, war, natural cataclysms, epidemics etc.).

WHERE?

The case of *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, a work by E.L. Bernays published in the USA and studied (as well as applied in practice) by J. Goebbels in Hitler’s Germany, illustrates that there are some ‘universal principles’ of manipulation, propaganda etc³⁹.

However, my impression is that the above-mentioned researchers focus their attention on local problems – in a ‘healthy democracy’ (i.e. in the USA). This problem can be illustrated by means of ‘political opportunity structures’⁴⁰.

It is obvious that different political systems offer different political opportunities. In 1986, H. Kitschelt understood these ‘structures’ as ‘filters’ between the mobilization (and choice of strategy) and its effects⁴¹. In 1994, S. Tarrow explained this concept as follows: ‘By political opportunity structure, I mean consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action affecting their expectations for success or failure’⁴². In 1999, C.A. Rootes indicated that: ‘More recent work

³⁸ A. Sparrow, ‘Sept 11: ‘a good day to bury bad news’, “Telegraph”, 10.10. 2001.

³⁹ E.L. Bernays, *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, OCLC 1923; E.L. Bernays, *Biography of an Idea: Memoirs of Public Relations Counsel*, New York 1965.

⁴⁰ cf P. Berger, T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: a Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York 1967.

⁴¹ H. Kitschelt, *Political opportunity structures and political protest: anti-nuclear movements in four democracies*, “British Journal of Political Science”, 1986, 16, p. 59; cf C.A. Rootes, *Political Opportunity Structures: promise, problems and prospects*, “La Lettre de la Maison Française d’Oxford” 1999, Vol. 10, p. 2.

⁴² S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: social movements and contentious politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1994 (> 1998), p. 85; cf C.A. Rootes, op.cit., p. 6.

(...) has gone a long way toward clarifying the discussion of 'political opportunity structures' by clearly distinguishing between the formal institutional structure of the state, the informal procedures and prevailing strategies used to deal with challengers, and the configuration of power and alliances in the party system⁴³. According to this researcher: 'political actors make history, but they do not so in circumstances of their own making. Instead, they encounter constraints and are presented with opportunities configured by the institutional arrangements and the prevailing patterns of political power which are the inescapable contexts of political action'⁴⁴. However, C.A. Rootes, discussing the work by H. Kitschelt, indicated that he: 'confounded structure and contingency'⁴⁵.

Of course, the above opinions must be brought back to reality (cf the 'democracy' in the pseudocommunist North Korea).

Another problem is connected with different (political, social etc.) levels of manipulation ('global manipulations', 'international manipulations', 'internal / local manipulations').

BY MEANS OF WHAT?

There are a variety of more or less interrelated (network-like structures⁴⁶) means. I do not think that it is necessary to deal here with obvious details. This question is connected with various 'tools', such as the media, organizations of 'experts' (eg think tanks (such as the Brookings Institution, the Institute of Political Studies), spin organizations, the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Central Intelligence Agency, sects and other religious structures) and more or less independent, clever individuals (gurus, priests, spindoc-

⁴³ C.A. Rootes, op.cit., p. 5.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 4.

⁴⁶ It may be useful to point at two opposite approaches to this problem, presented by D. Pipes (*Conspiracy. How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where it Comes From*, The Free Press, 1997 (Polish ed.: Warsaw 1998)) and D. Estulin (*The True Story of the Bilderberg Group*, Dadio Head, S.L., 2005 (Polish ed.: Katowice 2009)).

tors (eg E.L. Bernays: ‘the father of spin’), authorities⁴⁷, money, equipment, information etc.

HOW?

There are a variety of ways and tricks for ‘attitude change’ (shifting the Overton window, framing, reframing etc.)⁴⁸ I do not intend to present and discuss all of them in this short paper. Instead, let us have a look at some of them:

- 1) introducing the only right / correct / true / appropriate political / economic / social / ideology, cult etc. (cf: political correctness, god’s will, etc.)⁴⁹;
- 2) education.⁵⁰ For example, according to N.J. Russell, a think tank: ‘should not focus on direct policy advocacy, bur instead should focus on educating lawmakers and the public in an attempt to change the political climate... This is the true influence of a think tank – shaping the political climate of future legislative and legal debates by researching, educating, involving and inspiring’.⁵¹ For example, the European Commission (< Russia < Gazprom) tries to educate Polish citizens that exploitation of shale gas in Poland is bad for the environment: the best solution to this problem is importing Russian gas (this gas is very expensive (c. 500 USD / 1, 000 cubic m; in the USA the exploitation of shale gas resources results in a considerable (c. 50%) reduction of gas price)⁵²;

⁴⁷ Such as J. Sachs in Bolivia and Poland (‘mentor’ of L. Balcerowicz).

⁴⁸ cf V. Volkoff, *La désinformation*, Paris 1986; D. Lakhani, op.cit.; R. Cialdini, *Influence: Science and Practice*, Boston 2001; R. Potocki, *Dezinformacja*, in: *Encyklopedia Białych Plam*, Radom 2001, pp. 43–45.

⁴⁹ cf the annihilation of Polish shipyards on the grounds of the EU regulations.

⁵⁰ cf B.K. Eakman, *Educating For the New World Order*, Halcyon House, 1991.

⁵¹ N.J. Russell, op.cit., pp. 1–2.

⁵² cf: T. Wójcik, *Gaz z łupków – między biznesem a polityką*, “GazetaPolska”, 30.11.2011, p. 23; P. Skuteli, *ShaleGas Poland 2012: The Energy Independence Conference* (a relation), 10.5.2012, <http://www.sgp2012/?file=home>, (accessed: 03.09.2012); V. Paniuşkin, M. Zygar, *Gazprom. Russkoye oruzhie*, 2008 (Polish ed.: Warsaw 2008).

- 3) brainwashing (one could mention here the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (London) and his 'brainwashing techniques')⁵³;
- 4) relativization (eg: apparent / illusory and real virtues, apparent / illusory and real faults⁵⁴, permissiveness, demoralization⁵⁵);
- 5) 'creative presentation of facts' (eg: 'political imperatives' of Pol Pot, A. Hitler, V. Lenin, J. Stalin, Mao Tse-tung; cf 'spin' and 'spin tactics'⁵⁶);
- 6) 'prognoses', 'forecasts' (eg global warming, overpopulation, energy)⁵⁷;
- 7) 'halo effect'⁵⁸ (eg 'reconciliation in other matters' (cf the meeting in 2012 of Polish and Russian priests ('reconciliation') and the plane crash (attempt ?)⁵⁹ in Smolensk / Russia in 2010 (96 victims: among them – Lech Kaczyński, President of Poland, and top military commanders)⁶⁰);
- 8) 'contrast' (choosing the lesser of two evils, comparisons, benchmarking, ranking, rating, polls). According to A.M. Colman, 'contrast' is: 'A distinction between things being compared, or an emphasis on the

⁵³ cf Ph.G. Zimbardo, *Mind Control: Psychological Reality or Mindless Rhetoric?*, "Monitor of Psychology" 2012, No. 11, <http://www.icsahome.com/inforerv-articles/zimbardo-philip-mindcontrol.htm>; (accessed: 03.09.2012); N. Begich, *Controlling the Human Mind*, Anchorage 2006; K. Taylor, *Brainwashing: The Science of Thought Control*, Oxford 2006; R.J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: a Study of Brainwashing in China*, Chapel Hill 1989; B.T. Weeks, *Tavistock. The Best Kept Secret in America*, 31.07. 2001, <http://educate-yourself.Org/nwo/nwotavistockbestkeptsecret.Shtml>; (accessed: 03.09.2012).

⁵⁴ cf N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*; Polish ed., Warsaw 1993.

⁵⁵ cf Sun Tzu, op.cit.; Sun Pin, *Military Methods of the Art of War*; New York 1998, p. 243; J. Darski, *Wojna psychologiczna*, "Gazeta Polska", 23.2.2011, p. 15; V. Volkoff, op.cit..

⁵⁶ L. Tye, *The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays & the Birth of PR*, "PR Watch", 1999, 6, 2; A.S. Roberts, *Spin Control and Freedom of Information: Lessons for the United Kingdom from Canada*, "Public Administration", 2005, Vol. 83, No. 1; V. Volkoff, op.cit.

⁵⁷ cf D. Yergin, *The Quest. The Global Race for Energy, Security and Power*, Penguin Books, 2011.

⁵⁸ cf A.M. Colman, op.cit., p.322.

⁵⁹ cf *Oficjalny raport sejmowy potwierdza: Tupolewa rozerwały dwie duże eksplozje*, Im, wg, "Gazeta Polska", 12.09.2012, pp. 17–19.

⁶⁰ cf A. Ścios, *Kombinacja operacyjna 'pojednanie'*, "Gazeta Polska", 5.09.2012, p. 18.

distinction between things that are juxtaposed⁶¹. For example: the situation in other countries is much worse than in Poland (Poland is a 'Green Island' of Donald Tusk). A 'contrast just in case' or a 'handy contrast' can be illustrated by means of North Korea (earlier Cambodia of Pol Pot) and continental pseudocomunist China;

- 9) 'false alternative' (eg: should we join the 'Euro-zone' in 2013 or in 2014 ?; cf the 'independent third party' of E.L. Bernays: experts express their opinions on the grounds of false alternatives⁶²;
- 10) 'repetition' (cf the case of Norway and Denmark: Norway rejected membership of the European Economic Community / European Union in two referendums: in 1973 and 1994; in 1992 Denmark rejected in a referendum the ratification of Maastricht Treaty, however, the next referendum (in 1993) was in favour)⁶³;
- 11) 'agenda setting' (according to J.N. Druckman: 'Agenda setting (cf 'frame setting' – B.Zb. Szalek), media priming, and persuasion are distinct but related concepts of framing'⁶⁴);
- 12) 'attacking the heart' (Sun Pin: 'You must turn their hearts (...) with (the prospect of) substantial profits'⁶⁵);
- 13) 'entanglement / involvement' (cf the technique of 'tie-in'). For example: Russia could accept new American military installations in Europe – within a common (North American – European – Russian) system⁶⁶;
- 14) 'staging' (eg the Trust Operation led by F. Dzierżyński against B. Savinkov (captured in 1924 by the OGPU, sentenced and murdered)⁶⁷; a good illustration of staging presents the radio program (extraterrestrial invasion) by Orson Welles on 30th Oct. 1938);

⁶¹ A.M. Colman, op.cit., p.165.

⁶² cf D. Lakhani, op.cit., p.55.

⁶³ cf A. Butler, *Collins Dictionary of Dates*, Glasgow 1996.

⁶⁴ J.N. Druckman, *The Implications...*, op.cit., p. 247.

⁶⁵ Sun Pin, op.cit., p. 243.

⁶⁶ cf G. Pawłowski, *Rosja nie zamierza rozpocząć zimnej wojny z Zachodem*, "Dziennik", 5.07.2007, p. 20.

⁶⁷ cf R.B. Spence, *Boris Savinkov: Renegade on the Left*, Columbia University Press, 1991.

- 15) 'insolent lies' (eg : CIA and the mass destruction weapons in Iraq);
- 16) 'fear' as 'tool' ('fear facilitates manipulation' > less freedom in political, military, religious, economic, ethnic, social, scientific structures (cf danger from outside, external enemy, internal enemy ('ethnic purges'); extermination of entire town populations in order to make other communities surrender (Genghiz Khan, in the 13th century). According to P.D. Collins: terrorism is in the USA a method of generating 'changes'⁶⁸;
- 17) 'creation of facts'. For example:
 - a) the fire of the Reichstag building (27.2.1933) said to be caused by communist agents of the Comintern and the following events;
 - b) the assassination (air crash) of President of Rwanda in 1994 and the following civil war (practically genocide).

According to E.L. Bernays, 'modern propaganda' means 'provocation, 'shaping / creation of events'⁶⁹. Some provocations are so clever that it is difficult to assess their true nature.

This problem can be illustrated with the case of the attack on the WTC towers in New York in 2001. Some researchers (eg Prof. L. Margulis, Prof. S. Wiąckowski, Prof. A. Parzymies, D. Avery) do not accept the official interpretation of the attack⁷⁰. They suggest a conspiracy in order to introduce a 'police state' (cf the 'Patriot Act') in the USA and to present a 'casus belli' for the war on Iraq (huge oil resources)⁷¹.

Some researchers interpret the explosions in Russia (Moscow, Volgondonsk) and Dagestan in 1994–1999 (subway, living quarters, trade centre; hundreds of victims) as cryptoterrorist provocations arranged by Russian

⁶⁸ P.D. Collins, *Ukryte oblicze terroryzmu*, Nexus, 2003, 7–8, p. 10–17; cf B.Z. Szalek, *Kilka prakseologicznych uwag na temat walki z terroryzmem*, in: K. Kowalczyk, W. Wróblewski (Eds.), *Oblicza współczesnego terroryzmu*, Toruń 2006, p.14.

⁶⁹ cf E.L. Bernays, *Propaganda*, op.cit.; D. Lakhani, op.cit., p.56.

⁷⁰ S. Wiąckowski, *Tragedia z 11 września 2001 roku i jej tajemnice*, "Nexus" 2012, No. 7–8, p. 31; *Islam a terroryzm*, ed. A. Parzymies, Warszawa 2003, p. 32; D. Avery, *Loose Change* (film), <http://www.loosechange9.11.com> (accessed: 20.09.2013), Polish version: *11 September. Niewygodne fakty*, Mercury Media, 2006.

⁷¹ cf A. Berinsky, J. Druckman, *Public Opinion research and support for the Iraq war*, "Public Opinion Quarterly" 2007, No. 71, pp. 126–141.

secret services, in order to introduce in the Russian Federation a 'police state' and to give a 'casus belli' for the war on Chechnya⁷². M. Sixsmith associates the Russian invasion on Chechnya (4.10.1999) with the presidential elections in Russia (26.3.2000)⁷³. By a strange turn of fate, the Muslim (?) attack on the WTC towers in New York in 2001 made look the Russian – Chechen war like a war on the terrorism of islamic fundamentalists⁷⁴.

18) 'diversion' (by means of 'attractors', created 'facts' etc.). It is symptomatic that 'serious' US researchers in this field prefer to deal with doubtful simulation models than with such structures as the Council on Foreign Affairs.

Of course, the above methods, tricks, techniques and issues are, more or less, interrelated.

FINAL REMARKS AND QUESTIONS

It may be useful to present some remarks and questions by means of the following sequence:

- 1) the 'original' window / frame (unthinkable > policy, impossible > possible, etc.);
- 2) shifting the window / frame (attitude change);
- 3) the shifted window / frame.

Of course, the adjective: 'original' (window, frame) should be understood properly (in fact, the 'windows', 'frames' evolve – and – are shifted)⁷⁵. In each case politicians have at their disposal some traditional 'tools',

⁷² cf M. Sixsmith, *The Litvinienko File*, 2007 (Polish ed.: Poznań 2007); A. Litvinienko, *Łubianskaya priestupnaya gruppirovka* (Polish ed.: Warsaw 2007); A. Litvinienko, J. Felsztinski, *Blowing up Russia: The Secret Plot to Bring Back KGB Terror*, London 2007 (Polish ed.: Poznań 2007); M. Gessen, *The Man Without a Face. The Unlikely Rise of Vladimir Putin*, 2012 (Polish ed.: Warsaw 2012).

⁷³ M. Sixsmith, op.cit. (Polish ed.), pp. 154–155.

⁷⁴ see M. Gessen, op.cit.

⁷⁵ cf the evolution of religions, cults, political ideologies etc.

such as , for example, the golden rule '20 : 80' (ranking of importance, priorities), various levers / leverages, gears etc⁷⁶.

In 1928 E. L. Bernays expressed the following opinion: 'If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our (i.e.: whose ?) will without their knowing about it? The recent practice of propaganda has proved that it is possible, at least up to a certain point and within certain limits'⁷⁷.

The whole process must be assessed / evaluated by means of: 'utility', 'usefulness', 'efficiency', 'effectiveness' (one thing is: 'usefulness of the aim / target / purpose of manipulation', and another thing is: 'effectiveness of manipulation'). In certain cases the purpose of manipulation can be sound in itself (cf 'healthy democratic polity'), but 'absurd political aims' cannot be excluded (imagine: 'efficient manipulation in order to attain erroneous / illusory aims')⁷⁸.

Another problem is: 'necessity / reasonability of manipulation' (> : 'shifting the window'). This issue can be illustrated by means of Russia: this huge country has a Gross Domestic Product smaller (1, 480 bn USD) than Italy in crisis (2, 051 bn USD; no gold, no diamonds, no oil, no gas)⁷⁹. It seems that Russian top politicians are more interested in manipulations than in improving their own economy.

The obvious fact that 'politicians are only human' directs our attention to the problem: 'private interests – public welfare' (in other words: efficient governing versus efficient enslaving).

Numerous authors emphasize the problem of effectiveness of manipulation. According to J.N. Druckman: 'Some work along these lines suggests that frames vary in the pervasiveness depending on who sponsors the frame (e.g., which politicians promote the frame), media practices (e.g.,

⁷⁶ cf: spend 1, 000 USD in order to save 1 billion USD.

⁷⁷ E.L. Bernays, *Propaganda*, op.cit., p. 71.

⁷⁸ cf B.Zb. Szalek, *Some praxiological remarks on the problems of the European Union*, "Reality of Politics", 2011, 2, p. 183–201; V. Volkoff, op.cit. (cf "Le Monde" and the atrocities of Pol Pot).

⁷⁹ J. Darski, *Nowa geopolityka*, "NowePaństwo" 2011, 2; cf *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland*, Warsaw 2011, p. 877.

how do journalists choose frames), and cultural resonances (e.g. does the frame resonate with larger cultural themes)...⁸⁰. Researchers admit that there is a problem with 'effectiveness' of such activities (J.N. Druckman: 'sometimes they work and other times they don't')⁸¹. There can be no doubt that 'effectiveness of manipulations' (such as 'shifting the Overton window', 'framing' and 'reframing') depends on numerous factors such as: source credibility, pacing, time (the right moment, etc.), speed, continuity, make up / camouflage ('flexibility'), ethics (especially 'zero ethics').

Another interesting problem is connected with the 'threshold of effectiveness'. One could illustrate it with the case of four enigmatic explosions in Dniepropetrovsk in Russia (27.4.2012; nobody knew what they were about)⁸². In the case of terrorist activities in such countries as Sri Lanka (LTTE; c. 100, 000 victims), Spain (ETA; c. 800 victims), Algeria (Muslim fundamentalists; c. 100, 000 victims) their effectiveness is 'zero'⁸³.

Another question is: how efficient are the activities within the shifted Overton window / frame of political possibilities⁸⁴? A good illustration presents the Iraqi conflict⁸⁵.

And what about 'predictability' of such manipulations as 'frame building', 'reframing', 'shifting the Overton window', etc. ?

J.N. Druckman applies the expression: 'competing frames' in connection with 'political programs' (programs of political parties)⁸⁶. However, in reality, globally thinking, there are numerous more or less interrelated, more or less competing, or even hostile / inimical 'windows', 'frames' subject to further manipulations (such as shifting etc.; these manipulations may result from interactions between them)⁸⁷. This complex of windows

⁸⁰ J.N. Druckman, *The Implication...*, op.cit., p. 244.

⁸¹ J.N. Druckman, *On the Limits...*, op.cit., p. 1041.

⁸² cf A. Rybczyński, *Dniepropietrowska prowokacja*, "Gazeta Polska", 9.05.2012, p. 25.

⁸³ cf B.Zb. Szalek, *Kilka prakseologicznych uwag na temat walki z terroryzmem*, op.cit.

⁸⁴ cf the situation in Russia>Soviet Union after the 'Great Revolution'.

⁸⁵ cf J.E. Stiglitz, L. Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: the true cost of the long conflict*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2008.

⁸⁶ However, it cannot be excluded that in some cases the same political player sponsors major / main 'competing frames'.

⁸⁷ cf the 'hullabaloo/row of ethics' in the works of F. Koneczny: *Rozwój moralności*, Antyk, 1997; *Prawa dziejowe*, Antyk, 1997.

/ frames exists in a very differentiated environment (natural, artificial (political, social / demographic, ethnic, religious, economic, military, etc.)). All this means that any manipulations are subject to unpredictable, unforeseen factors, events etc. Therefore, the results of manipulations of this kind cannot be described as 'entirely predictable'⁸⁸.

On the other hand, there are researchers, such as B. Bueno de Mesquita or G. Friedman, who present political forecasts and prognoses. For example, B. Bueno de Mesquita is called by some of his admirers: 'the modern day Nostradamus', or 'the next Nostradamus' (90% of his political (rather short-term) forecasts are said to have come true)⁸⁹. G. Friedman deals with long-term (100 years) forecasts⁹⁰.

From the viewpoint of common sense and praxiology, there is an obvious discrepancy between such ways of manipulation as 'windows', 'frames' (applied in numerous sectors and countries, on different levels of political, social, financial etc. structures) and the 'political forecasts' of this kind.

Perhaps, it would be useful to focus the research on the predictability of the results of short and long-term shifting of windows / frames of political possibilities / opportunities.

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⁸⁸ Let us recall the situation in France: in 1793 the unthinkable 'kingdom' becomes 'republic', and in 1804 the desired 'republic' becomes 'empire' (a higher level of 'monarchy').

⁸⁹ cf. B. Bueno de Mesquita, *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behaviour is Almost Always Good Politics*, Random House 2011; *The Predictioneer's Game: Using the Logic of Brazen Self-Interest to See and Shape the Future*, Random House, 2009; B. Bueno de Mesquita, A. Smith, R.M. Siverson, J.D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, MIT Press, 2003.

⁹⁰ G. Friedman, *The Next 100 Years. A Forecast for the 21st Century*, 2009 (Polish ed.: Warsaw 2009).

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