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Features of Ukrainian mass media political discourse in the “post-Maidan” period

- What is democracy in Ukrainian?
- It means voting until the real democrats are chosen.
(Anecdote from *Segodnya* newspaper, 18.01.2010)

Events related to the presidential elections of 2004 (known as the “Orange Revolution”, and in oppositional discourse as “the so-called Orange Revolution”, “orange Sabbath”, “orange coup”, for example), have changed the orientation of Ukraine's political development, and with it the discourses of politics and the mass media.

The live broadcast of “the revolution on Maidan”¹ by the ‘5th TV Channel’ served as a release mechanism for new trends in the development of Ukrainian society. These include unprecedented politicisation of all groups of society, the involvement of the general public in mass media political discourse, and recently in aspects of this such as internet communications.

The electoral processes that have been taking place in Ukraine since 2004 at both national and local levels (presidential, parliamentary, and local councils of deputies and mayors, in regular and pre-term elections), have significantly increased the role of the mass media in the life of Ukrainian society. Examples of this are the increased number of political talk shows on central TV channels which have high ratings and one or two repeats, and the active use of print media, online media and outdoor advertising by politicians and political scientists during presidential campaigns. All this invites the assertion that the mediatization of living space in Ukrainian society after the events of 2004 has reached a critical point, and one of the models of mass media influence on a social level, the media addiction model (Kudryavtseva/Filatenko 2007, p. 331-337) has been realised in Ukraine. This model is directly connected with instability in social and political life. Under the conditions of the power crisis (2004-2010), Ukrainian citizens are more often turning to mass media as a

¹ Maidan – from Maidan Nezalezhnosti, ‘Independence Square’, the central square in Kyiv where the events of 2004 took place.

source of not only information but also psychological comfort. And the media, in turn, have a unique opportunity to exercise influence over largely defenceless citizens. Distinctive features of the Ukrainian mass media political discourse of the post-Maidan period are combative polemic and aggression, which have determined the overall direction of influence, including the selection of both verbal and nonverbal methods of expression. Modern Ukrainian political thinking in general is not characterised by tolerance. In the context of the narrative “Elections”, political language tends to be uncompromising, implacable and aggressive. Political intolerance of public officials (including national leaders), scandals, accusations of criminal pasts, betrayal of national interests, of separatism and illegal, anti-state activity have become part of everyday life, and can clearly be seen in the media content of the period 2004-2010.

We can observe these phenomena during the election campaign in Ukraine. The desire to discredit an opponent involves not only the attempted psychological impact on those individuals, the direct participants in the contest, but more importantly on the third parties, the listeners, viewers and readers, in order to impose their negative evaluations and to have a manipulative effect. The existence of a system of pre-established values in Ukrainian society allows the speaker or writer to convince their audience without argumentation, and also to have a large-scale manipulative effect on public consciousness, using mass media as a channel.

Investigation of Ukrainian media discourse shows that the participants in the narrative “Elections” widely use both positive and negative value judgements in their discursive practice. Moreover, positive value judgements of presidential candidates currently in power are mainly connected with allegations concerning achievements in economic, political and social spheres, for example: “We have achieved great progress in economy [...] The economic growth rates were almost the biggest in Europe [...] [with a steep decline in European production in this period, resulting from the economic crisis – L.K.] I am proud of this [...]” (Viktor Yushchenko, the President of Ukraine, presidential candidate, cited in *Facty*, 05.01.2010).

Positive value judgements made by presidential candidates from the opposition represent various achievements and benefits in the future, in case they win the elections: “I will make Ukraine a truly independent country [...] I will strengthen democracy [...] Ukraine will become a state for people” (Viktor Yanukovich, leader of the Party of Regions, presidential candidate, cited in *Komsomolskaya Pravda in Ukraine*, 05.01.2010).

There is a wide range of variants among negative value judgements. Firstly, **they represent accusations of incompetence in general, or ignorance of some professional issues in particular. Negative assessment of the opponent's mental abilities is also seen.** Such accusations come not only from the opposition, as might have been expected (e.g.: “The current ruling regime is not capable of *implementing reasonable fiscal reform* during global financial crisis”, *BLIC*, 17.12.2008), but also from one element of the existing power structure to another: “The agreement signed by you [with Russia on gas supplies – L.K.] – is a capitulation. You are *mediocrities!*” (the President addressing the Government, cited in *Rabochaya Gazette*, 07.-13.02.2009).

The most frequently used model of value judgements in modern Ukrainian media discourse is **accusing opponents of excessive zeal for power.** Judgements of this type are used as an argument by all participants of the political narrative “Elections”: “Today you *go over the corpses* for the sake of your goal” (the President addressing the Prime Minister, “*Rabochaya Gazette*”, 07.-13.02.2009), “I clearly see that you [the President of Ukraine – L.K.] now focus not on the problems of Ukraine but only consider how *to stay in power.* And you are ready to use even the global financial crisis to this end?” (ex-President Leonid Kravchuk, www.unian.net, 24.02.2009); “[...] his [Leader of the Party of Regions – L.K.] words about the existence of an anti-crisis program are perceived as another *attempt to return to the lost power feeder*” (www.unian.net, 22.12.2008).

It should be noted that the value judgements, accusing the opponent of harming either the country, a particular region or the country's borders, are heard mostly in relation to each other from the representatives of one political force, which came to power after the “Orange Revolution”: “You *brought Ukraine to default* in 1997” (the Prime Minister addressing the President, *Rabochaya Gazette*, 07.-13.02.2009); “Timoshenko led to power people with criminal convictions, and her deputies are involved in *the capture of other people's businesses and other illegal actions with land* in the Kiev region” (President Yushenko, *Segodnya*, 24.12.2008).

We can also find examples of value judgements **accusing opponents of not only the aggravation of confrontation and the collapse of the coalition** (for example, Timoshenko said that Yushchenko's coalition had ‘fallen apart’ – *BLIC* 03.09.2008), but also of unfairness, dishonesty, and moral violation “At the end of the NSCU meeting [National Security Council of Ukraine – L.K.] the Interior Minister supposedly called up the Kyiv mayor and said that he was “*just a liar and padlyuka*”, but he got a kick on his knee” (www.unian.net,

25.01.2008); “It’s a shock! Not so long ago in 2004 they tearfully embraced in Maidan, then quarrelled about scandal, made it up and now they *fight and backheel* again” (*BLIC*, 22.12.2008). These value judgements give evidence of the decay of a once united “orange” team, and relatedly, the destabilisation of the political situation in the country.

The Ukrainian mass media political discourse during the election campaign in 2004 is characterised by irrational accusations of the type “They are – thugs”, “He/she is a thief.” In 2004 they came from the oppositional political forces, in the “postorange” period – mainly from “orange” forces who gained power (specifically government leaders and high ranking officials). Such assessments are used as modes of address. This had not been observed previously, in all the previous years of Ukraine as an independent state. In the mass media we find these judgements in the form of direct or indirect quotations: “*Thief and podkabluchniki!*” (the President about the Prime Minister and her companions, *BLIC*, 23.12.2008); “Yulia, you were regularly *stealing* that gas and now you are lecturing on how to get rid of corruption? You have *a gift for theft*, may God forgive me!” (the President addressing the Prime Minister, *Rabochaya Gazette*, 07.-13.02.2009); “I knew Pavel Lazarenko [ex-Prime Minister of Ukraine, a former business partner of the current Prime Minister and presidential candidate, Yulia Timoshenko. He is currently serving a prison sentence in the U.S. – L.K.] and Yulia Timoshenko, and spoke to them in person. These are *the thieves* of the largest ‘class’, said Chernovetskiy, the mayor of Kiev” (www.unian.net, 09.02.2007).

The use of ideologically marked vocabulary in order to identify “our people” and “others”, forming mass consciousness archetypes of Good and Evil, is known to be one method of discursive influence. For example, in the discourse of “orange” parties we find this kind of vocabulary – *holodomor*, *democracy*, *democratic coalition*, *European integration*, *European standards*, *Euro-Atlantic integration* (membership in NATO), *pro-Ukrainian policy* etc. In the discourse of political opponents we find phrases such as – *friendship with Russia*, *European vector*, *social standards*, *federalization*, *the country’s unification*, *single economic space (SES)*, *the official status of the Russian language*, *local government reform*, *systemic reform* and *political stability*.

An ideological function is also performed by verbal labels, which are markers of otherness and symbols of evil, and suggest a negative evaluation, forming an enemy image in public consciousness.

Labels in Ukrainian mass media discourse are used widely and variously. During the parliamentary election campaigns they relate mostly to the names of

political trends, parties, ideologies and social phenomena, as in: a) *anti-Ukrainian policy, Russian-Soviet party, “Kuchma's children”, the party of Donetsk bandits, “bandyuki of Donetsk”, “Dony”* (the inhabitants of Donetsk), *pro-Moscow politicians, Kremlin's agents, the fifth column, the hand of Moscow/Kremlin* – on the one hand, and on the other hand b) *banderovtsy, “nashisty”* (representatives of the party “Our Ukraine”), *natsiki, “orange”, “pomerantsy”* (from the Ukrainian “помаранчевий”), *pro-American policy/politicians, pro-NATO policy/politicians/president, fascists, “maydanutye”* (those who stood in Maidan in 2004, Yushchenko's supporters), *galichansko-Chicago-camarilla* (about the West-Ukrainian supporters of Yushchenko, the appeal to American citizenship and Yushchenko's wife's birthplace, Chicago), *orange clan, orange putsch, yuschenizm.*

During presidential election campaigns the group of labels discrediting a political opponent by creating a negative image is updated. It may be insulting epithets, metaphors or names, or titles which describe a candidate for the presidency and cause emotional and negative attitude towards them. Examples of this include (about Yanukovich): *con, Bandyukovich, Prime Minister-hatter* (a reference to his criminal record), *proffesor* (a reference to a questionnaire published in the media in 2004 and answered by Yanukovich); about Yushchenko: *“three percent” president, “kefirnyi” rating of the president* (reference to the 2.5-3% rating in opinion polls of 2009), *“beekeeper”* (referring to the President's hobby).

For the first time in the election campaign in Ukraine the highest state officials used gross and insulting labels, reflected in mass media discourse. Commenting on the income declaration of Yulia Tymoshenko, the President addressed the Prime Minister as follows: *“Bomzh! Where does the Prime Minister get hundreds of millions of hryvnia for advertising if she has no flat, no piece of land, no car?! Bomzh! Is it possible to live homeless for 50 years?”* (*Vlast Deneg* No. 48, November 2009). The labels *“Bomzh”* and *“Bomzhulya”* (a blend of *bomzh* + *Julya*, by analogy with *Tigryulya*, from political advertising used by Yulia Timoshenko) and *“Lady Bomzh”* began to appear actively in print media and on the Internet.

Labels that express irony or sarcasm have become widespread in Ukrainian mass media political discourse. Some examples are: *“kytsya”* (Russian “ko-shechka”), *“our kytsya”, “gas princess”* (about Yulia Tymoshenko, in the last example, a reference to her past management of a power engineering company and related to these criminal scandals in Ukraine, Russia and the United States), *“Catherine Claire”* (about Katerina Yushenko, the wife of the president, a U.S.

citizen of Ukrainian origin, used intensively in the 2004 presidential campaign), “*Messiah*” (about Yushchenko), and “*Rabbit Senya*” (about Arseniy Yatsenyuk).

The appearance of labels may be explained by negative reaction to a politician's statements. Thus, the address “lyubi druzi” (favorite friends) in a public speech of the president has become a generic name for the President's closest supporters. It has a negative connotation. The suggestive power of the Ukrainian phrase “lyubi druzi” is increased (through code-switching) by its use in Russian-language texts in order to describe such phenomena as nepotism and corruption around the President: “Do the events that happened in the last Congress of ‘Our Ukraine’ [the President's party – L.K.] mean that the party began a serious process of staff renewal, a release from ‘lyubih druziv’?” (*Kiev Telegraph*, 27.10.-02.11.2006), “The remaining half [referring to the IMF loan – L.K.] “was assimilated” by “lyubi druzi”, with the help of their own and family firms and companies with ‘tenders on state purchasing’. There are legends about this” (2000, No. 13, 27.03.-02.04.2009).

Some political labels entered mass media discourse even in 2004, and have retained their potential influence up to today. Such labels as *professor*, *lyubi druzi*, *donetskie*, *nashysty*, *orange*, *pomerantsy*, *beekeeper*, *gas princess* have been actively used all this time. These words cause a negative evaluative attitude towards one or another part of society (depending on who the reader supports).

The distinctive feature of Ukrainian mass media political discourse of 2004-2010 is an appeal to the psycho-emotional sphere of the addressee, which intensifies the effect of the media. The modern mass media are characterised by appeals to real or imagined fears on the part of the reader or viewer, compounded by the high speed and continuous flow of their delivery. This approach makes it impossible to comprehend the message rationally and logically, thus emphasising emotional perception. Constant appeal to the same fears, due to the repetition of the corresponding verbal labels, convince the recipient of the reality imposed on him or her, and of the enemy image created by those labels.

There are several basic fears exploited by Ukrainian politicians, political strategists and journalists. In the discourse of the “white-blue” opposition, the Regional Party and their supporters, – they are: a) **fear of nationalism (fascism)**: “*nashysty*” (about the members of the party “Our Ukraine”, a blend suggesting an analogy with the nomination “fashysty”), “*orange-brown hysteria*” (with the same analogy), “*natsiki*”, or ‘crawled out of caches’ (about nationalists, a reference to the OUN-UPA – Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, who had

been living in forest huts or “caches” in the postwar years, during the guerrilla war against the Soviets) and b) **fear of foreign influence** (e.g., *pro-NATO, pro-US politician/President*).

In the discourse of “orange” political forces the main fear actively exploited in times of election campaigns is the **fear of criminal organisations**. The verbal means of intensification of this fear are numerous.

Firstly, the following labels penetrated into the mass media in 2004: *con, Bandyukovich* (a blending from “bandit” + “Yanukovich”), *Donetsk bandits* (his companions), as well as new ones which appeared during the campaign period of 2009-2010: “*Donetsk patsanat*” (“Donetsk kids” – from the slang *kid* – a member of a criminal group), “*bandit territory*”. They create a negative image not only of political opponents, but all the region's voters supporting Yanukovich. The image of today's enemies is reinforced by the fear of real enemies of the distant past, for example in the case of the “*brigade-horde mentality*” of people from Donbass (*Ukrainsky Tyzhden*, 29.01.2010, No. 4), from the word *brigade* – a slangy word meaning “criminal gang”, *horde* – from the Tatar-Mongol horde, an implication of the conquest of modern Ukraine by the Tatar-Mongols of the historical past; “*cheeky horde from the east*” [about Donbass, an eastern region of Ukraine – L.K.], “*expropriating property and freedom*” (*Novaya Gazeta*, 26.01.2010). In the latter example the fear of losing property and freedom is expressed.

The non-standard vocabulary of criminal slang, which has been widely and actively used in “orange” political media discourse from 2004 to the present day, appears to be the verbal component of the mass media enemy image of political opponents (for example *mochilovo, bratki, havat', shesterit', brigadir, pahan* and many other nominations relating to the criminal world). In this regard, I must mention an extract from newly elected President Yushchenko's appeal to the heads of security services and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Donetsk region, in February 2004: “Guys, either you defend your country to the last drop of your blood according to the oath of allegiance, or become *brigadiers* for *tillages* (a TV programme “Television News Service” – All Ukrainian TV channel “1+1”, 10.02.2005)”. This statement conveys the presupposition “*law enforcement officials in the Donetsk region are criminals because they speak criminal slang*”. This interpretation is quite predictable. Manipulative impact is on the subconscious level without any rational and logical thinking.

Verbal aggression, explicitly conveyed by expressive-emotive words with negative evaluation, and the intensification of fear that results, have become a

hallmark of political discourse in the Ukrainian mass media, especially in the last three weeks between the first and the second rounds of the presidential election in Ukraine in 2010: “*hordes of Yanucovich* are frankly *hack*, and those who still do not understand, who are not aware of the *risk* in the situation, will likely *give them all that is available* in the near future. And won't utter a word.” (“Remember the heroes of Kruty – stop the *aggressive horde of Yanucovich*” – www.rupor.info, 29.01.2010). And these are not isolated examples. Thus, the newspaper *Svoboda* referring to the will of the citizens from the south-east of the country, disparagingly called the result of the first round of voting in the presidential election of 2010 “*the maloros uprising*” (uprising of the Ukrainians). And further: “It appears that the current elections are the first act of the Ukrainian Punch and Judy show, a mass spectacle demonstrating to the world an unbreakable inferiority complex and historically perverted ideas.” (*Svoboda*, 02.02.2010), etc.

Expressive terms such as *malorosy* (Little Russians, referring to the Ukrainians, which in the “orange” discourse has a negative evaluation), *vertep* (den), *puppet show*, *inferiority complex*, *perverted* form a very negative image of the ‘other’, referring to all voters from the south-east of Ukraine.

Another distinctive feature of the mass media political discourse of recent years in comparison with the 2004 election campaign is a wider usage of implication, which is known to possess greater attraction, because it assumes the recipient's participation in creating the message by extracting the hidden information. Interpreting the message in the manner intended by the writer or speaker, the addressee accepts the necessary information without seeking confirmation of its validity. This is how implication works. So, after the first round of the 2010 presidential election, one candidate for the presidency asked voters who voted in the first round “for other candidates of the *democratic forces*”: “I am convinced that when you voted for *new changes*, when you voted for new people, for new leaders you did not intend to *bring criminals to power*” (*Koms. Pravda in Ukraine*, 22.-28.02.2010); “I am sure that people *who voted for all candidates from the democratic forces*: Tigipko, Yatsenyuk, Suprun, Kostenko, – *do not intend the country to be led by criminals*” (*Facts*, 21.01.2010).

In these statements there are no explicit references to her political opponent with whom she came into the second round of elections, but just an opposition of “*democratic forces*” and “*new changes*” on the one hand, and “*criminals*” on the other. These expressions suggest that her opponent is supported by criminals. This reinforces a positive image of the addresser and a negative image of the unnamed but well-known politician implicitly referred to. This crea-

tion of a negative image, discrediting the opponent by means of implicit forms of attack, is a more subtle and effective way of achieving impact on the recipient, in comparison with explicit aggression.

As is well known, political slogans are highly influential in election campaigns. The most striking among them in 2004 were: “We are many – we will not be defeated!”, “Yushchenko – yes!”. In 2009 we had: “She works”. It appeared in the period of tough confrontation in Verkhovna Rada when the Regional Party deputies blocked the parliamentary rostrum in the fight for the adoption of the law on social standards. This prompted the appearance on advertising billboards of the slogan: “They block. She works.” Extensive discussions in the media of the situation in Parliament, as well as the above-noted mediatization of the Ukrainian society, made a pragmatic presupposition easily recognisable for recipients: ‘they’ are the Regional Party; ‘she’ is Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. The high evaluation of the prime minister as a presidential candidate is introduced in implicit form. The main purpose of the first part of the advertising text (“They block”) is to assign contrasting value and create an oppositional logical relationship. Without this polarised presentation of the leader and her opponents, the head of the government might be perceived in much more equivocal terms, against the background of the economic crises, declining productivity and increasing unemployment. It also, of course, serves to provide a negative evaluation of her opponent. During the election campaign the first part of political advertising changed the informing of all affairs of the Yulia Tymoshenko government, the second part – “she works” – remained unchanged.

However, the effect of this political slogan appears to have been doubtful. The fact that its meaning was only implicit allowed it to be taken up in advertising texts, including the play on words: “*She works. She is an automobile second-hand shop*” (an advertisement for a second hand car dealership); “*They work. We dance*” (advertisement for the dance club “Big Dance”); “*They speak. She works. But I take photos*” (advertisement for a camera); “*She works – you have a rest*” (advertisement for saunas); “*She works – we repair*” (advertisement for online computer support) and “*She works!!! You have a rest*” (advertisement in the subway). Furthermore, in a number of Ukrainian regions billboards appeared with counter-advertising slogans: “*She works. And robs Ukraine*”, “*They are kaka. She is swell*” (dolly), “*She works. They die. They are Ukrainians*” (a reference to the advertisement “She works. She is Ukraine”).

In the opposition media, the pronoun “she” was used with the denotative content “Prime Minister of Ukraine”. The substantivisation of the Ukrainian pro-

noun which occurs with the corresponding change of its grammatical paradigm creates a striking negative evaluative connotation in the context: “And besides I noticed that VONA [SHE] has blank eyes like buttons” (2000, 01.01.2010); “And yet VONA [SHE] is struggling with the crisis and the epidemic” (The President is struggling with VONROY); bypass gas pipelines are being built (2000, 11.12.2009); “not led (or led) forces push VONU (her) at the same chair” (ibid); “For whom the crisis is a war, and for whom VONA (she)! Here is one in the country for whom there is no crisis, it is “premyerka” (Prime Minister) – she celebrated her own nomination with the merchant sweep!” (2000, 30.10.2009); “Creative directors of VONY (she) have raised the bar” (*Segodnya*, 15.01.2010).

The irony and sarcasm conveyed by the nomination “VONA” (she) is supported graphically, and in some cases by means of other lexical expressions in one syntagmatic set: *tsyatsya*, *dolly*, *premyerka*, (used in the Western Ukraine lexical variant to “prime”). Some attempts to give the image “VONY” a positive evaluation were not successful, entitled: “The Great Patriotic VONA” – (*Focus*, No. 52 (164), 23.12.2009).

Along with the semantic transformation of the Ukrainian pronoun VONA, it is necessary to note the transformation of the form of the word VONA → VOiNA (war), entailing another change in meaning, which creates a very negative connotation for the image: “Stop VOiNU! [war]” (2000, 12.02.2010).

Implicit communication of ideas is used to discredit opponents by both sides of the political system. We can see it again in the following citation from the *Kiyevsky Telegraph* (28.04.2006): “At the same time Austria specialises in *laundering money* from Eastern European countries. Austrian financial corporations in Europe have approximately the same reputation as *businessmen from Donetsk*” This statement has the presupposition “*Donetsk businessmen are criminals*”, aimed at imposing negative evaluation. This presupposition is supported by explicit labels such as “*Donetsk bandits*”, “*Donetsk bandyuki*”, “*the dons*” (clipped form of ‘Donetsk’), and “*the Donetsk*”, which were introduced into mass media discourse in 2004 and are extensively used during all election campaigns.

Implicit accusations can take other forms too, including allegations of drug addiction, and to take an accuser to court for slander or libel is virtually impossible because the allegation is not expressed in the message explicitly.

One example of this is “The girl with *the cannabis eyes* goes along with the communists in the opposition” (*Kiyev Telegraph*, 30.06.-06.07.2006). “*The girl with the cannabis eyes*” is, in fact, the accusation against Timoshenko of

drug addiction, which is not mentioned explicitly in the text, but is clearly discerned by the readers. The reader will surely remember the direct accusations of cocaine use by Yulia Tymoshenko which were made by the representative of the Regional Party, T. Chernovil, but later retracted.

NPs may also contain implicit information, as in “recently Lutsenko said that Kiev is headed by a “*coke-chemical mayor*” (*Segodnya*, 05.11.2007), “*Lenya-space*” and “*astronaut*” (about the mayor of Kiev, suggesting associations with the language of drug culture, such as “coke” for cocaine, and “spaced” meaning the state of drug intoxication).

Completely new for the mass media political discourse of the “post-orange” period is the usage of taboo words or obscene euphemisms by leaders of political parties in public discourse such as press conferences and government meetings, with subsequent circulation in the media. These utterances demonstrate the low level of culture of the speakers themselves. In September 2005 the president announced during a video-conference with Ukraine, whilst on a visit to the United States, that he dismissed his prime minister and the government: “All must [...] clear off the beach, he claimed” (www.pravda.com.ua, 11.09.2005). Or: “The solution is probably that everyone should clear off the beach” (V. Yushchenko, *Vecherniye Vesti*, 21.09.2005). The addresser did not explicitly utter a taboo word (i.e. “to say where to get off [...]”), but it was perceived clearly by his hearers. Similarly: “If you don't pay your partners in Verkhovna Rada, if they do not buy another Lexus for themselves, they will, if you'll pardon me, show you an asshole” (addressing the Prime Minister at the meeting of the Council of National Security of Ukraine, replicated in the mass media, *Segodnya*, 10.01.2009; *Vlast Deneg*, 2009, No. 48 and others); “Put this bill in front of that journalist's *muzzle*, and then take him to the court!” (V. Yushchenko about the scandal with his son, *Ukrainska Pravda*, 27.07.2005); “Mr. Osadchii is a chairman of Yushchenko's election headquarters and has the task of blocking the work. A muddle-headed person, stupid, *blin*” [i.e. fuck] (Yulia Tymoshenko, *Vikna*, TV channel “STB”, 05.11.2009); “I [Viktor Yanukovich] declare publicly on television today that I will not support this asshole [mayor of Simferopol, the representative of the Regional Party – L.K.]” (*Sobytiya*, TV channel “Ukraine”, 02.10.2009).

As we have seen here, a wide range of verbal strategies are used in the Ukrainian political discourse to gain PR exposure. However, non-verbal elements are also widely used by the politicians. This issue requires separate consideration to do it full justice, but I will mention the most striking of them here. The leader of the party known as the ‘Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc’, the only well-known female politician in Ukraine, uses sexist strategies as a major element

in her influence on the electorate. She wears transparent Guipure lace blouses, tight-fitting dresses with low backs, dresses with zips at the back going down to mid-thigh level, endless ‘haute couture’ outfits, or, at the other extreme, white clothes suggesting purity and innocence (flirtatious hearts against a white background, echoing the logo of her party), and all this together with her Ukrainian folk-style plaited hair, creating an extremely enticing image.

Commenting on the phenomenon of Yulia Tymoshenko as a politician, Dmytro Vydrin, a famous political scientist, said:

Elegant vulgarity and refined triteness are the ultimate political weapons of Yulia Tymoshenko, which are difficult to counter with any rational arguments or projects [...]. Actually she has brought her female form to such public perfection in her politics, that there is no need for any content. (*Segodnya*, 27.01.2010)

Of course non-verbal images such as these correlate strategically with the verbal labels and slogans: *Kytsya* (pussy-cat), *tsyatsya*, *the white-hearted*, “*Vote by your heart!*” and the combination is perhaps the greatest resource for manipulative PR-impact in the media discourse as a whole.

Thus, the mass media political discourse of the “post-Maidan” period is characterised by a) a wide range of explicit and implicit forms of verbal aggression, creating an overall picture of intolerance among the participants in the political system; b) high levels of manipulation of the public consciousness; and c) a destructive influence not only on the discourse, but on Ukrainian society in general, and, above all, on the formation of democratic values in the minds of the citizens of the newly independent republic.

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