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Communication Management and the Coverage of Modern Armed Conflict:
Factual or Fictional?

Social Consciousness Control during the Civil Conflict:
the Case Study of the Ukraine
(Paper in progress)

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During the civil conflict in Ukraine (November 2013-February 2014) a perception of
the state authority as a public evil in the society was formed, the structure that does
not guarantee the interests of elites and common people, which resulted in the
desacralization of the government and its agencies.

The principal role was played by the media, owned by oligarchs. The media from the
constructive criticism passed to an uncompromising opposition to the authorities.
Communication features of mass media consisted in ensuring the interests of oligarchs,
but not the state. Due to the ambiguity and heterogeneity of the society (East – West;
Russian – Ukrainian; elite – common people) desacralization of power, nationalistic
orientation of authorities had led to the reverse effect. The new government (which was
formed after Maidan) turned out to be a hostage to anti-state and nationalistic meanings.
Now it there is a conflict with those who were previously supported. For the current
authorities it is absorbing the adverse features and response of society. The negative
consequences of this process will be faced with in 2016.

Key words: Ukraine; coup; mass media; civil war; nationalism; elites;

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Introduction

The incidents which took place on Euromaidan in December 2013 - February 2014 have profound historical significance. They resulted in the state coup which caused the death of over a hundred people (demonstrators and police officers) (Katchanovski Ivan, 2015). Now authorities in power in the Ukraine call the past events "Revolution of dignity". The fact that these events, in many ways, changed the geopolitical situation in Europe, had an impact on the foreign policy aspects of cooperation between the main political players - the European Union and the USA, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other hand, stresses much the importance (Richter Karl, 2015).

In other words, the coup in the Ukraine which occurred as a result of the situation caused by Euromaidan (December 2013-February 2014) became a historical event. Therefore, the interest to the Euromaidan’s events, which is the source of our study, is completely justified.

Main concepts

All events were overviewed on-line by media in the Ukraine. The relevance of the present study is connected to the fact that unceasing events in the Ukraine (the civil conflict in the East of the country, active activities of armed political groups, so called “volunteer units”, intensified activities of nationalistic groups and gangs), in many ways, were predetermined during Euromaidan (December 2013 - March 2014). Moreover, most mass media also defined their political positions in that period of time and, in majority, have been adhering to them to the present time (Zaharchenko V.Yu., 2016).

In addition, the relevance of the present study relates to the fact that the principles and forms of online mass media’s influence identified in this study disclose the audience consciousness control techniques. These techniques can be used and have been already used in other CIS countries (in Moldova, partly – in Russia).

When preparing the study, we were guided by the scientific literature on the theme chosen by us.

First of all, it is the book by Pashentsev E. N. "Communication management and strategic communication: modern technologies of global influence and control", where exact scientific estimations of the events occurred in the Ukraine are given and the basics of Communication Management are explained.

Furthermore, we used the scientific study by Semenova A.V. and Korsunskaya M.V. "Media Content Analysis: Issues and application experience" as a methodological manual on the content analysis of the information material in the media. As an example of the effective use of internet media content, we have studied the work by the Canadian scientist Ivan Kachanovsky "The “Snipers’ Massacre” on the Maidan in Ukraine".

The survey of experts

While analyzing the Ukrainian internet media content, we conducted the survey of experts.

60% of the polled experts responded positively to the question "Do you think that influence of the media online services was determining and it's the online media that were the main information source and formed public attitudes to the events?". Whereas 40% of respondents disagreed with this statement and assumed that influence of online mass media had been significant, but not determining for peoples actions."

Most experts expressed the opinion that the majority of the Ukrainian media were biased against both authorities and law enforcement agencies and supported the protesters.
The subject of this study is the analysis of:
- how the Ukrainian mass media informed the public about what was happening;
- how the editorial boards, while performing the tasks set for them by owners, reviewed the events and thus influenced readers / websites visitors;
- How, as a result of applying special techniques and manipulating information, the media influenced public mentality and actions.

**Determination of sources (mass media selected for the analysis)**
We have selected the news content of 5 media sources namely – the "Ukrainskaya pravda", the “RIA News Ukraine”, the “Cenzor.net”, the "Zerkalo nedeli” and the "Korrespondent.net".

We were guided by two criteria for selecting the media:
1. The most influential media, which have the major impact on the population. It was determined by the expert poll. In total 15 experts (political scientists, politicians, journalists, media managers) were interviewed. All of them identified the "Ukrainskaya Pravda", the "Zerkalo nedeli" and “Cenzor.net” as the most influential media during Euromaidan.
2. For comparison we have done the research of the site “RIA News Ukraine” as a foreign (Russian) media, to which neither political nor propagandistic objectives were set at that time. That is, a priori, it was independent from internal political preferences of media.
3. In addition, for comparison, the site “Korrespondent.net” was chosen, that held the pro-government stance at the time of Euromaidan.

One day – Dec. 1, 2013 was taken for our analysis. This day can be considered as the birthday of Euromaidan. On the eve at night of Dec. 1, police using the force dispersed the peaceful demonstration of a few hundred students who were demanding the government to sign the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

Dispersal of the peaceful demonstration resulted in a sharp escalation of the situation, and at the next morning the thousands of citizens went on a rally in Kiev and the protestors from different regions of the country began to arrive in the capital of the country. So, it was the Dec. 1st that became the day of the sharp escalation the situation and worsening of relations between the authorities and law enforcement agencies, on the one hand, and the demonstrators, on the other hand.

**Research methodology**

**The methodology of media analysis**
The analysis will be conducted on two levels.

1 level: First of all, we define the number of news placed on the corresponding media site on that day, determine the language, as well as others techniques that characterize the attitude of media outlets to the event (Semenova A.V., Korsunskaya M.V. 2010; Verpincev V. B., Manoilo A. V., Petrenko A. I., 2015).

2 level: Additionally, we sort the media news in three basic groups - according to their attitude / review of the actions of Euromaidan main participants:
- the demonstrators;
- the authority;
- law enforcement agencies.
The analysis shows that while keeping the basic newsgroups each online mass media had its own peculiarities displayed in the tables. Thus, we identify and analyze the news according to their assessments, that characters the ratio of mass media editorial boards attitude to the actions of key participants of events—demonstrators’, authorities’ and law enforcement agencies’.

We distinguish this based on three criteria – how the mass media assesses the announced news - "positively", "negatively", "neutrally".

All of this must reveal the nature of editorial policies. And this, in its turn, shows how the mass media influences the readers.

(4).Results of the study

THE “UKRANSKAYA PRAVDA”

1. Actually the "Ukrainskaya pravda", while maintaining visibility of reviewing the events objectively, supported the demonstrators actively and condemned the authorities and law enforcement agencies.

2. The «Ukrainskaya pravda» used various consciousness control techniques and perception of information by the site visitors (Panarin I.N., 2015):
   – derogative characteristic of authorities and law enforcement agencies’ actions;
   – emphasized peaceful nature of the demonstrators’ actions;
   – emphasized aggressive nature of the actions of law enforcement officers;
   – emphasized alienated attitude to the authorities;
   – placing indirect instigation to violence (ex., Thailand) against the authorities and the police;
   – by placing the chosen deliberately photographic materials or by placing a detailed list of victims of "police brutality", wherein the information about the victims during police clashes is given in contracted form, strengthening of the negative characteristics of the authorities and law enforcement agencies.

3. The overall ratio of the news with positive, negative and neutral characteristics are:
   demonstrators gave: positive assessments – 34, negative assessments – 2, neutral assessments - 3.
   Authorities and law enforcement agencies: positive - 5, negative - 47, neutral - 15, this also indicates negative assessment of the authorities and law enforcement agencies actions.

THE “RIA NEWS UKRAINE”

1. The “RIA News Ukraine” tried to give the detailed and objective review of the events by giving about the same equally news coverage of both demonstrators and law enforcement agencies’ actions.

2. The “RIA News Ukraine” gave information in one message not only about the actions of single confrontation participants, but of both participants of the events at the same time (as a rule, the demonstrators and law enforcement officers), that is, it was striving to objectivity in reflecting events.

3. The “RIA News Ukraine” didn’t use emotionally charged epithets, comparisons and other methods to convey its own attitude to events occurred.

4. The ratio of positive, negative and neutral assessments is more balanced in the "RIA News Ukraine" than in the “Ukrainskaya Pravda”.
THE “CENSOR.NET”

During Euromaidan the «Censor.Net», on Dec. 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2013, in particular, took clearly anti-government position. It was expressed by emotively charged headlines and news texts, where the demonstrators were assessed mostly positively (43 news), and the authorities and law enforcement agencies, conversely, negative assessments (41 news) (Zelinskii S. A., 2008).

1. When the actions of the demonstrators were clearly destructive or outright vandalism (an attempted demolition of the monument to Lenin), editors described their actions as a "provokers in masks".
2. The «Censor.Net» positioned itself as the Internet media of Euromaidan, so in a large part of the news materials contained the calls for anti-government activities, and in some cases they clearly indicated how the demonstrators purposefully were supported (Pashentsev, E.N., 2014).
3. A large part of the information messages are emotionally charged, offensive language is used, as well as direct speech of anonymous sources.

THE “ZERKALO NEDELI”

1. It is noticeable that the website “Zerkalo nedeli” sought objective review of the situation on Euromaidan, at the first stage (later the “Zerkalo nedeli” changed its position).
2. The “Zerkalo nedeli” has few messages, mostly the mini-reports, summaries, extended information that enabled editors to give the generalized overview of the events.
3. It is obvious that by the time when active actions began (on Dec, 1 2013) in particular the editorial board of the “Zerkalo nedeli” hadn’t yet decided their preferences and underestimated the importance of the events. There was neither clear editorial policy nor highlighted materials. The editors published the significant part of the materials non related to the events.

THE “KORRESPONDENT.NET”

1. Editors of the “Korrespondent.net” clearly adhered to the pro-government stance. The editorial policy was aimed at expanding the coverage of the authorities’ and law enforcement agencies’ actions.
2. Around the afternoon on Dec. 1 the website “Korrespondent.net” changed from dispassionate overview of events to the attempts to calm down people, to reassure its readers that everything is under control of the authorities.
3. The main feature of this media is almost complete absence of the information written by its own reporters. Materials were written on the basis of the information messages of other online mass media and media agencies.

(5). Overall conclusions

Journalists shape public opinion in favor of the supported participants who are closer in ideology and political attitude by means of manipulating and placing the significant amount of assessing materials. It is fair to say, that we assume that the position of the media in the Ukraine during Euromaidan was rather formed by mass media owners and / or sponsors rather then by journalists. From our point of view, with such an attitude to the information on the events, the significant part of Ukrainian mass media violated the
basic standards – such as objectiveness and balance. Thus during the study of the content of five online media we identified the following trends in their work with the information to be published:

1. The way the online media reviewed this theme crucial for the country on Dec. 1 2013 was presented in quite enough details. sufficient in all sources (it was the day when the peaceful demonstrations in the Ukraine grew into a revolutionary confrontation between demonstrators and authorities). Nevertheless, some editions paid more attention to the events that occurred on the Maidan (for example, the "Cenzor.Net" and the "Ukrainskaya Pravda"), whereas and others focused on actions of authority and law enforcement agencies (for example, the "KorrespondenT.net"). That is to say, one of the forms how mass media editorial board influenced the readers is drawing more close readers’ attention to the supported (media editorial board) participants (Verpincev V. B., Manoilo A. V., Petrenko A. I., 2015). This is reflected in a more detailed coverage of the activities of such participants.

2. The significant part of messages are emotionally charged in certain mass media, the characteristics used by mass media for assessing actions of the participants have clearly expressed emotional nature.
For example, offensive language for assessing negative actions of participants in mass media’s view can be used (eg, the "Censor.Net") or words in an ironic sense (law enforcement officers are the "eagles" – the "Ukrainskaya pravda"). In some cases the derogatory words and terms are used, as well as punctuation marks such as "quotation marks".
Thus, another means of influence on readers by the Internet mass media is the emotional evaluation of events, expressed lexically or through special punctuation. While placing information materials the major part of the mass media widely used assessment of the participants actions.
At the same time, these assessments are formed both with the help of special tools (p.2) or deduced from overall context. In some cases, assessments are supported by placement of specially selected photographic materials.
For example, the "Censor.Net" placed the photos, which reflected the aggressive actions of law enforcement officers. At the same time, it didn’t place any photograph showing the actions of protesters, when they used stones, boards and other means of the attack against law enforcement officers.

3. All in all, we have identified three groups of Internet media. The largest group supported the demonstrators’ actions (for example, the "Ukrainskaya pravda", the "Cenzor.Net"). The second group is a very small number that supported the authorities’ and law enforcement agencies’ actions (the "KorrespondenT.net"). The third group of the mass media is striving to the objective analysis of the situation (the "RIA News Ukraine" and the "Zerkalo nedeli").
At the same time, in our opinion, the "Zerkalo nedeli" on Dec. 1, merely is not determined in its attitude to events, in connection with this nearly 20 per cent of messages (more than in other media) were devoted to information messages unrelated to ongoing events in Kiev in the Independence Square.
The online media "KorrespondenT.net" completely or almost identically reprinted the materials published by other online media outlets.
Almost all the mentioned publications were took from their news list on Dec. 1, 2013 out the news about official authorities materials.
References:


