

**PERAET 2021****International Scientific Conference «PERISHABLE AND ETERNAL: Mythologies and Social Technologies of Digital Civilization-2021»****POLITICIZATION OF A MEDIATIZED CULTURAL INCIDENT**

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**Abstract**

The article is devoted to the study of the reaction of users of social networks to the publication of the Manifesto "The Abduction of Europe 2.0" by the Russian theater director and publicist Konstantin Bogomolov in the domestic opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta on February 10, 2021. It is shown that the publication itself and the subsequent reaction to it gave this event the status of a mediatized event incident that caused a public outcry. This resonance was especially pronounced against the background of the "new ethics" and the events associated with this discourse taking place in Western Europe and the United States. The authors show the dynamic politicization of the opinion leader's journalistic text based on the logic of mediatization. The subject of this research is the politicized reaction to the representation of value narratives of the Bogomolov Manifesto in a networked society. The authors identify the opinion leaders involved in the discussion and process of mediatization, determine their communicative status and give the characteristics of mediatization on various network platforms.

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*Keywords:* Cultural incident, mediatization, new ethics, online discussion, politicization

## 1. Introduction

First, let us outline the reasons why we believe it is possible to call the network discussion that unfolded after the publication of Bogomolov's (2021) text as an ideological discussion, and why we interpret this document itself as a manifesto. Based on the definition, the manifesto (manifestum from Latin "call") is a solemn written appeal of the supreme power or leader to the people; statement of any provisions of a programmatic nature. The programmatic nature of the text of the manifesto implies the strategic communication of the subject of the manifesto in relation to society. This means that it contains a brief description of the current situation and a number of tactical tasks to achieve a new status quo. Bogomolov's (2021) Manifesto "The Abduction of Europa 2.0." we refer to a special genre of literary and artistic manifesto. This is a kind of appeal of an artistic leader, an aesthetic headliner to a wide audience. This is a genre of artistic declaration, a form of presentation of the aesthetic program of a school, trend or direction. Such manifestos have always institutionalized a new direction in art, legitimized a new literary and artistic method as a response to the challenge of the times. Bogomolov's manifesto is a message containing values and declaring ethical and aesthetic principles in the era of the aggressive offensive of the so-called "new ethics" promoted by Western civilization. Moreover, this offensive takes place in the digital era of information confrontation, hence the addition 2.0. At the same time, the name of the Manifesto is metaphorical and goes back to the Greek myth of the abduction of Europe. And Europe - and again we see a metaphorical transfer - is the cradle of Christian civilization and the stronghold of European culture.

The publication of Bogomolov's manifesto received a wide public response in the social media space and thus acquired the status of a mediatized incident. By a mediatized incident, here and in our previous publications, we mean some local event potentially affecting the interests and values of significant groups of communication audiences, which falls into the top of the local agenda, causes a wide public discussion and, as a result, functions as a significant news item on the national agenda. This effect is achieved through the process of mediatization, that is, a cyclical cross-process of discursive application of the topic of the incident and related topics in the online and offline media environment and social media (Dekalov et al., 2013; Gureeva, 2016; Kenski et al., 2020; Nim, 2017). To designate the explosive network mediatization, the authors once introduced the concept of "mediatization 2.0."

The mediatization of the manifesto occurred due to the fact that it was carried out on the prepared ground for the politicization of all socially significant events from the Columbine to the imprisonment of cultural figures for high-profile crimes. Politicization is manifested in the fact that the discussed incident expands the circle of those involved, prompting to express opinions for or against in a categorical form, which polarizes society and increases opposition and aggressiveness (Ferrara, 2020; Fuchs, 2020; Keller & Klinger, 2019). This is happening even more actively in a difficult foreign policy environment and the upcoming elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation in September 2021.

The decisiveness and polarization of statements in the speech practice of society is expressed in an affirmative modality. And network platforms are no exception here. Modality as a linguistic category expresses a certain attitude towards facts, states of affairs or actions, sets a positive or negative assessment. It is on the basis of the category of modality that recipients perceive the value narratives

transmitted in the text and react to them positively or negatively, which allows to control public opinion. The means of subjective modality are capable of overlapping objective-modal characteristics, forming the qualification of "last resort" in the modal hierarchy of the utterance.

## 2. Problem Statement

Due to the indicated properties, the affirmative modality gives the commentary a declarative character, which leads to the polarization of the assessment of the expressed narratives by supporters and opponents (Song Zúñiga & Boomgaarden, 2020; Soo Yun Shin et al., 2020; Won, 2019). The polarization of assessments of the declared provisions is capable of politicizing any discourse:

*Politicization is the process of acquiring a political status by problems and phenomena that did not have such initially. Economic, cultural, legal, administrative, religious, moral and other phenomena are politicized, that is, politicization means, in fact, the overflow of the problem from some other social sphere into the political one. (Danilov 2009, p. 92)*

Therefore, in the present study, comments and posts in the objective modality were not involved in the analysis and were not considered.

Politicization, having the characteristics of bipolarity, increases the traffic of the published content, since it has a mobilization potential. It unites on the principle of pros and cons of active and passive supporters of polar positions in relation to published value narratives (Kozyrev, 2016). This is how the "mediatization funnel" is formed. Therefore, network resource administrators do not delete comments of the opposite opinion. They preserve these comments, but slow down them in the feed. On the one hand, this serves as a demonstration of objectivity. On the other hand, the demonstration on the news feed of a clear preponderance towards a different opinion performs a manipulative function and controls public opinion. As it should be in the situation of the "spiral of silence", a person, not wanting to remain in the minority, can change his position to the opposite under the influence of the opinion leaders of the network community. Mobilization constructs communication in social networks according to the principle of decomposition of the text, commenting on its individual theses, pulling out individual fragments from the context and further disseminating content with appropriate liners and commenting (Ilcheva, 2013; Khrul, 2018). This brings the discussed news item to the agenda and becomes a tool for recruiting supporters, unwinding the spiral of publicity with the help of comments, reposts, increasing the life cycle of an event on the news feed both in a constructive and destructive manner (Kinyasheva, 2018).

In the study, the authors consider the publication of the text of the manifesto "The Abduction of Europa 2.0." as a mediatized event (incident), that is, a way of organizing the communication field around the news occasion by adding it to the agenda and maintaining traffic in the format of mediatization 2.0, where social networks and messengers become the main channels (Klein & Robison, 2020).

## 3. Research Questions

(1) in a modern networked society, any sensitive informational occasion has the potential of explosive mediatized politicization.

(2) network monopolists of the analyzed social networks suppress the expression of support for the values of the Manifesto and pump-up posts and comments that deny the values expressed by the Bogomolov's text.

(3) social networks, controlled by global Western monopolists, regardless of the specifics of the site for the representation of content, promote the principles of "new ethics" on their network resources in the Russian-speaking segment.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to prove the fact of politicization of any socially significant informational occasion in the Russian-speaking segment in global social networks. To achieve the goal, the authors identified the opinion leaders involved in the discussion and process of mediatization, determined their communicative status, and gave the characteristics of mediatization on various network platforms.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The collected speech material was processed by the method of lexical and semantic analysis of the identified value narratives. The principles of material selection: chronological framework (the first month after the publication of the Manifesto text), the degree of popularity of the channel (the number of subscribers on the channel or in the account), place in the top 10 when typing the phrase "Bogomolov's Manifesto" in the search line.

A lexical and semantic analysis was carried out to identify value narratives by trigger keywords in the text of the Manifesto and in the text of posts expressing attitudes towards the values expressed in the Manifesto and comments to posts. Value narratives are combined into 2 polar lexical-semantic fields, expressing the opposition of traditional and new ethics with the help of semantic contextual oppositions.

Based on the identified contextual oppositions in the text of the Manifesto, media materials on network sites and comments to these materials were analyzed to determine the public reaction to the value narratives of the Manifesto.

The empirical base of the study was the original text of the Manifesto (published on the Novaya Gazeta website), publications and comments of users of social networks Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube for the period from 10.02.2021 to 10.03.2021.

- YouTube: 6 videos were analyzed: Esquire Russia (82.6 thousand subscribers), Echo of Moscow (850 thousand subscribers), Channel 1 (6.27 million subscribers), RTVI News (648 thousand subscribers), Ksenia Sobchak (92 million subscribers).

- Facebook: post by Konstantin Bogomolov dated February 10, 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100001871017107> 02/10/2021 contains a summary of the Manifesto with a link to the full text, 1003 user comments (928 reactions for, 75 against), 202 reposts with comments. The analysis involved reposts and posts with the hashtag # Bogomolov's Manifesto or mentioning in the text of the post users who are friends of Konstantin Bogomolov, that is, who are

cultural figures (actors, directors, producers, speakers of media channels) with the highest number of likes and comments in descending order.

- Twitter: Source: RBC (13.02.2021) [https://twitter.com/ru\\_rbc/status/1360593755926102018](https://twitter.com/ru_rbc/status/1360593755926102018). 27 retweets, 126 likes, 17 comments; Novaya Gazeta (10.02.2021) [https://twitter.com/novaya\\_gazeta/status/1359414338705063939](https://twitter.com/novaya_gazeta/status/1359414338705063939): 191 retweets, 240 likes, 180 comments; Alexey Venediktov (10.02.2021) <https://twitter.com/aavst/status/1359418789759246336>: 6 retweets, 16 likes, 22 comments; Mikhail Svetov (13.02.2021) <https://twitter.com/msvetov/status/1360604788656910337>: 18 retweets, 257 likes, 16 comments. These publications and comments are issued by Twitter itself at the request of "Bogomolov's Manifesto" in the categories "latest" or "popular"; "URA.RU" (10.02.2021) <https://ura.news/news/1052471227>

- Instagram: User reaction: 46676 likes, 4899 comments.

## 6. Findings

**You Tube.** The first group of commentators on the You Tube site - sympathizers who share the value narratives of Bogomolov, praise him for his courage to publicly express his point of view. They understand that this position is not popular among art and cultural figures, but on the other hand, it is approved by the government institutions. The logic and content of this narrative are clearly politically determined, markers of political affiliation are used, politicians and institutions are called. As a result, the fact of the politicization of news stories in the network environment can be considered proven. Although the author of the manifesto himself denies the political background of his text.

The second group of commentators, who can be called doubters and opponents of the author, consider the publication of the manifesto a PR-technology to obtain government funding for projects and protect their own privileges. The authors of this group note that Bogomolov does not understand the progressive essence of the new ethics and did not understand the situation that is happening in the United States and Europe. At the same time, they emphasize that the situation in Russia is a real "ethical catastrophe", while in Europe and the USA it is developing in the right direction. And there are also politically charged narratives here.

On **Facebook**, the authors selected the accounts that turned out to be the most read on this news feed and received the largest number of reposts. Of the top 10 accounts, 5 expressed supports for the Manifesto, 5 expressed disagreement with the value narratives of the Manifesto. However, in quantitative terms, the number of likes, comments and reposts demonstrates a clear preponderance towards disapproval of the value narratives of the manifesto:

**Endorsement** of the value narratives of the manifesto:

Comments 205

Reposts 14

Total reactions: 637.

**Disapproval** of the value narratives of the manifesto:

Comments 972

Reposts 304

Total reactions: 4118.

**Twitter** is the most politicized social network, therefore, due to the specifics of the site, Bogomolov's manifesto is viewed exclusively in a political aspect in order to mobilize Bogomolov's opponents. To discredit the postulates of the Manifesto on Twitter, the following communication strategies were used in the comments: doubts about the competence of the author of the Manifesto, accusations of creating hype, irony over conservative views, ridicule of the stylistic design of the Manifesto and the choice of genre, graphomania of the author, transition to the personality of Bogomolov and his family life, reproaches of hypocrisy and double standards, accusations of detachment from the problems of modern Russia, sliding into the political Middle Ages.

Most of the official media accounts published links to the manifesto and accompanied the publication on a social network in an objective modality, so we excluded them from the analysis. At the same time, the assessment of the Manifesto's narratives is most clearly manifested in the comments of users in the posts on the media accounts. It was revealed that the overwhelming majority of commentators did not agree with the value narratives of the Manifesto, and directly oppose its author. This is manifested in comments containing direct insults, the transition of criticism to the personality of Bogomolov, his inner circle. The question is repeatedly raised: "Is Bogomolov worthy / has the right to write the Manifesto?" In addition, Bogomolov was ridiculed with the help of memes, anecdotes, insults, etc.

### **Instagram**

Comments can be conditionally divided into 5 groups:

- short reaction with “applause”, “fire” emoji, etc .;
- comments in support of the Manifesto, solidarity;
- comments of gratitude and admiration for the personality of Konstantin Bogomolov;
- comments of disagreement with the text of the Manifesto;
- comments insulting the personality of Konstantin Bogomolov.

The majority are the last two groups; in total, their representation is three times higher than that of the other groups.

## **7. Conclusion**

First, it should be noted that there was no consensus in the digital community regarding the object of research. The essence of comments, user approaches, style of texts - all this largely depends on the platform, its technical features, as well as on the audience that mainly uses this platform. Thus, Facebook in the Russian segment is a social network of intellectuals in the professional environment. Consequently, comments on Facebook tend to correspond to this approach: they are rather restrained, reasoned and aimed at rational discussion. In contrast to this social network, Twitter in the Russian segment is often used for humorous and pragmatic purposes - users post expressive short comments. Therefore, the level of expressiveness of comments on Twitter about the Bogomolov Manifesto is extremely high, up to the use of obscene vocabulary.

It is important to note that Bogomolov himself denied the political nature of his text, which did not prevent him from using examples from the political sphere. Against this backdrop, he is opposed by dissenting commentators, most of whom see the Manifesto as clearly politically motivated. In their interpretation, Bogomolov ignores or justifies Russian political reality in his criticism of the Western

value system. Thus, he is accused of blatantly ignoring the values established by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, namely the prohibition of incitement to hatred based on various criteria. The opinion of this group of online commentators, and we repeat, the majority of them, is that the Manifesto can testify either to the author's blatant political illiteracy or to a global provocation of the audience. Some commentators adhere to the first position and accuse Bogomolov of incompetence. Another part of the commentators "falls into the labyrinth of provocation", sharply expressing their disagreement. Thus, it is possible to identify contradictions in the political values of the author and the audience. These differences show up differently in the comments of the digital community depending on the platform.

Thus, the basic hypotheses of the study were confirmed. Indeed, on the whole, ethical and aesthetic in content, the Manifesto has generated a broad, politically charged debate. As a result, a spiral of mediatization of the essentially cultural incident was triggered, which ultimately transferred it to the ontological status of a political incident.

It also revealed the prevalence of opponents of the value imperatives of conservative traditionalism among Russian users of the Western social networks. These values are proclaimed and protected by the author of Manifesto. This causes a sharp rejection of most Russian Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram users. In these networks, the promotion of the values of the new ethics is the mainstream and any opinion opposing these values is pessimized through the mechanisms of triggering the "spiral of silence".

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