



DOI: 10.18523/2414-9942.11.2025.140-154

Ihor Tsyhvintsev

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8554-4292>

Postgraduate Researcher

*Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
Kyiv, Ukraine*

SHAKAL-EXPRESS AS A POLITICAL-AFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGY: CANCEL CULTURE, MORAL JUDGMENT, AND DIGITAL ACTIVISM AMONG UKRAINIAN GENERATION Z DURING WARTIME

Abstract

This article conceptualizes the “Shakal-Express” – a wartime term from Ukrainian Twitter – as a localized form of digital moral sanctioning and a political-affective technology. Rather than simple online outrage, it functions as a mechanism of horizontal moral governance, blending reputational control, affective mobilization, and non-institutional political signaling.

Analyzing seven cases from Ukraine’s public sphere (2022–2025), the article explores how Generation Z draws symbolic boundaries of acceptable behavior during crises. Each case is examined through four criteria: trigger, affective frame, response strategy, and consequences. This framework reveals how online judgment is structured and evolves.

The study offers four hypotheses on the motives, impacts, and shifts within “Shakal-Express” as a practice of informal digital justice. It also highlights its dual nature – positioned between cancel culture and bullying, empathy and cruelty.

Ultimately, the article proposes “Shakal-Express” as a useful model for examining new forms of youth political participation in an age of digital affect, symbolic violence, and social upheaval.

Key Words: *Shakal-Express, Cancel Culture, Digital Publics, Political Participation, Generation Z, Influencers, Affective Politics, Moral Economy*

Introduction

In today’s digital space, the boundary between civic activism, moral judgment, and online harassment is becoming increasingly blurred. The “Shakal-Express” (Shakaliachyi ekspres) – a phenomenon that emerged within the Ukrainian Twitter community during the full-scale war – illustrates this ambiguity. It arises amid heightened sensitivity to public behavior, symbolic gestures, and expressions of loyalty, transforming into a rapid, horizontal, and emotionally charged reaction. This

phenomenon demands rethinking within political science—as an indicator of transformed mechanisms of public accountability in times of crisis.

This study interprets the “Shakal-Express” as a specific Ukrainian form of digital moral response, emerging on social media in reaction to perceived violations of a value or symbolic order. The term, which appeared in 2022 within the ironic discourse of Ukrainian Twitter, denotes a wave of collective online condemnation that includes

memes, boycotts, demands for apologies, and public shaming.

Unlike classical interpretations of cancel culture, where institutional exclusion (firing, blocking, banning) plays a central role, the “Shakal-Express” does not necessarily aim at “cancellation”. More often, it functions as an act of symbolic signaling, horizontal control, or emotional retribution. It operates through affect, algorithmic visibility, and public solidarity, and its effects fluctuate between reputational justice and moral coercion.

This study considers the “Shakal-Express” not as a meme or a one-off emotional surge, but as a political-affective technology—a mechanism of digital moral signaling based on emotional reaction, memes, and collective condemnation. It is a

form of non-institutional moral governance that operates through affective response, digital visibility, memetic coding, and symbolic marking of what is permissible/impermissible in the public space.

By “political-affective technology”, we mean: an informal mechanism of collective action functioning outside institutions, mobilizing affects (anger, shame, betrayal, compassion), realized through horizontal actions (reposts, shaming, flash mobs), and yielding political effects (reputational impact, norm changes, symbolic exclusion).

This approach allows us to view the “Express” not as deviance, but as a specific form of digital normativity, where affect serves as a tool of social arbitration.

Theoretical Framework

Political-affective technology as a mechanism of informal governance

To comprehend the “Shakal-Express” as a political phenomenon, it is essential to view it not merely as an emotional outburst or a memetic reaction, but as a political-affective technology—a mechanism through which digital communities exercise moral governance beyond institutional frameworks. This technology has four key features:

- it operates through affect (anger, shame, indignation);
- it is realized horizontally (without centralized leadership);
- it has symbolic consequences (inclusion/exclusion from publicity);
- it is based on a collective notion of justice.

One of the key concepts for analyzing the “Shakal-Express” is symbolic power¹ – the capacity to impose meanings as legitimate while concealing the mechanisms of coercion. It is the power to impose particular interpretations, to define the social boundaries of the permissible, all while

hiding domination through cultural legitimization.

In the digital age, such power ceases to be exclusively institutional: it is delegated to influencers, communities, and anonymous users. Participants in the “Express” claim moral legitimacy by constructing the boundaries of acceptability through public shaming, boycotts, or calls to action.

This process resonates with Jürgen Habermas’s concept of communicative power, whereby the public sphere serves as an arena of democratic influence beyond institutions. In the Ukrainian wartime context, this publicity assumes the role of a reputational tribunal, where every action or utterance is potentially evaluated through the lens of collective vulnerability, war ethics, and a sense of solidarity.

At the same time, the phenomenon of the “Express” is rooted in the logic of affective politics, described by Zizi Papacharissi²: digital publics are formed around emotions rather than ideologies;

¹ Pierre Bourdieu and John B. Thompson, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Harvard University Press, 1991)

² Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*, Oxford studies in digital politics (Oxford University Press, 2015)

political participation occurs through reactions rather than programs.

Affective publicity, in this context, is a dynamic network of participants united not so much by rational positions, but by shared emotional experiences that become the basis for political articulation. In this article, affective publicity is understood as a politically active digital community formed around shared emotional experience rather than ideological platforms.

Here, we are dealing with what Bennett and Segerberg called connective action³ – a decentralized, personalized, and memetic form of engagement, where moral intuition and visual symbols replace formal structures. This is a form of digital mobilization based not on common organizational frameworks, but on individualized modes of participation, memes, hashtags, and personal emotional motives that are technologically synchronized.

Within this logic, Ronald Inglehart's theory of post-materialist values⁴ also becomes relevant: Generation Z in its digital participation is guided not by ideologies but by values –authenticity, equality, responsibility. For them, participation in the “Shakal-Express” is not apolitical hate, but a form of moral declaration: who has the right to be present in the public space during wartime.

Thus, the “Shakal-Express” performs a regulatory function: it delineates the social

Analytical Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the research objective and prior analysis of digital publicity, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1. Generation Z engages in digital moral sanctioning not with a destructive aim of “cancellation” of individuals or brands, but

boundaries of the permissible, identifies violations of the moral order, and initiates mechanisms of reputational action. This directly correlates with the hypotheses presented, which consider digital moral sanctioning as a tool of justice and/or symbolic violence.

To explain the ambivalence of the “Shakal-Express”, it is also worth referring to the concept of digital vigilantism⁵, which describes informal digital reactions as a form of self-governance through public exposure. Participants in such actions “weaponize visibility”, creating moral pressure and sanctions without the involvement of institutions. This leads their actions into the realm of moral economy—an informal social contract in which public actions are assessed not only by their content but by their emotional resonance, context, and expected community response.

In this sense, the moral economy of publicity is a system of expectations and symbolic exchanges where even silence or excessive emotion can be interpreted as a moral stance or its violation. It determines which actions trigger the “Express”, which pass unnoticed, and which transform the object of sanction into a figure of support.

Hence, the “Shakal-Express” functions as a regulatory mechanism: it sets the boundaries of social acceptability, identifies breaches in the moral order, and initiates reputational responses.

with the aspiration to restore moral order in the public space.

H2. The “Shakal-Express” serves as an informal mechanism of democratic accountability, but in certain cases, it may assume features of horizontal symbolic violence.

³ W. L. Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, “THE LOGIC of CONNECTIVE ACTION,” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661>

⁴ Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political*

⁵ Daniel Trottier, “Digital Vigilantism as Weaponisation of Visibility,” *Philosophy & Technology* 30, no. 1 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0216-4>

H3. The effectiveness of the “Express” depends not only on the nature of the violation but also on the level of moral capital and public authority of the object (person, brand, institution).

H4. The dynamics of the “Shakal-Express” indicate a shift from classical forms of political participation (elections, petitions, rallies) to expressive politics based on emotion, visibility, and collective

interpretation of symbols—especially during wartime.

This formulation of hypotheses enables the construction of an analytical framework that encompasses both the normative and political dimensions of youth digital participation. These hypotheses will subsequently be correlated with the conceptual field of symbolic power, affective publicity, and the post-materialist value orientations of Generation Z.

Methodology of the Study

This study employs qualitative case analysis as the primary method for reconstructing the dynamics of the “Shakal-Express.” The choice of method is determined by the complexity and contextual saturation of the phenomenon, which does not lend itself to formalized quantitative verification but demonstrates stable patterns within the digital culture of wartime.

The analytical material consists of seven high-profile cases from the Ukrainian digital space (2022–2025), selected based on the following criteria:

- **Massiveness of the reaction** – widespread discussion on Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram over 24–72 hours;
- **Affective intensity** – manifestation of clearly expressed emotions (outrage, shame, offense, anger);
- **Symbolic significance** – presence of themes touching on war, morality, public behavior;
- **Diversity of consequences** – from reputational damage to the rethinking of social norms.

The source base includes:

- open social media posts (Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, YouTube);
- reactions from influencers, journalists, and public figures;
- official responses from brands, individuals, or institutions;
- commentary and analytical materials in the media (Texty.org.ua, Detector Media, MediaSapiens, Babel, etc.).

Each case was analyzed using a standardized structure:

- **Trigger** (what initiated the “Express”);
- **Affective frame** (dominant emotions and narratives);
- **Response strategy** (reaction of the object);
- **Consequences** (reputational, institutional, cultural).

Within the analysis, four analytical hypotheses (H1–H4) were proposed concerning the motives, functions, and effectiveness of the “Shakal-Express.” Their relevance is examined through the case materials, and confirmation/refutation is assessed in the final discussion.

Case 1: Yakaboo and Moral Retribution for Symbolic Inequality (H1, H2, H3)

1. **Trigger.** In September 2022, the CEO of Ukraine’s largest online bookstore Yakaboo, Ivan Bohdan, stated in an interview: “According to

our statistics, women buy more books. Well, of course – as usual, they spend the money earned by men”⁶. This comment, reproducing a sexist

⁶ Kovalska, "Ukrainian Book: After the War, Away from Moscow." Kudryavka Meetup #2 (2023), <https://youtu.be/bnr0Os4mSI0>

stereotype, provoked a wave of digital outrage—especially among feminist activists, cultural communities, and youth. The statement was perceived not merely as a careless remark but as a devaluation of women's contributions—including in the context of war. This triggered the “Shakal-Express”: calls for a boycott, memes, hashtags, and demands for resignation.

2. Affective frame

Outrage, shame, and betrayal became the dominant emotional drivers. The public interpreted the statement as symbolic devaluation of female agency—particularly painful at a time when women serve on the frontlines, volunteer, and lead institutions. A collective sentiment formed within the digital public: this was not a “trifle” but a violation of the moral order that required a response.

3. Response strategy.

Initially, the company attempted to defuse the blow by framing the phrase as an “unfortunate joke.” This response was perceived as an evasion

of responsibility. Later, the CEO resigned, and Yakaboo published an extended apology, including promises of transformation, value-based dialogue, and policy revision.

4. Consequences.

In the short term—a deep reputational crisis. In the long term—internal reform: changes in HR approaches, rebranding, partnerships with women's NGOs. Public reputation was partially restored thanks to openness to change.

Analytical Summary.

This case vividly confirms H1—Generation Z engages in digital sanctioning not to destroy but to restore moral order. At the same time, it illustrates the risk of transforming legitimate indignation into symbolic violence (H2) if the institution's response is delayed or vague. Finally, H3 is reflected in the fact that the moral capital of the object (in this case, the bookstore's cultural mission) enabled the company to recover from the crisis. Thus, the “Shakal-Express” here performed the function of an informal reputational tribunal characteristic of digital publicity.

Case 2: Klavdiia Petrivna and the Hate Against Visibility (H1, H3, H4)

1. Trigger.

At the beginning of 2024, Ukrainian singer Solomiia Opryshko, known by her stage name *Klavdiia Petrivna*, appeared on stage for the first time revealing her face after a long period of anonymity. Instead of the expected recognition, this act of self-revelation provoked a wave of public aggression: users widely discussed her appearance, age, style, and even questioned the very idea behind her art. The “Shakal-Express” was launched not due to a violation of values, but because of aesthetic rejection.

2. Affective frame.

Emotions of disgust, ridicule, and frustration dominated. Many users openly attacked the singer's image as

“not young enough,” “not feminine,” “irritating.” Aesthetics became politicized: a woman who does not conform to the standards of youth and glossy beauty was perceived as a violator of an invisible moral contract. At the same time, a counter-campaign of support emerged on social media, where influencers, fans, and artistic communities applauded her courage and originality.

3. Response strategy.

Klavdiia Petrovna did not respond directly—her silence became an act of position. This, in turn, mobilized support: video duets, art illustrations, and posts with hashtags appeared. Thus, public hate was transformed into an affective field of resistance.

4. Consequences.

In the short term – a wave of digital aggression and psychological pressure. In the long term – the strengthening of Klavdia's brand as a figure of alternative visibility: dedicated to art, gender-free, outside the canon. She became a symbol not only of aesthetic resistance but also of reputational resilience.

Analytical Summary.

This case clearly illustrates H1 – digital publics of Generation Z sanction not only violations of wartime or patriotic etiquette but also deviations from visual and

gender norms, which are likewise perceived as moral deviance.

Simultaneously, H3 demonstrates how the object's moral legitimacy (in this case – artistic sincerity, courage, and aesthetic consistency) can activate a counter-public. Finally, H4 is evident in the way participation in public discussion became a form of expressive politics: both hate and support functioned as political gestures in the battle for visibility. This case exemplifies how the *moral economy of publicity* responds to violations not only of ethics but of style.

Case 3: Portnikov and the Fragment Taken Out of Context (H2, H3, H4)

1. Trigger.

In early 2024, a fragment of an interview with prominent publicist Vitalii Portnikov went viral on social media. From the phrase "In a democratic state, it is ordinary people who die for the country, not MPs," users concluded that he was allegedly justifying civilian casualties. The quote was taken out of its historical context, but anonymous channels presented it as cynical.

The "Shakal-Express" was triggered immediately: Twitter attacks, accusations of heartlessness, and assumptions about pro-Russian sympathies.

2. Affective frame.

Social media was flooded with reactions of anger, disappointment, and betrayal. The public perceived the comment as a rationalization of inequality, as the stance of an intellectual detached from suffering. This was especially painful in the context of national trauma. The fragment acted as a reputational micro-bomb – difficult to neutralize even with explanations.

3. Response strategy.

Portnikov promptly explained on Facebook that he had referred to a historical parallel between different political regimes. However,

"visibility had already been weaponized": emotional condemnation continued. Only a portion of the intellectual community came to his defense, while the broader audience remained trapped in cognitive disinformation.

4. Consequences.

There were no formal consequences – but his moral reputation was damaged, especially among younger and more radical online audiences. His name became a symbol of the rift between "analytical discourse" and "wartime emotional truth." In part of the public consciousness, this interpretation persisted despite clarifications.

Analytical Summary.

This case illustrates H2 – even statements that do not violate ethical norms can, in wartime, be perceived as moral transgressions if they do not fit the affective logic of public thinking. H3 is evident in the fact that high moral capital of the intellectual does not always offer protection – on the contrary, it can make the figure more vulnerable. H4 is traced in the dynamics of the "Express": from a rational statement to affective condemnation – an example of the shift to expressive politics, where reputation is formed beyond content, at the level of emotional resonance. This case also

demonstrates the danger of fragmentary perception in digital space—reputation, like

text, can be cut out and transformed beyond the author's intention.

Case 4: Readeat and the Cultural Conflict Around a Brand (H3, H4)

1. Trigger.

In September 2023, a bookstore-café called Readeat opened in Kyiv. Even before its launch, it became embroiled in scandal due to outrage over the low payment to authors—4 UAH for short texts. The situation escalated after marketer Andrii Fedoriv claimed that “Ukrainians don't read much”, and that Readeat aimed to “change the industry”. This was perceived as a condescending dismissal of the publishing community. The digital “Express” began with accusations of commodifying culture, elitism, and devaluation of creative labor.

2. Affective frame.

The outrage was grounded in ressentiment—a sense of injustice caused by symbolic inequality. The bookstore positioned itself as a place of beauty, aesthetics, and change, while ignoring labor and cultural contexts. The public responded to the gap between the visual façade and the value content—something perceived during wartime as moral blindness. A segment of the public—especially Gen Z youth—interpreted it as a symbol of capitalist deafness to cultural labor.

3. Response strategy.

Readeat did not apologize. On the contrary, it intensified its media presence, using the scandal as an informational hook. The launch was

accompanied by public events, celebrity appearances, and influencer reviews. The brand positioned itself as a disruptor—ambitious, provocative, confident in its mission.

4. Consequences.

Paradoxically, Readeat sold 1.6 million UAH worth of books during its first weekend. The scandal became a form of cultural marketing that worked not for the critics but for a broader audience unaffiliated with the professional book sector. The class divide between “content creators” and “aesthetic consumers” emerged as a critical pressure point.

Analytical Summary.

This case clearly confirms H3 – the public's moral reaction depended on the level of symbolic capital held by the brand, but also on its willingness to engage in open dialogue.

The high aesthetic status of *Readeat* did not translate into moral legitimacy—on the contrary, it provoked rejection. Within the scope of H4, the case illustrates a new form of political participation: not through ideological platforms, but through affective interpretations of storefronts, tone, and behavior. Symbolic consumption here becomes a battleground not just over style, but over meaning. As a result, the “Shakal-Express” served not merely as a sanction, but as an indicator of class-cultural division within the moral economy of war.

Case 5: Telebachennia Toronto and the Reverse Express (H2, H4)

1. Trigger.

In September 2024, the satirical media outlet Telebachennia Toronto (Toronto TV) released a video titled “They F*cked Off,” which listed Ukrainian public figures who had left the country during the war. Among them were individuals who had

departed legally – or had not left at all. The video was laced with irony and sarcasm, provoking a wave of outrage—not against the subjects of the video, but against its authors. A public debate emerged over the limits of satire during national trauma.

2. Affective frame.

The public reaction was built on offense, shame, confusion, and later – counter-aggression. Viewers interpreted the video as baseless shaming, exploiting painful themes of escape, loss, and moral ambiguity. At the same time, a “reverse Express” was activated – against the critics of Toronto. These critics were accused of “not understanding satire” and of excessive sensitivity. This mutual condemnation evolved into digital turbulence without a clearly defined enemy.

3. Response strategy.

The Telebachennia Toronto team did not apologize. They stated that the video was satire aimed at privilege, not condemnation of individuals. However, part of the cultural community questioned the appropriateness of the tone. Society became polarized: for some, the video was exposure; for others – disrespect.

4. Consequences.

There were no formal sanctions or loss of partnerships. However, trust among parts of the audience – especially within cultural and media circles – was partially eroded. “One’s own” came under fire from their own public. This showed that moral legitimacy in digital space is dynamic, regardless of past achievements.

Analytical Summary.

This case confirms H2 – even those traditionally seen as “ethical watchdogs” can become targets of moral reaction. The “Express” here took on a mirror effect: what was sanctioned was not an act, but an attempt to sanction. Within the framework of H4, this case illustrates the limits of expressive politics: a satirical statement is interpreted not as a political position but as a moral attack, especially under collective stress. It signals an erosion of the boundaries between critique, mobbing, and reflection – a hallmark of the political-affective landscape of wartime.

Case 6: Lata and the Hatred for Joy (H1, H2)

1. Trigger.

In January 2025, military medic and veteran Yevhen “Lata” posted a photo from a trip to the Carpathians. The image was emotional: gratitude for life, a smile, a landscape. In the comments, someone wrote: “In the context of war, this looks inappropriate.” This triggered a wave of similar reproaches: some accused him of untimely joy, others of “provoking” pain, and still others of “faking” it. This was an “Express” not for an action, but for an emotion.

2. Affective frame.

The societal response consisted of projected pain, harsh moral demands, and veiled envy. In the public imagination, the war had created a new moral norm: a hero must be suffering, serious, and endlessly modest. A smile became a sign of frivolity – perhaps even betrayal. This

exemplifies the so-called zero empathy syndrome: the emotions of another are perceived as a personal offense.

3. Response strategy.

Yevhen posted a sincere response, explaining that smiling is also a way to survive, and that among those who hike the mountains are veterans, volunteers, doctors. His post gained wide circulation and became a viral counter-narrative. A portion of the public, previously silent, expressed active support: “Thank you for the right to joy”.

4. Consequences.

Unlike many cases, this one did not result in prolonged condemnation – the public’s protective mechanism worked, and the narrative shifted. Still, the very fact of hating a veteran for joy exposed a profound deformation of the moral landscape.

A sense emerged that even heroes are not safe from the Express if they display an unexpected emotion.

Analytical Summary.

This case is a clear illustration of H1 in a distorted form: the public believes it is preserving moral order by punishing not for a crime, but for an “inappropriate” emotion. H2 is revealed in how moral accountability transforms into moral radicalism—where even

happiness is interpreted as betrayal. This is an example of affective politics where the right to vulnerability or joy is not part of the socially acceptable behavioral repertoire. The “Shakal-Express” here acts as a tool of coercion into a singular model of heroism, where the subject is stripped of human complexity. And at the same time—as a space in which the norm can be redefined through the power of a public counter-voice.

Case 7: Babel and the Limits of Emotional Journalism (H2, H3, H4)

1. Trigger.

In April 2024, the media outlet *Babel* published an article with the headline: *“Bloggers on X hinted something terrible was happening at the front. It turned out Pavlo Petrychenko had died. Was it emotion or hype?”* Although the text addressed an important ethical issue—how emotions are “dosed” in blogs during times of tragedy—the headline sparked a sharp audience reaction. It was perceived as a devaluation of a soldier’s death, even though the content did not explicitly express this.

2. Affective frame.

The explosion of outrage was driven by grief, mourning, and protective anger. The emotionally charged public interpreted the headline as cold, almost cynical—as if death were merely “noise” in the social media feed. Friends of the deceased, soldiers, and influencers immediately launched a wave of criticism. Notably, the target was not a politician or a brand, but a newsroom usually associated with progressive journalism.

3. Response strategy.

The editor-in-chief explained on Facebook that she had lost loved ones herself, and that the article aimed to spark an ethical discussion about how losses are communicated. But the

tone had already been set—the justification seemed too late. Some readers unsubscribed from the outlet, while others demanded a rethinking of editorial practices.

4. Consequences.

Formally—no staff changes or legal repercussions. But the outlet’s credibility suffered moral damage—not because of a factual error, but due to a failure to meet public expectations of tact. *Babel* found itself in a political trap: either remain independent or yield to the affective norms of the time.

Analytical Summary

This case clearly confirms H2 – the digital public can sanction not for content, but for tone, especially in situations of collective grief. H3 is evident in the fact that even the high symbolic capital of the outlet did not protect it, as legitimacy is shaped not only by knowledge, but also by emotional tonality. Finally, H4 is illustrated in how the headline became a political act—even if it was not intended as such. In wartime, emotional precision is as important as factual accuracy: a word loses neutrality and becomes a signal. This case shows that the affective politics of Generation Z includes a strict ethics of language—and that the “Shakal-Express” can act as a mechanism for publicly correcting norms of journalistic sensitivity.

Table 1. Hypotheses and Their Empirical Confirmation Across Cases

Hyp.	Essence	Confirmed by Cases	Comment
H1	Gen Z applies the “Express” to restore moral order, not to destroy	Yakaboo, Klavdiia Petrovna, Lata	Fully confirmed: the Express is initiated as a reaction to breaches of moral consensus
H2	The Express oscillates between accountability and moral violence	Portnikov, Toronto, Lata, Babel	Partially confirmed: in a number of cases, the boundary between justice and bullying was blurred
H3	The effect of the “Express” depends on the moral capital of the object	Yakaboo, Klavdiia Petrovna, Readeat, Portnikov, Babel	Fully confirmed: objects with high legitimacy had chances for reputational recovery or resistance
H4	Participation shifts to expressive politics through affect, memes, and aesthetics	All cases (especially Toronto, Readeat, Babel)	Fully confirmed: responses are based not on programs or ideologies but on emotional interpretation and symbolic representation

Discussion

The “Shakal-Express” as a Flexible Political-Affective Technology

Case analysis shows that the “Shakal-Express” is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Its nature is hybrid, dynamic, and situationally determined. Some reactions appear as fair moral retribution, others—as aesthetic rejection, still others—as cultural *ressentiment* or as a form of traumatic regulation of public emotions. All of these

manifestations exist within the space of digital morality, where actions are often judged not by legal or rational criteria, but by emotional signals, visibility, and the cultural context of war.

To systematize the empirical material, we propose a typology of “Shakal-Express” scenarios based on the type of trigger, affective dynamics, purpose of the response, and potential consequences.

Table 2. Typology of “Shakal-Express” Scenarios

Scenario Type	Case Example	Main Trigger	Affective Reaction	Purpose of Reaction	Potential Effect
Moral retribution	Yakaboo, Portnikov	Violation of public values (gender, justice, war)	Outrage, betrayal	Demand for punishment or apology	Reputational loss, policy change
Aesthetic punishment	Klavdiia Petrovna	Nonconformity with visual/gender expectations	Disgust, mockery	Removal from public space	Polarization, counter-public mobilization
Class-cultural rupture	Readeat	Symbolic inequality, sense of superiority	Ressentiment, anger	Rejection of brand legitimacy	Partial rebranding or conversion into

					marketing gain
Regulation of emotions and mourning norms	Lata, Babel	Emotion that contradicts expectations (joy, “insufficient grief”)	Offense, moral dissatisfaction	Behavioral alignment to “ethically acceptable”	Tone shift in discourse, redefinition of sensitivity
Reverse moral failure	Toronto	Attempt at moral control misaligned with audience expectations	Confusion → aggression at initiator	Sanctioning the “sanctioner”	Trust erosion, symbolic collapse of legitimacy

This typology allows us to see the “Shakal-Express” not as a uniform form of bullying but as a multilayered tool of affective regulation of public behavior. It serves simultaneously as an indicator of changes in public norms and as a mechanism

of their reproduction. Affect here is not a side effect—it is the main mediator of public judgment, especially under wartime morality, where the line between institutional authority and civic action becomes blurred.

The Algorithmic Logic of Affective Acceleration

A distinct role in the dynamics of the “Express” is played by the algorithmic amplification of emotional reactions. On social networks such as X, Instagram, or Telegram, moral outrage quickly receives priority through reposts, hashtags, and reactive memes.

As a result, even a fragment taken out of context (as in the Portnikov case) or an

ambiguous emotion (as in the Lata case) becomes more prominent in media than actual deeds—precisely due to the algorithmic mechanism of affect amplification.

This elevates the “Express” beyond mere reaction and transforms it into a media technology that combines moral judgment with the logic of reach.

Public Norm as an Unstable Construction

Another important aspect is that the public moral boundary is not fixed—it is formed in real time through conflict, affect, and memes. What is perceived as acceptable today may provoke outrage tomorrow.

This is why the same actions—such as expressing joy (Lata) or offering analytical

commentary (Babel)—can, in one context, be interpreted as normal, and in another—as ethical violations.

This indicates that the “Shakal-Express” not only reveals the norm but also constantly redefines it, creating an ongoing moral cartography of society.

The Limits and Risks of Political-Affective Action

The key conclusion lies in recognizing that the “Shakal-Express” is not merely a meme or a trend, but a new form of civic presence within the space of digital morality. It is political—even if it does not explicitly claim to be so.

However, it also carries risks. In situations where moral clarity substitutes for

complexity, and speed outweighs analysis, the Express may transform into a form of horizontal violence.

Therefore, the task of the researcher is not only to classify cases but to trace the boundary between political emotion and ethical disorientation.

Conclusions

This article has analyzed the phenomenon of the “Shakal-Express” as a localized form of non-institutional sanctioning in the Ukrainian digital space during wartime. By applying the concept of political-affective technology, we examined how Generation Z—the primary participant in digital publicity—exercises moral governance through outrage, sarcasm, memes, visibility, and symbolic gestures. Such participation does not fit within classical models of political behavior, yet it has real consequences—from reputational destruction to the transformation of public norms.

Theoretical Summary

The conducted study confirmed the analytical usefulness of viewing the “Shakal-Express” through a combination of several approaches: the theory of *symbolic power*⁷, *affective publicity*⁸, *moral economy*^{9,10}, *connective action*¹¹, and *post-materialist values*¹².

From this perspective, the “Express” appears as a novel form of digital politics based not on programmatic content, but on affect; not on ideology, but on sensitivity; not on systems, but on reactions.

All four proposed hypotheses were confirmed:

- **H1:** Generation Z does not act out of destructiveness – instead, it seeks to restore moral order in response to violations of symbolic consensus.
- **H2:** The Express oscillates between normative sanctioning and affective violence, depending on the trigger, the legitimacy of the target, and the dynamics of public sensitivity.
- **H3:** Symbolic capital (reputation, mission, authenticity) determines the

outcome of the Express: destruction or re-signification.

- **H4:** We are dealing with *expressive politics*, where participation is not action but emotion, not debate but meme, not partisanship but moral representation.

Thus, we are witnessing a phenomenon that redefines the very nature of the political in the digital age: public action acquires the character of an emotional gesture, and the moral economy becomes the principal instrument of influence.

Rethinking the Political Through Affect

Under the influence of war and the digital environment, political action increasingly takes the form of emotional gesture. The “Shakal-Express” demonstrates that the political subjectivity of Generation Z is not limited to elections or protests. It manifests through meme language, indignation, and collective sensitivity to symbols and feelings.

This is a form of everyday politics, where each like, repost, or outcry becomes a tool of affective governance—not through a political program, but through resonance. It is precisely at the intersection of humor and anger, style and ethics, that a new politics is born—emotional, unstable, but deeply real.

Practical Implications of the Findings

The results of this study have implications for several sectors:

- For journalists and media professionals, the Babel case demonstrates that even a correctly written article may be perceived as an ethical violation solely due to its headline. This highlights the need for new standards of sensitivity regarding

⁷ Bourdieu and Thompson, *Language and symbolic power*

⁸ Papacharissi, *Affective publics*

⁹ E. P. Thompson, “THE MORAL ECONOMY of the ENGLISH CROWD in the EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,” *Past and Present* 50, no. 1 (1971), <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/50.1.76>

¹⁰ Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, English-language edition, trans. Gregory Elliott (Verso, 2018)

¹¹ Bennett and Segerberg, “THE LOGIC OF CONNECTIVE ACTION”

¹² Inglehart, *Modernization and postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton University Press, 1997.

linguistic framing and the affective load of headlines in situations of public grief.

- For businesses and brands, the Yakaboo and Readeat cases clearly show that marketing devoid of a moral compass and sensitivity to the social context is inevitably exposed to reputational crises. In today's digital environment, a brand is not just a product or service—it is, above all, a value signal that must resonate with public expectations.
- For public intellectuals and opinion leaders, the Portnikov case revealed a particular vulnerability to fragmentation of meaning and decontextualization. In an age of emotional politics, complexity, rationality, and intellectual integrity do not guarantee protection—on the contrary, they can be easily delegitimized through affective distortion.

• For civil society, it is important to understand that the “Shakal-Express” is not always an expression of injustice—it can perform a function of collective moral correction. However, without proper reflection and awareness of boundaries, such practice can transform into a form of horizontal repressive pressure.

- For educators, activists, and political communicators, it is crucial to realize that the new generation already acts politically—though not in the classical sense of participation. The politics of Generation Z is a micro-politics of interpretations, symbols, memes, and public emotions that demands a rethinking of traditional analytical frameworks and interaction strategies with youth audiences.

Research Perspectives

The results of this study open several avenues for further interdisciplinary analysis. First and foremost, a promising direction involves conducting comparative studies: examining how similar forms of moral pressure, symbolic condemnation, and digital sanctioning operate in other post-conflict or hybrid democracies, such as Poland, Georgia, or Lithuania. This would allow scholars to identify universal traits of such phenomena—or, conversely, highlight their cultural specificity.

The second promising vector involves algorithmic studies: analyzing how platforms like Telegram, TikTok, or X (formerly Twitter) amplify affective reactions, form “chain” dynamics of Expresses, and influence their speed, reach, and duration. Can such dynamics be modeled? Are there points of intervention that might mitigate the harm from uncontrolled waves of outrage?

The third direction involves gender and class-based analysis of vulnerability to the Express. It is essential to explore which social groups more frequently become targets of digital critique, how symbols triggering moral response are activated, and whether the

Express reproduces existing asymmetries and biases.

The fourth direction pertains to the use of mixed methods—specifically, combining content analysis and discourse analysis with in-depth interviews and digital ethnography. This approach would help reconstruct the internal motivations of Express participants, their understanding of justice, the boundaries of the permissible, and their sense of collective responsibility.

Finally, a critical direction lies in the attempt to formalize what might be called an “ethical contract of publicity”: developing principles of public communication that account for the emotionality of digital environments while avoiding censorship or repression. Such an approach would enable not only documentation of the consequences of the Shakal-Express but also critical rethinking of the rules of engagement in the new informational society.

Ultimately, the phenomenon of the “Shakal-Express” demands from political science not only descriptive or instrumental approaches, but a deeper reconsideration of the very concept of publicness in times of

crisis. It functions as a magnifying lens that reveals the dynamics of moral tension, emotional coordination, and informal governance in the digital era.

It combines trauma, solidarity, algorithmic logic, and interpretive struggles over meaning—and it is precisely in this combination that the new quality of the political emerges. This is no longer just protest or loyalty—it is what constitutes everyday political subjectivity in the space of emotional response.

In the context of wartime crisis and media hyperreality, the “Shakal-Express” is not a deviation from the norm—but one of the ways in which the norm is formed. It is not

deviance, but a mechanism of moral governance without institutions, in which affect and memes become the language of collective judgment. It exposes where the boundary lies between justice and vindictiveness, between participation and mobbing, between publicity and humiliation.

It is a phenomenon that compels political science to move beyond traditional formal structures—and turn to the micro-dynamics of emotion, visibility, identity, and risk. Because it is precisely there—at the crossroads of anger and humor, shame and solidarity—that a new form of political subjectivity is now emerging.

Bibliography

1. Bennett, W. Lance, and Alexandra Segerberg. “THE LOGIC of CONNECTIVE ACTION.” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012): 739–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661>.
2. Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. English-language edition. Translated by Gregory Elliott. Verso, 2018.
3. Bourdieu, Pierre, and John B. Thompson. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press, 1991.
4. Inglehart, Ronald. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton University Press, 1997.
5. Kovalska. “Ukrainian Book: After the War, Away from Moscow.” *Kudryavka Meetup* #2., 2023. <https://youtu.be/bnr0Os4mSI0>.
6. Papacharissi, Zizi. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. Oxford studies in digital politics. Oxford University Press, 2015.
7. Thompson, E. P. “THE MORAL ECONOMY of the ENGLISH CROWD in the EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.” *Past and Present* 50, no. 1 (1971): 76–136. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/50.1.76>.
8. Trottier, Daniel. “Digital Vigilantism as Weaponisation of Visibility.” *Philosophy & Technology* 30, no. 1 (2017): 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-016-0216-4>.

Ihor Tsyhvintsev is a postgraduate researcher at the Institute of Political and Ethnic Studies, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. His research focuses on political culture, digital activism, and the political behavior of Generation Z in the context of war.

Ігор Цигвінцев

асpirант

Інститут політичних і етнонаціональних досліджень імені І. Ф. Кураса НАН України

«ШАКАЛЯЧИЙ ЕКСПРЕС» ЯК ПОЛІТИКО-АФЕКТИВНА ТЕХНОЛОГІЯ: КЕНСЕЛ-КУЛЬТУРА, МОРАЛЬНЕ СУДЖЕННЯ ТА ЦИФРОВИЙ АКТИВІЗМ СЕРЕД УКРАЇНСЬКОГО ПОКОЛІННЯ З У ВОСІННІЙ ЧАС

Анотація

У статті пропонується концептуалізувати “Шакалячий експрес” – термін, що виник у Twitter-спільноті України під час війни – як локалізовану форму цифрового морального осуду та політико-афективну технологію. Це не просто онлайн-обурення, а механізм горизонтального морального врядування, який поєднує репутаційний контроль, емоційну мобілізацію та неінституційне політичне сигналізування.

На основі аналізу семи кейсів з української публічної сфери (2022–2025), дослідження показує, як покоління Z формує символічні межі допустимого у кризовий час. Кожен кейс розглядається за чотирма критеріями: тригер, афективна рамка, стратегія реагування та наслідки. Це дозволяє простежити структуру й динаміку онлайн-осуду.

У статті сформульовано чотири гіпотези щодо мотивів, ефектів і трансформацій “Шакалячого експресу” як практики неформального цифрового правосуддя. Також виявляється його амбівалентність – між “кенселінгом” і цькуванням, емпатією та жорстокістю.

“Шакалячий експрес” пропонується як аналітична модель для вивчення нових форм політичної участі молоді в умовах соціальних зрушень і цифрової емоційної економіки.

Ключові слова: шакалячий експрес, культура скасування, кенселінг, цифрові спільноти; політична участі; покоління Z; зумери, інфлюенсери; афективна політика; моральна економіка.



Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License