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A ROLE OF POLITICAL FACE IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING A POLITICAL IMAGE

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Adopting a new face – a mask – might be one of the conditions for a comeback to the political scene. A political face is not a synonym for identity because it is not shaped by the public, but it consists a sort of mask which is put on a politician by his/her image advisors and next presented to the public. This paper attempts to verify a thesis that *a political face* is not a synonym but an unstable element of a political image. The political image again is an equivalent for socio-political identity.

Most definitions which appear in works on political communication treat the political image as a kind of Ego reflected in a way similar to the concept of Marzena Cichosz, who indicates, that the image consists of a set of features, which in the opinion of the public the subject possesses [Cichosz, M. 2004:60].

The concept of a political image suggested here is partially consistent with the above thesis. However, its presumption is based on an important element. The political image, as a synonym for identity, consists of two fundamental components: a *political face* – created and unstable construct presented to the public and, a *private face* – which is more constant and often a stable element. James E. Grunig is wrong saying that the political image is “a created construct which is next presented to the public” [Grun-

ing 1993:121–139], since this definition refers only to one of the components of the political image that is a *political face*. This will be proved in the following paper through analysis of economic, social and psychological concepts concerning creation of a reputation or identity.

POLITICAL IMAGE VS. SOCIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF THE IDENTITY

In sociology, the most popular concept of a face referring to masks and roles played by us in “the theatre of everyday life” was presented by Erving Goffman who defined the face as a picture of “self” drawn in terms of approved social attributes [Goffman 2006:6].

In psychological literature terms: *Ego* and *Private ego*, *Ego identity*, *personal identity*, *individual identity* are used interchangeably. The same concerns terms: *Public ego*, *Social ego*, *Social identity*, *Collective identity*. Regardless of this terminology, most psychologist and sociologists try to point at dualism of identity which consists of a private and public side [Durkheim 2000:51].

That dualism of identity is directly related to dualism of the political image, which consists of a private face and a public face.

Psycho-sociological *Private ego* will correspond with a *private face* of a politician shaped in the process of socializing, which includes components determined by the background, culture and values in which he/she grew up. The private face (*Private ego*) is a permanent and a stable component of the political image. Whereas *Public ego* is an equivalent of a *political face* – a term suggested in this paper.

Private ego is a set of features of an individual with a view to his/her experiences, feelings, thoughts and opinions. Whereas *Public ego* is a body build, appearance, garment, expression and speech. In other depiction *Private ego* is a set of standards of behaviour recognized by the individual as correct, when *Public ego* is a set of standards of behaviour assigned to other important persons [Carver, Scheier 1981]. *Private ego* controls all behaviours which are to express personal rules or values, whereas *Public ego* similar to a *political face* is manifested when the individual presents oneself

in a way to meet the expectations of other people. *Private ego* is also revealed when an individual asked: "Who you are?" lists his/her personal characteristics. When asked the same question the individual responds by presenting his/her social status, professional status or a post, then *Public ego* is taking effect [Bikont 1988:16].

That *Public ego (the political face)* was manifested by the members of the Polish parliament in interviews carried in 1993. Then, when asked "Who you are?" they responded: "a politician", "a member of ruling elite" revealing their political face – a structure created by themselves [Pańków 1995: 168–197].

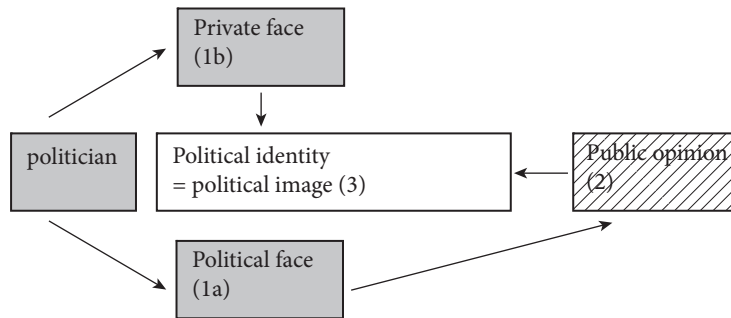
According to Johnatan Turner, *Social ego (political face)* is a total of all social identifications used by the individual to describe oneself [Turner 1985:96]. When a politician introduces him/herself as a member of a Party, a representative of particular political group or a follower of particular ideas, actions or solutions – he/she presents to the constituency *the political face*.

Paichelier added to the theory of Turner an interesting remark claiming that a man led by a fundamental need of searching for and winning recognition of a particular social group he/she chooses these social identities which will be approved by this group. Similar behaviours feature these politicians who create their *political face* for the sake of an election campaign. Having analyzed the demand on the electoral market one selects these identifications, which in a given moment agree with expectations of a target electorate, i.e. interest in ecology, passion for sport or respect for forefathers.

When an individual did not succeed in identifying with a given social group, or when his/her *political face (Social ego)* was rejected, one may concentrate on *Private ego* [Bikont 1988:31]. This happens in the case of political hibernation. When constituency give a negative feedback to the face suggested by the politician and they reject it, then for some period of time he/she might give up offering new pictures of *Social ego*, give up struggling for their approval and at the same time legitimism of power and leave a political scene focusing on his/her private face.

Such an approach to the political image suggested above, which consists of political and private face and which at the same time is an equivalent of *Social/Public ego and Private ego* complies with a process of creating a political face presented in a scheme 1.

Scheme 1. Process of creating a political image based on a process of creating identity.



Source: personal elaboration.

A politician, who in the process of socialization acquired a set of behaviours and values, when deciding on a political activity in cooperation with advisors he/she creates the *political face*.

(1a) and next, presents it to the public opinion. This face is a set of social identifications and a set of external features (garment, appearance, speech), through a prism of which he/she would like to be perceived. This means that the *political face* consists of many elements – roles and pictures, which following Barry Schlenker, might be divided into: *central pictures and crucial pictures* [Schlenker 1980:168–223]. Central pictures include these pictures which are superior over other pictures of identity, i.e. in the case of a politician a picture of an educated lawyer is superior over a picture of a good father or a helpful neighbour. This method of distinguishing particular features – central pictures of a politician, is often applied by political marketing specialists in order to create a distinguishing image.

The aim of this method is to make the receiver, who has a limited perception and filters information to remember exactly these central pictures which are crucial for a politician and his/her advisors. As it was put by Hazel Marcus “Schemes of *Self* is a cognitive generalization of oneself expressed by characteristics created based of these aspects which make us most distinguishing from other people [Marcus 1980: 113–114].

According to the scheme presented above (Scheme 1) a distinguishing picture of a politician – *a political face* (1a) which is an analogy for psych-sociological concepts of *Public ego* once it is created it is next presented to the public opinion (2). nowadays it happens mainly by means of mass media. If the face suggested by the politician gets a positive feedback from the public then, it comes back to its author in a form of external portrait, which is again filtered by his/her own perception. In and by itself, opinions of milieu amount to a factor which shapes political identity, which is a synonym of *political image*. This identity is made up of *a private face* as well as *a public/political face* created and given for approval to the public opinion. Philippe Maarek even claims that the composed image is always a result of a more or less successful compromise between a real personality of a leader and what the public opinion subjectively expects from the politician [Maarek 1992: 48 in Cichosz 2004: 262]. This is why the political face as a mask is unstable and might undergo changes influenced by the social pressure.

George Mead claims that identity is a result of interplay of many factors. They might be classified in three dimensions: *I*, *me* and *generalized other* [Mead 1975:193]. *I* means a subjective reaction of the individual to behaviour and expectations of other people towards him/her. *Me* means becoming subjectively aware of the roles which an individual believes to play in the process of socialization, whereas *Generalised other* means becoming aware and understanding standards of behaviour of other people and become familiar with schemes of cooperation with them. It is due to the first dimension – *I* – that a person is able to distance from social patterns and functions. According to the concept of Mead, it is *I* which prevents a person from passive acceptance of patterns of behaviour and from undergoing the external pressure or expectations of the public opinion. That is why *I* is an equivalent of *a private face*.

It is not every politician who will passively undergo the process of creating an unnatural image by making *his/her public (political) face* dominating over *the private face*. Much depends on relationship which exist in his/her identity between two crucial factors: *Private Ego* and *Public ego* and between *I* and *Generalised other*; and to what extent he/she allows the second factor to be created according to the public opinion and not according to the values and opinions he/she holds.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A PRIVATE FACE AND A PUBLIC FACE

The Scheme 1. presented above indicates that a *political face* is only one of the elements of the political image. The political image is shaped also by a private face. The *political face* is the element created by a politician and his/her advisors, but it must be presented to the electorate and requires an approval. Contrary to the private face which is an unchangeable one. In the process of creating the political image it is relevant to establish relationships between the political face and the private face, that is what Mead calls “*P*”.

Robert Ziller claims that *a clearly described Ego identity is helpful in a further process of creating a social identity. Both of them consist a point of reference for each other and a revising mechanism* [Ziller 1964:341–360]. Other authors add: *When it happens that some conditions make the social identity exclude the private identity then the subject undergoes the process of depersonalization* [Bikont 1988:27]. Such a situation takes place in case of some Polish politicians when their *political face* shaped with a help of spin doctors – that is a mask put on a political scene – differs in much extend from his/her *private face* and superiors it. This situation is called depersonalization of a political actor.

POLITICAL IMAGE AND THE CONCEPTS OF ECONOMIC MARKETING

In the literature on political marketing the process of shaping a political image is often compared to the process of creating a brand name in the economic marketing. Similar to creating a political image – which happens through a combination of a private face and a political face – the brand name is created in two stages. The marketing product has some features given to it by its constructors and process engineers, i.e. colour or taste, which remain almost unchangeable as they contain their relevant features (when we take cocoa pulp away from the chocolate ingredients the product is not a chocolate any longer). However, a group of product managers might develop a new concept of the product’s image by changing its cover, distribution,

target customers and then submitting their concept for approval. The results are measured by sales rate or consumer research.

The above process is similar to a dual concept of creating the image of a political party or a politician. Politicians have some stable elements of their *private identity* that are values he/she holds, and opinions he/she has on a given situation and events. This component of the political image is stable and difficult to change. However, a group of spin doctors might influence the political image by modifying its second component – *the political face* – by changing his/her appearance, speech or political program. A political face is what Marta Ryniejska-Kiełdanowicz calls *an active component of the image* which is shaped, tended and modified [Ryniejska-Kiełdanowicz 2005: 13].

The political face similarly to a product's brand name is firstly constructed by spin doctor and a politician him-/herself and next presented to the electorate/consumers, or as it was put by Marek Jeziński *imbedded and rooted in the awareness of the society, which takes place first of all through the attempts to present the person in the mass media as often as possible* [Jeziński 2004:29].

Ipsa facto, similarly to positioning a brand name in the economic marketing the target group of a politician is constructed at the level of shaping his/her political face.

What Cichosz [2004:610] believes is that *one of the components of the politician's image is also his/her target group*. However, the fact is that this component is not the vision of an elector but it is information generated by a politician and his/her advisors and next submitted to the elector. This is why this information is not a direct element of the political image but is constructed at the level of shaping the political face.

THE ROLE OF IMAGE ADVISORS IN CREATING A POLITICAL FACE

Seeking for a proof which would confirm the assumed dual concept of the political image consisting of *a private face* and *a political face* understood as a picture submitted to the electorate for approval, it is necessary to reach to the etymology of the concept used in the political marketing – creating the image. Who is shaping, making the image – a politician or an elector?

In the concept suggested in this paper *the political face* is shaped by the politician and his/her advisors. Yet, when the face is approved by the public opinion it comes back to the politician in a form of an external portrait and together with the second component – the private face – it makes a political image.

Any candidate who is applying for a post is surrounded by a number of spin doctors. Only when properly “wrapped up” is he/she able to succeed in election [Cwalina, Falkowski 2005:147]. The thing is that this wrapping means that a face of a politician is developed by his/her election staff and once the concept is developed it is presented to the electorate. John Street claims that a public image of the politician is more and more controlled by the political parties and the politicians with a help of people called spin doctors [Street 2006].

Therefore, in the suggested dual view of the political image, the political face developed at the level of the politician and his/her advisors is exactly this element which the electorate’s perception is focused on. Owing to this, their attention is diverted from the actual outlook, thoughts and a value system represented by the politician and which are a part of his/her *private face*. Street [2006] puts it in the following way: *in the process of “framing” (the face) the information on what really the politicians are like undergoes a strict regimentation* [Street 2006:160]. Margareth Scammell believes that political parties and their candidates must take care of their political image if they want to be considered on the political market [Scammell 1999:163]. They must also take care about what face they offer to their electorate for approval, *operate with a distinguishing picture which in a clear way expresses the position and a value system* [Street 2006:163]. In the present political marketing a *political face* is thus a more and more dominating component of the politician’s image, which obscures his/her *private face*. In and by itself, this gives a chance to image specialists, who might create the political face almost from the basis and, in cooperation with public opinion and mass media shape almost a completely new *political identity*.

Validity of the above considerations are confirmed by Grażyna Ulicka who writes: *The image will never reflect the complexity and richness of a human personality, it is stereotyped, it is more like a rough draft rather than a picture, often it is a caricature* [Ulicka1996:164].

POLITICAL FACE VS. SYMBOLIC PROFILE

When contesting for a power the real identity of a candidate is substituted by his/her symbolic profile – which Philippe Braud defined as “a positive personal image and a popular party etiquette” [Braud 1995:210]. This *personal image* needs to be interpreted as a political face, the concept of which was presented above. It is based on some biographic elements which belong to a *private Ego*, but which are selected to meet the expectations of the electorate. Philippe Braud in his “Handbook for a Seat Applicant” underlines that biographic elements, when presented in an appropriate way, get their meaning in particular socio-cultural circumstances [Braud 1995:211–212]. *The image* must dress up the realistic *Ego* without contradicting it. *The image* must project and interpret these biographic elements which might increase acceptance and at the same time reduce these factors which are not expected by the electorate in a given moment.

According to the theory of Braud, when making use of the power of mass media a political leader manipulates his/her auto presentation in order to increase attractiveness and credibility. He/she manipulates the biography, the identity, the output, the status as well as the external image. He/she attempts to gain sympathies and confidence. That is why he/she is often presented close to society, similar to them and as a representative of them, but also as being outstanding, admirable for his/her intellect and personality as well as the looks [Braud 2005:212]. All this is done with the aim of coming into being and establishing ones image in the consciousness of the society.

Without doubt, the theory of the symbolic profile concept is close to the dual concept of the political image but only in its basic assumptions. It lacks a clear distinction of elements of a public and a private face. In the case of the symbolic profile the boundaries of these two areas are faded away. Furthermore, Braud narrows the construction of the symbolic profile down to the election campaign. Yet, *the political face* as the element of identity is a subject to continuous transformations, is permanently refaced which allows to keep permanence of this identity.

Also one cannot avoid impression that in the symbolic profile *the private face* is much depreciated. The sociological and psychological analysis of identity's researchers shows that *the private face* is difficult to be changed.

Whereas Braud claims that politicians can manipulate, control and dress up their private face. This assumption reduces a role of a politician to a brazen manipulator, image seller who for the sake of the electoral success is able to contradict him-/herself. This is however a too far going generalization. As long as it is possible to manipulate the private identity for a short period, (i.e. election campaign) it is not the case in a long term. After the election success further domination of the manipulated face over the private face and a constant interaction of this face with reality, (i.e. in mass media) might lead to the crisis of the identity mentioned earlier in this paper, which ends up in a politician leaving the political scene.

Table 1. Comparison of a dual concept of the political image and a symbolic profile

Political image (by M. Wnorowska)		Symbolic profile (by P. Braud)	
Private face	Political face	Personal image	Party etiquette
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a set of features of an individual with a view to experiences, feelings, thoughts and opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a public picture, presentation complies with expectations of other people 	“Dresses up the Self identity”	“Allows new persons to come into a political scene”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a set of standards of behaviour recognized as correct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a construct presented to the public 	“Project and interpret these biographic elements which might increase acceptance”	“The more important the party the more meaningful the candidate become”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • controls this behaviour which reflects ones standards or values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • body build, appearance, expression, speech, conduct 	“Something more than realistic identity”	“A launch vehicle in the case of a normal political career”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social status, post (total of social identifications) 	“Earlier executions of a candidate”	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • political etiquette, electorate etiquette 		

TRANSFORMATION OF THE IDENTITY AS AN ANALOGY TO A LOSS OF THE POLITICAL FACE

As it was shown in considerations so far, *the political face* as a concept proposed to the society is an unstable element and is a subject to change. Also Robert Ziller claims that the status of *the Social ego* is less stable than the *Personal ego* [Ziller 1964:350]. A man in a lifetime changes his/her social identifications many times. This also take place in the case of a politician, who might transform the political face through the change of a political group he/she represents or change of such elements as appearance or verbalism of speech. It often happens that the change of social identifications is accompanied by a crisis of social identity which is called a *loss of the political face*, and which often leads a politician to the state of political hibernation.

The psychological and sociological literature introduced a term of a relevant feature, which means such properties of a given thing or phenomenon without which it loses its initial meaning. It is also the case of political image. Even though the image consists of many features, both of *private face* and the *public face*, the loss of the relevant feature may cause a break of the political identity, which again causes a crisis of identity and a need to restart the identity creation process. As the relevant feature one may take *the central picture* mentioned earlier in the theory of Schlenker [1980:168–223]. A politician – whose central picture is made of honesty – when involved in a political scandal which undermines his/her relevant feature he/she undergoes the crisis of identity. Then he/she needs to rebuild the identity by seeking a new relevant feature and presenting *a new political face* for a social approval. In the process described above, the gist of political hibernation is depicted as a period between the loss of political face and creating a new one.