

Pervushyn M. The impact of censoring and filtering practices in the Ukrainian Internet on Ukraine's international image in context of Russian military aggression

Despite the war, the process of Ukraine's eurointegration continues and puts the country under tight scrutiny of Western NGO's and international organizations, concerned with the state of Ukrainian civil society, democratic institutions and support of human rights, especially in the conflict zone.

Such supervision extends itself beyond physical reality, as restrictive measures applied to Ukrainian cyberspace by Ukrainian authorities and unrecognized «governments» of the occupied territories are also scrutinized by relevant Western institutions that evaluate their impact on freedom of speech and accessibility of information for the citizens of Ukraine. Taking into account sheer quantity of censoring and filtering practices that are applied in the Ukrnet in the last four years, it is important to analyze the impact that such measures make on the international image of Ukraine.

The most worrying trend is the relatively recent inclination of Ukrainian authorities to copy approaches of their adversaries when it comes to restriction of Internet freedom. The author believes that Ukrainian authorities should abandon the «tit for tat» approach and refrain from further engagement into fruitless competition with the Russian authorities and Russian proxies on «Whose list of blocked sites is bigger?» basis. It would be wise to limit the actual blocking initiatives to a handful of most prominent Russian Inter-net-corporations and some of Russian propaganda outlets. In other words, the emphasis should be put on promotion of Ukrainian channels of information, instead of restricting access to the Russian ones. In such a way Ukraine should be able to mitigate the negative impact that Russian subversive and restrictive tactics in the cyber space make on the country's international image

Key words: Internet censorship, informational warfare, Russian-Ukrainian conflict, freedom of expression in the Internet, cyber-security.