

Formation of Dependent Communication Regime of Ukraine: United States Impact

Yury P. Tikhonov✉

National Research Institute for Communications Development, Moscow, Russia;
Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration,
Moscow, Russia,
yp.tikhonov@igsu.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7438-9053>

Abstract. The article is devoted to the issues of the influence of external actors on country communication modes and their dependence as the result. This influence is a consequence of the unsettled global communication, which allows hegemons to influence states and country communication modes in the field of information and communication exchange. The communication regime of Ukraine, which was not previously the subject of scientific research, and its formation under the influence of external actors are of particular importance in the context of the current geopolitical situation. Based on the designed system criteria of dependence of the communication mode, which include the commonality of the past and its influence on the modern structure of communication, the language of communication (actual and official), the presence of preferences / restrictions on the activities of communication channels, the participation of foreign actors in rulemaking, the development of strategies in the field of information and communication exchange, dependence on external decision-making centers, communication coverage (territory control, broadcast to the whole territory), investments and financing of the communication sphere, ownership of communication media, the author analyzes the impact of the United States on the communication regime of Ukraine. The influence revealed as a result testifies not only to the dependence of the communication regime, but also in the context of the current conjuncture of international relations allows us to judge the fragmentation of the communication regime of Ukraine under the influence of external actors, which in the future will not contribute to the formation of a single stable information and communication space in Ukraine.

Keywords: communication regime, influence, dependency, hegemony, Ukraine, USA, information security, information sovereignty, world order

For citation: Tikhonov Yu.P. Formation of Dependent Communication Regime of Ukraine: United States Impact. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2022. No. 3(5). pp. 108-119, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-3\(5\)-108-119](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-3(5)-108-119)

Introduction

Issues of expanding somebody's influence in international politics are always the subject of interest of researchers and politicians. With the development of international law and international relations, with the integration of the world, there was more and more a need to learn how to limit somebody's influence, to create measures to restrain hegemony. In our time, WTO and UN standards significantly limit the methods of economic and forceful influence on states. So the need to influence others in their own interests was partially limited, but did not disappear, which forced states to look for new ways of influence, including those in the non-military sphere. The sphere of information and communication exchange, despite attempts to institutionalize global communication, remains one of the least regulated. The lack of regulation made it easier for the hegemony to spread influence and increase the dependence of other states. In order to counter this influence, new forms of local institutionalization of global communication appear which has become the subject of research. In 2020, the National Research Institute for the Development of Communications introduced the category "communication mode" into scientific circulation and began research on country communication modes as the basis for the institutionalization of modern global communication (2). One of the possible classifications is based on the typology associated with the dependence of communication modes. It has not yet been developed, but it is a key one in assessing the influence of foreign states on communication regimes.

The communication regime of Ukraine is an example of a clash of interests and influences of global leaders – the main beneficial owners are the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the European Union, which influence Ukraine to varying degrees, including its information and communication sphere. This is recognized both by Ukraine itself and by the international community. Despite the transition to military methods of resolving the conflict that has arisen between global leaders with the start of a special military operation conducted by the Russian Federation since February 24, 2022¹, the information and communication sphere still remains one of the key aspects of this confrontation. Disinformation, propaganda, fake news, blocking of information channels, other phenomena affecting information and communication channels demonstrate the relevance of the problem of influence and prospects for the functioning of the communication regime of Ukraine under the influence of external actors. The impact of the United States of America as one of the key actors in the system of international relations will be discussed in this article.

1 Address of the President of the Russian Federation dated February 24, 2022. Available from: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>.

Materials and methods

To study the influence of the United States on the formation of the dependence of the communication mode of Ukraine and to identify its peculiarities, the system of criteria for the dependence of country communication regimes was developed, taking into account the model of a complex empirical study of the country communication mode developed by V.V.Komleva (3), H.Schiller's dependency theory (8), J.Galtung's structural theory of imperialism (5), and critical theories of the Frankfurt School (6). On this theoretical and methodological basis, four areas of influence of states were identified, that groups of criteria were distinguished and are listed below.

Table 1. Criteria of dependency of country communication regime on foreign states

Group	Criteria
A. Historical and cultural criteria	A1. The commonality of the past and its influence on the modern structure of communication
	A2. Language of communication (actual)
B. Regulatory and legal criteria	B1. Language of communication (official)
	B2. Preferences / limitations of communication channels
	B3. Participation of external actors in legislative process, development of strategies in the field of information and communication exchange
C. Political criteria	C1. Dependence on external decision-making centers
	C2. Communication coverage (territory control, broadcast to the whole territory)
D. Financial and economic criteria	D1. Investments and financing of the communication sphere
	D2. Ownership of the means of communication

This system of criteria allows us to perform a comprehensive analysis of the influence of foreign states on the communication regime and its main elements of a particular country: context (historical, cultural, political, regulatory constants), practices and discourses and their relationship with norms and laws, actors (for this study, both internal actors and external ones that have a political and economic impact on internal ones are relevant).

The sources used were: Ukrainian regulations in the sphere of information, statistical data and materials of the non-governmental organization Reporters Without Borders, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) (recognized as an undesirable organization by the decision of the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation on 04.08.2022). Also, for the purposes of the study, official information was used from the websites of USAID, NATO, the US State Department, the White House, the website of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and media materials.

Results

Historical and cultural criteria

The specificity of the United States of America as a subject of influence on Ukraine and its communication regime is the absence of a common historical past, which is due to both geographical remoteness and the youth of the American state. However, since 1991, the history of relations between sovereign states has developed because of the US policy in the post-Soviet space. The importance of Ukrainian-American relations in the context of curbing Russian ambitions was emphasized by the well-known American political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski: "Any new Eurasian state based solely on the power of Russia, without Ukraine, will inevitably become less European and more Asian every year (1)".

This would further consolidate the Euro-Atlantic partnership, moving Russia away from it. In the period from 1991 to 2014, there was a trend towards gradual distancing through the integration of Ukraine, its elites, and the transformation of the worldview of the population towards Europe.

The model of Western Ukrainian identity, which was historically formed under the influence of Poland and Austria-Hungary, was taken as a basis (4). It is noteworthy that in the current cabinet, 11 out of 23 ministers come from Western Ukraine, 7 from Central Ukraine (Kyiv, Chernihiv, Cherkasy), 2 from the Dnipropetrovsk region, 1 from the Zaporozhye region, 1 from the Kharkiv region, which clearly demonstrates that the Western Ukrainian origin dominates among the executive authorities². The color revolution in 2014, which had the ideological basis of the pro-Western course of Ukraine and European integration, which were curtailed by the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich, fixed the gap between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. This is the beginning of a protracted political crisis within the country, where both pro-Russian and pro-European sentiments have historically coexisted without significant predominance. Pro-Western undertakings have been repeatedly supported by the US leadership, which was expressed in investments in areas that previously depended on the Russian Federation, in parallel they imposed sanctions on the Russian Federation for interfering in the internal affairs of Ukraine since 2014³. Thus, the United States systematically dismantled the communication system historically associated with the Russian Federation, simultaneously focusing on Western Ukrainian patterns while strengthening communication ties with the EU and the United States.

A distinctive feature is the use of the Ukrainian language by the United States in the interaction as a means of constituting self-identity (in slogans, news, when creating information resources focused on Ukrainians). It is obvious that the attitude towards this manner, which defiantly emphasizes respect for culture, identity and forms the horizontal equal dialogue, is positive, since it allows to emphasize the statehood, as well as to move

² Ukraine Cabinet of Ministers. Government portal. 2022. Available from: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/uryad-ta-organi-vladi/team>.

³ Crimea is Ukraine (Antony J. Blinken Press-statement, Secretary of State). Department of State. 2021. Available from: <https://www.state.gov/crimea-is-ukraine/>.

away from Russia and the common historical past. In parallel with this, there is a gradual replacement of the Russian language with English in the teaching system: despite the status of both languages as languages of international communication, official languages of the UN, English is positioned as more popular. This contributes to further integration with the West, more and more people are learning English.

Regulatory and legal criteria

In Ukrainian legislation, the only state language is Ukrainian; its widespread use is enshrined in the law of Ukraine “On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language”. This law establishes Ukrainian as the only state (official) language, fixes its mandatory use in all spheres of public life, proclaiming the Ukrainian language the basis of state building and self-determination of the Ukrainian nation, an element of the country’s constitutional system⁴. The law establishes that knowledge of the Ukrainian language is the duty of every citizen of Ukraine (Article 6). Thus, the Ukrainian authorities establish their own rules of communication, which go against the established practice of the widespread use of the Russian language and other languages of regional importance (for example, Hungarian in Transcarpathia). The law additionally establishes the requirements for mandatory knowledge of the Ukrainian language for public positions – from the president to ordinary employees in the areas of healthcare, education, finance, civil and military service (Article 9). The laws of Ukraine are necessarily published in the state language and are officially translated only into English, which, in turn, emphasizes the importance of this language. There is no official translation to other languages that are actively used in communication.

The attitude towards the English language is also manifested in Art. 25 of the Law, which does not require the English-language media to publish mandatory parts of the circulation in Ukrainian. This is an exception for media in foreign languages in Ukraine⁵. The absence of restrictions, the openness of the communication regime significantly simplify the activities of foreign actors on the territory of Ukraine and create comfortable conditions for the formation and retransmission of Western discourse by local media based on samples used by Western sources.

Ukrainian legislation was created not only by managers within Ukraine, but also by representatives of external forces influencing them. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) played an active role, which shortly before the 2014 revolution, launched the RADA (Responsible Accountable Democratic Assembly) program, which is implemented jointly with a number of Ukrainian non-profit organizations. The goal of the program is to create a representative, accountable and independent Parliament,

⁴ On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language: law of Ukraine (document 2704-VIII, current version – revision of 01.01.2022, basis – 1089-IX). The Ukraine Verkhovna Rada. Ukraine Legislation. Available from: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2704-19#Text>.

⁵ On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language: Ukraine law (document 2704-VIII, current version – revision of 01.01.2022, basis – 1089-IX). The Ukraine Verkhovna Rada. Ukraine Legislation. Available from: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2704-19#Text>.

the Ukraine Verkhovna Rada. Within the framework of this program, there is an exchange of practices on the involvement of civil society in the legislative process, their participation in monitoring and independent control over the executive branch. The program includes expert consultations, educational programs for Ukrainian civil servants and members of Parliament for the exchange of experience. One of the areas of activity is the analysis of the work of the parliament and the development of proposals for its reform⁶. This program confirms the active involvement of the United States in the work of the Verkhovna Rada, testifies to the influence of the United States on ongoing reforms, including the transformation of legislation, through expert consultations and reports. The involvement of non-profit organizations, in turn, activates work with civil society and the population, thereby legitimizing the ongoing changes, and makes it possible to enlist its support.

Political criteria

The United States, as a rule, rarely participates in integration associations themselves, but actively uses this mechanism to consolidate states in order to simplify their interaction with them and achieve partial harmonization and control. A vivid example is the Euro-Atlantic partnership founded during the Cold War. Its main format is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Despite the military-political nature of this association, it provides security in various areas. In particular, the Strategic Concept 2010 includes information and cyberspace in the concept of security, which requires additional protection and attention of the alliance in view of the growing threats in this sphere⁷. This document applies exclusively to NATO members, which Ukraine is not now, but NATO actively interacts with partners in the spheres of its activity, including with Ukraine. Thus, one of the NATO trust funds under the Partnership for Peace program was implemented by 2017 and is aimed at improving protection against cyber threats, developing technologies and creating a monitoring center to counter threats in the field of information security. In 2016, the NATO-Ukraine platform was created to counter hybrid warfare, aimed at strengthening the resistance of society and the state to information pressure and countering the disinformation that arose with the outbreak of the crisis in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea in 2014⁸. Thus, we see that Ukraine, not being a member of NATO, is actively integrated into the cooperation and military-political activities of the bloc, which supports it in suppressing the informational influence of the Russian Federation, simultaneously strengthening the influence of the United States. Further integration with the bloc, as well as any integration, will lead to the delegation of certain powers to the supranational level, which will further strengthen the influence of external decision-making centers.

At the same time, the coverage of influence in the field of communication is gradually decreasing due to political reasons: if before 2014 Ukraine was an integral communication

6 About USAID RADA Program. Available from: <https://radaprogram.org/en/node/5>.

7 Strategic Concept 2010. NATO. Available from: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_82705.htm

8 Relations with Ukraine. NATO. 2022. Available from: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_37750.htm.

space within the borders of 1991, after the events of Euromaidan, the reunification of Crimea with the Russian Federation and the formation of the then self-proclaimed Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics communication in these territories was again directed towards the Russian Federation and its communication regime. With the start of a special military operation, the influence of the United States and the controlled decision-making center has noticeably decreased – a number of Ukrainian territories are currently under the physical control of the Russian Military Forces, and Russian television and radio broadcasting is being established in these territories⁹. Although the United States does not recognize these territorial changes, at the same time it loses control over communication over part of the territory of Ukraine, which indicates the fragmentation of its communication regime.

On the territory controlled by the internal center in Kyiv, the United States has control over the discourse formed by the national media. Also carry out broadcasting a number of American media resources, including: CNN, CNBC, VOA, Radio Liberty Ukraine (RFE / RL). All of them were actively involved in the public awareness campaign during the 2019 presidential election, which indicates their active participation in political coverage and broadcast from a certain point of view. This is important – according to USAID, 74% of the population in Ukraine depend on television sources of information. The main instrument of US influence on the communication regime of Ukraine is the financing of the national media and communications system through various programs, which will be discussed below.

Financial and economic criteria

The key institutional investors in the Ukrainian economy are the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) and USAID¹⁰. The latter, among other things, is actively implementing a program to ensure cybersecurity for critical infrastructure, which is also related to the logistics of communication in the country and ensuring its sustainability. 27% of foreign direct investment received by Ukraine in 2019–2020 relates to the field of IT technologies, in total, \$40 million has been invested since 2017 in the field of information security¹¹. In the same years, the popularity of traditional media is rapidly declining and there is a growing interest in Internet communication through social networks and news sites, which indicates the transformation of the communication system and requires new principles for ensuring its security. USAID investments have also launched a number of new media projects on television and radio stations. In particular, the show Countdown was created in an interview format, where there are “moderated debates and fact-checked discussions” (7). A number of

9 Ukrainian TV towers will stop broadcasting to Crimea. RIA News.2022. Available from: https://ria.ru/20220421/veschanie-1784625753.html?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop.

10 EBRD, USAID and AmCham help Ukraine develop capital and organised commodity markets. Available from: <https://www.ebrd.com/sites/Satellite?c=Content&cid=1395298836767&d=Touch&pageName=EBRD%2FContent%2FContentLayout>.

11 Ukraine: an FDI snapshot. Investment Monitor. 2022. Available from: <https://www.investmentmonitor.ai/analysis/ukraine-fdi-snapshot-foreign-investment>.

educational historical and scientific projects were also launched, aimed at a young audience ("Divatska istoriya Ukrainy" ("Amazing History of Ukraine"), "Sho? Yak?" ("What? How?")). External financing of these projects affects the position broadcast within the framework of these projects, which can influence the perception of their own history, the transformation of the identity of Ukrainians under the influence of external actors.

The issue of ownership of communications media in Ukraine remains extremely difficult. Information by the non-profit organization Reporters Without Borders point to regime-dependence of the operating media and a lack of transparency as the main risks for pluralism in the media space. We see that a number of media outlets belong to political figures or persons affiliated with them¹². The US Department of State report on the observance of human rights assesses non-profit organizations and also states the partial freedom of the press, the ownership of the share of the media by oligarchs who own companies registered offshore, despite the direct prohibition of the law on the ownership of offshore structures by media companies¹³. Such a scheme not only reduces the transparency of funding, but also raises the question of the impact on the broadcast position. In this regard, it is difficult to assess the ownership of the media and the influence of the United States on this financial and economic aspect.

Conclusion

The analysis allows us to conclude that the communication regime of Ukraine is highly dependent on the United States, which is a key player in the international arena and, in particular, one of the main subjects of influence on the communication regime of Ukraine. This dependence is provoked by the successful exploitation of Ukraine's desire to become sovereign from the Russian Federation, to find its own identity, which de facto it made the state dependent on the United States. The United States most actively influences in the regulatory, legal, financial and economic spheres (investing in communication infrastructure, advising on the transformation of the legal system, its openness), which allows the American media, NGOs and political institutions to successfully broadcast their discourse throughout the country. The lack of historical unity is not an obstacle to building a new communication model – since the United States is not the only player influencing Ukraine in the context of the Euro-Atlantic partnership, the commonality of Western Ukraine with European culture, which is opposed to Russian influence and a common historical past, is taken as the basis for self-identity. Partnership and active cooperation within NATO makes it possible to give the information and communication sphere a military-political character and invest in further opposition to Russian information and communication influence.

¹² Media ownership monitor. Ukraine. Reporters without borders. 2021. Available from: <https://www.mom-rsf.org/en/countries/ukraine/>.

¹³ 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ukraine. Department of State. URL: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ukraine/>.

It can be concluded not only about the dependence of the communication regime of Ukraine, but also about its fragmentation, since the influence of the United States is not the only one and is opposite to the influence of the Russian Federation. The merging of the communication regime with the political one due to the affiliation of large media with politicians indicates a close relationship between the communication regime and geopolitical tasks formed by external control centers, including the United States. All this will not contribute to the formation of a unified sustainable information and communication space in Ukraine and puts under doubt its further existence.

References

1. Brzezinski Z. The great chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperatives. Moscow: Izdatelstvo AST. 2015. (In Russian).
2. Gasumyanov V.I., Komleva V.V. Communication regimes as a factor of interstate interactions: problem statement/ *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn*/ 2020; 10:38-49. (In Russian).
3. Komleva V.V. Country communication regime as a socio-political phenomenon. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2021; Vol. 1, No. 1:13-26. (In Russian).
4. Tomaychuk L.V. Regionalism and regional identity in modern Ukraine. *Politek*. 2013; Vol. 9, No. 1; 252-263. (In Russian).
5. Galtung J. A Structural theory of imperialism. *Journal of Peace Research*. 1971; Vol. 8, No. 2: 81-117.
6. Horkheimer M., Adorno T.W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2002.
7. Korbut O. Strengthening Public Interest in Ukraine's Media Sector. Chatham House. 2021. Available from: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/04/strengthening-public-interest-ukraines-media-sector/02-ukraines-media-landscape>.
8. Schiller H.I. Communication and cultural domination/ *International Journal of Politics* 1975–1976; Vol. 5, No. 4:1-127.

About the author

Yury P. TIKHONOV. Specialist of Faculty of international regional studies and regional management, Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service of Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), research assistant of National Research Institute for Communications Development. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7438-9053> Address: 84, bld. 1. Prospekt Vernadskogo, 119571, Moscow, Russian Federation, yp.tikhonov@igsu.ru.

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Submitted: June 10, 2022. Approved after peer reviewing: June 16, 2022. Accepted for publication: June 20, 2022. Published: August 11, 2022.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.