TÍTULO: Estrategias de censura política cognitiva como efecto de "lo nuevos medios".

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RESUMEN: El propósito del artículo es el desarrollo y prueba de un modelo explicativo de estrategias peculiares a la censura política cognitiva ejemplificada en la campaña electoral presidencial ucraniana 2018-2019. Los autores amplían y generalizan aspectos objetivos y subjetivos de los enfoques disponibles en la literatura científica a las nuevas formas de censura política. En un aspecto, no solo la capacidad de atención por sí sola se considera como un objeto de censura política cognitiva, sino también otras funciones cognitivas de la audiencia de los medios es la capacidad de formarse una opinión coherente sobre los problemas actuales. Al menos tres estrategias cognitivas de censura política identificadas sugirieron de un debilitamiento de las capacidades cognitivas básicas: distracción, falsificación y absurdo. Estas estrategias se consideran en una perspectiva comparativa con la experiencia de las últimas formas de censura política en China y Turquía.

PALABRAS CLAVES: inundación de información, funciones cognitivas básicas, Medialogía, YouScan, Ucrania.

TITLE: Strategies of Cognitive Political Censorship as an effect of 'New Media'.

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the article is the development and testing of an explanatory model of strategies peculiar to cognitive political censorship exemplified in the 2018-2019 Ukrainian presidential election campaign. The authors extend and generalize objective and subjective aspects of the approaches available in the scientific literature to new forms of political censorship. In one aspect, not only the attention span alone is considered as an object of cognitive political censorship, but also other cognitive functions of the media audience is the ability to form a coherent opinion on current problems. At least three cognitive strategies of political censorship identified suggested a weakening of basic cognitive abilities: distraction, forgery and absurdity. These strategies are considered in a comparative perspective with the experience of the latest forms of political censorship in China and Turkey.

INTRODUCTION.

Until recently, research on censorship was associated with the function of governmental institutions that ensure public order and consent through censorship of information. Nonetheless, it was emphasized that the institutions of political censorship reached their peak in authoritarian and totalitarian societies, while self-censorship and social control dominated in democratic politics. However, in recent years, an opinion has increasingly been voiced that the phenomenon of

'omnicensorship' (Goryaeva 2009:9), which includes formal and informal prohibitions in the field of ideology and politics, does not necessarily apply only to authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, but acts as a stabilizing factor in any kind of power. Moreover, it is recognized that even practices of political censorship of an authoritarian model were often not a simple police action, but a creative game between authors, publishers, and censors (Darnton, 2014).

Certainly, this approach does not deny the significance of the differences between political censorship in different types of political regimes. However, the form of political censorship is no less dependent on media progress. Further, this reveals that censorship, corresponding to the realities of 'The Gutenberg Galaxy'; nowadays, in the era of social networks, is fading into the background; a new form of political censorship is becoming more effective, the understanding of which in the social sciences is only at the very beginning.

The traditional governmental censorship restricts access to certain texts, and by the commission, bans the ideas that are undesirable for public dissemination, turning into politically dangerous actions.

Accelerating growth in the information scope in the Internet era is quite difficult to control the old-fashioned ways; on the other hand, it is also of immense complexity for an ordinary person to navigate through. New information and communication technologies make reality a kind of 'liquid', eluding the usual criteria for its perception and evaluation. Distinctive features of this 'liquid reality' are 'media torrent' and 'information overload' (Gitlin, 2001). The redundancy of information, which is typical for the new media, makes it very difficult to verify; in turn, the latter would make it possible to distinguish a reasonable opinion from a hypothetical judgment, and an accidental lie – from deliberated misinformation. The latest form of political censorship is based on this cognitively vulnerable moment of Internet communications.

Both foreign and Russian scientific literature has already established a solid tradition of interpreting censorship as a political institution in a wider and more complex socio-cultural context than is usually done.

Based on the classical works of G. Tarde, E.A. Ross, R.E. Park, P. Sorokin, and J. Ortega y Gasset, censorship is comprehended primarily as a sanction of social control. This research line is close to the traditions of the Frankfurt School and consistent with the ideas of E. Fromm and M. Foucault. The latter also proposed an original concept of the 'logic of censorship', linking into one causal node the 'the inexistent, the illicit, and the inexpressible' of censorship mechanisms (Foucault, 1978: 84). In Russian academic literature, this line was developed further from the standpoint of social control, and sociocultural and sociological approach by Y.I. Giliginsky, V.N. Kudryavtsev, A.M. Yakovlev, I.V. Shmarova et al. (Afanasyev, 1972).

Of particular importance for the study is an approach that presents censorship as a socio-cultural phenomenon and as a product of the social structure (Parsons, 2002), as a public environment in the form of diverging concentric circles of control (Berger, 1963), and as the 'information society' (Bell, 1974). As part of this tradition, the Chilean sociologist Roberto Hozven introduced in the 1980s the conceptual triad of 'censorship – self-censorship – counter-censorship', which takes on new heuristic meanings in the study of the latest forms of political censorship (Hozven, 1982). In particular, the counter-censorship (or anti-censorship) is still insufficiently studied in terms of the effects of new media. Within the framework of the presented study, anti-censorship can be considered in the form of opposing not only traditional (for example, 'copyleft' as the antithesis of 'copyright censorship'), but also cognitive political censorship based on the generation of information flooding.

The idea of censorship implemented not through police control, but discourse-symbolic means, in and of itself is not a new phenomenon; it is similar to propaganda that manipulates stereotypes and other symbolic surrogates. Walter Lippmann had demonstrated a while back that 'without some

forms of censorship, propaganda in the strict sense of the word is impossible' (Lippmann, 1997: 43).

Symbolic censorship has grown since the Lippmann era of the so-called 'political correctness', which several Western authors also interpret as a form of censorship control with a blurred border between formal and informal prohibitions (Cohen, 2015; Wilson, 2015).

The concept of 'invisible censorship', proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in his analysis of television discourse in the aspect of discursive manipulations and 'symbolic oppression' (Bourdieu, 1998: 12-15), is even closer to the discursive concept of symbolic censorship. This concept is also similar to the notion of 'symbolic power', developed later by Teun A. van Dijk (van Dijk, 2008: 32-33).

From indirect (or 'invisible') media and political censorship, one should distinguish the so-called 'soft censorship', which in foreign political science implies the practice of influencing media production (especially news programs) through financial and economic mechanisms (Podesta, 2009). In his famous book, 'A Cognitive Psychology of Mass Communication', Richard J. Harris developed the concept of 'indirect censorship' (Harris, 2004: 206) similar to 'soft censorship'; however, the American psychologist distinguished the phenomenon of 'media self-censorship' (Harris, 2004: 207) from soft censorship (which emphasizes cognitive aspects), and highlighted the role of stereotypes and misinformation in the media restricting public access to truthful information as well. Very fittingly, Thomas Müller-Kulmann analyzed these subjects in detail in his book 'Propaganda and Censorship in Gulf War I' (Müller-Kulmann, 2007).

In general, all the approaches discussed above (by both Russian and foreign authors) present censorship as a kind of 'barrier for information', or as a kind of filter (administrative, financial, discursive, etc.) on its way. However, the concept of censorship, comprehended as the political effect of symbols and metaphors of public discourse, is quite problematic precisely because of its metaphoricalness. The censorship status of the discourse is not formally identified here either in the

subject or in the object of the discourse, and censorship practices – both by fact and by their conception – are, as it were, dissolved in an ideological language.

Later, in the second half – the last quarter of the XX century as telecommunication networks expanded, the 'information flooding' metaphor arose, which initially (also with a modicum of the ideas of Marshall McLuhan) expressed the enthusiasm of researchers regarding the decentralization of the system of production and dissemination of information.

This enthusiasm gave rise to a series of 'discoveries', which later revealed their ambiguity: in particular, the 'Gilmore law', according to which the Internet interprets censorship as damage and routes around it, because it considers censorship as a threat to own existence; as well as the 'Streisand effect', consisting in the fact that attempts to block (in the conditions of new media) public access to information only serves as a signal to increase attention. It is noteworthy that the first voices warning of the ambivalent nature of the Internet were heard not so much from scientists as from Internet activists. These include, for example, the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who wrote several books on Internet freedom and proposed a good metaphor for describing censorship by Internet corporations, such as Google: 'an information pied piper' (Assange, 2014a; Assange, 2014b).

Thus, the metaphor of 'information flooding' opens up a fundamentally new concept of political censorship, associated with blocking not so much information as an opportunity to perceive it. Such a concept also has its origins in the scientific and philosophical tradition. Thus, the authors of the 'Dialectic of Enlightenment' came close to the cognitive concept of political censorship as part of an analysis of the phenomenon of the 'cultural industry', which they see as an unspoken prohibition not on any specific information, but on the very ability for perception and problem solving (i.e., selectively, coherently and in the context of social memory (Horkheimer, Adorno, 2002)). Later, American media theorist Neil Postman observed that 'television is altering the meaning of "being

informed" by creating a species of information that might properly be called disinformation' which does not mean false information but 'misleading information – misplaced, irrelevant, fragmented or superficial information-information that creates the illusion of knowing something but which in fact leads one away from knowing' (Postman, 2005: 107).

But of particular importance for the theory of cognitive censorship, namely, as political censorship are the concepts developed in the works of Hannah Arendt such as 'organized lying', 'evident non-facts', 'defactualization', and 'political cynicism' (Arendt 2006; Arendt 1971). These notions largely anticipated the concept of 'post-truth' that has become extremely popular in recent years as being peculiar to the era of 'new media'. This era has put comprehension of the phenomenon of cognitive censorship on the current agenda of broad interdisciplinary research.

Further observation of the Internet environment led to the conclusion that new forms of censorship use such phenomena as 'echo chambers' and 'filter bubbles' that arise based on the principle of homophilia, that is, love of the such-like. Eli Pariser, who wrote a book about the 'filter bubble' in 2011, associated this phenomenon with 'second-order censorship – the manipulation of curation, context, and the flow of information and attention' (Pariser, 2011: 141).

The idea that the traditional types of censorship (preliminary, punitive, etc.) are not effective in modern society, and therefore the mind control assumes the role and function of censorship, has been mentioned in passing several times in Russian academic literature (Agapova, 2012). However, the manipulative strategies of cognitive censorship should not be confused with the manipulative effects of propaganda-ideological discourse, and the actions of the cognitive censor with the work of a professional ideologist. The latter affects the audience not only directly, but also in a roundabout way, with the expectation of both immediate and also the long-term effect; in the case of mass propaganda, it often covers the entire audience, and not just its segments.

In the case of cognitive political censorship, manipulation is designed to directly, promptly, and specifically impact to block specific unwanted information. The very possibility of such an impact opened up only in the era of 'new media', where authoritative information sources (channels) disappear in the conditions of information overload. Then, it becomes possible to close access to certain ideas, creating an increasing excess of half-truth, 'post-truth', and outright lies, purposefully filling the media with a shaft of anonymous 'fakes' ('post-facts', 'non-facts' or 'alternative facts'), deliberately confusing the audience and distracting it from censored political content. Thus, the blocking of public access to certain information is carried out not by restricting (or destroying) its carriers, but by blocking the ability to perceive these ideas. The very ideas do not disappear from the media landscape, but finding, understanding and keeping them in memory become a non-trivial task for a mass audience.

Having become convinced of the inefficiency of traditional forms of censorship under the conditions of the 'new media' information flooding, the authorities nowadays learn to modify their censorship practices to take into account these new communicative realities. According to the Turkish sociologist Zeynep Tufekci, 'producing information glut, inducing confusion and distraction, and mobilizing counter-movements, rather than imposing outright censorship, are becoming parts of the playbook of governments that confront social movements' (Tufekci, 2017: 6–7).

However, due to these new governmental censorship practices, the question arises of whether such practices apply to other, non-governmental actors? And is there truly no reason, therefore, to consider cognitive censorship not only as of the inheritance of authoritarian state regimes but also as usual practice in conditions of free political competition? Thus, is it possible, for example, to talk about mutual cognitive censorship of the participants in the election campaign, conducted according to democratic rules?

The purpose of this article is to clarify these issues based on an analysis of the public discourse of the 2018–2019 presidential election in Ukraine.

It can be suggested as a working assumption that this case can confirm the thesis statement: cognitive censorship strategies can be considered not only concerning governmental activities (top-down) or in a situation of mass protests (or their prevention), but also horizontally, between participants of the election race.

Materials and Methods.

In the process of research, cognitive censorship was considered in the context of symbolic power, comprehended as a kind of mind control, which is carried out by symbolic elites by choosing certain 'genres, topics, argumentation, style, rhetoric or presentation of public texts and talk' (van Dijk, 2008: 33). Hence, the main thing in the implementation of cognitive censorship as part of symbolic power is 'the control of the formation of social cognitions through the subtle management of knowledge and beliefs' (van Dijk, 2008: 63).

The concepts of ideological discourse and symbolic power proposed by T. van Dijk opened up the opportunity for developing a cognitive concept of political censorship; however, these concepts require at least two developmental improvements. The first of them refers to the concept of censorship, which, according to van Dijk, is mainly interpreted in the traditional sense and is problematized to a small extent. The second one is related to the cognitive effects of 'new media' such as 'post-truth politics', which have only begun to be grasped in the past few years.

To elaborate the concept of cognitive political censorship, the authors used the capacious definition of censorship proposed by Walter Lippmann, concerning the establishment of 'some barrier between the public and the event' (Lippmann, 1997: 43). The authors associated the further development of the concept of political censorship with the features of the 'new media', which employ all interactive forms of information exchange, including online media; the latter presupposes a digital form of

information storage, a network distribution method, a computerized processing system, etc. The authors presumed that the classical distinction between direct (administrative) and remote censorship does not lose its significance in the era of new media, but it is already not enough for understanding the specifics and conditions for the effectiveness of political censorship. In this vein, the concepts of 'invisible censorship' (Bourdieu), 'media self-censorship' (Harris), 'second-order censorship' (Pariser) and other similar still are in quite a demand. The authors consider the concept of the latest forms of governmental censorship, currently being developed by Z. Tufekci, as a methodologically valuable experience in comprehending the forms and strategies of political censorship in the era of new media. The authors of the presented study rely on the key message which was defined by Turkish sociologist as follows: 'censorship during the internet era does not operate under the same logic it did during the heyday of print or even broadcast television' (Tufekci, 2017:226).

The empirical part of the study involved the verification of the conclusions of the theoretical part through the operationalization of the basic concepts of the project. Relevant here is a way to monitor the media information and online network space by using the corresponding Russian platforms 'Medialogy' and 'YouScan'. These systems made it possible to track media publications in the aspect of the declared topic to the fullest extent possible, find the primary sources of news, and process information flows to track the natural life cycle of an information event and to separate it from products of manipulative technologies. Also, 'Medialogy' and 'Youscan' were used in identifying key newsbreaks (including the so-called 'fake news') and the source of the most hot-button messages. This allowed conducting an initial analysis and identification of key sources of media war.

At the next stage of the study, the sources of the information (including implicit and associated forms of control) were determined to identify whose interests the sources represent, as well as what forms of censorship in relation to alternative information they use. The quantitative analysis was not

enough to solve this problem; therefore, a critical discourse analysis of publications related to the stated topic was also undertaken.

The authors presented the results of the analysis of the Ukrainian experience of cognitive political censorship in a comparative perspective with similar experience in China and Turkey.

Results.

As a result of the study, at least three interrelated strategies of cognitive political censorship were identified. At least[1] the following strategies suggested a weakening of such basic cognitive abilities as attention span and coherent thought (Volkova, 2018):

• *Distraction* (when, on the approaches to information that is undesirable for dissemination, the attention of the media audience is captured by topics that have a cognitive priority due to their sensationalism and proximity to the basic stereotypes);

• *Falsification* (when the media environment is instantly filled with a stream of genre-structured false trails demeaning the sources of reliable and truthful information; the information subjected to an unspoken prohibition drowns in this stream of lies, eluding the attention of the recipients).

• *Absurdization* (when the thematic and semantic subject matter of the media landscape is deliberately torn through throwing in messages that are absurdly contradicting the meaning of undesirable information).

The implementation of these strategies, mutually presupposing and reinforcing each other, confuses their recipients and divides their consciousness from the actual history of events by making the media audience unable to rationally evaluate the current circumstances, including the topics of an unspoken censorship ban. All strategies involve 'informational flooding' of media audience recipients in the absence of generally recognized sources of reliable information.

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[1] **However, more such strategies can be identified as is obvious from the existing analysis of deceptive strategies via new media.**

The listed strategies of political censorship are well traced on the materials of Ukrainian presidential election campaign of 2018-2019, since its participants actively used not only straight lie, negative campaigning ('bad publicity'), mud-slinging and other classical technologies peculiar to the old-school election campaign, but also censorship practices that could be classified as the new media information flooding. The Ukrainian election race clashed three key political forces – administrative-governmental structures, the party-political establishment, and the top business tycoons; this case turned out to be especially interesting since it employed all the key types of political censorship: traditional governmental ('prohibitive'), financial and economic ('corporate', 'soft'), ideological ('discursive-symbolic'), and the last but not least, cognitive as such.

For instance, the availability of lobbying power allowed Petro Poroshenko actively resort to traditional types of political censorship, imposing a ban on objectionable sources of information and thereby blocking the dissemination of the very information (sudden dismissal of Ukrainian Public Broadcaster Chief Zurab Alasania is just one example)[2].

However, the corruption crisis at state-owned defense contractor Ukroboronprom (Ukrainian Defense Industry) forced Poroshenko more actively use other resources to suppress disadvantageous information, and first of all, such strategy of political censorship as a *falsification*. Judging by the activity of the pro-Poroshenko mass media, several newsbreaks were thrown into the Ukrainian media landscape from the end of February to the first half of March, aimed at suppressing and drowning out the scandal with Ukroboronprom, which broke out on February 26, 2019.

Journalists of the Nashi Groshi ('Our Money') program (Ukrainian Channel 24) published then the evidence they collected exposing a long-term corruption scheme through which hundreds of millions

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[2] **Zurab Alasania's dismissal on the grounds of 'insufficient coverage of the election campaign in Ukraine' became one of the hot-button examples of such lobbying power. It is curious that when Volodymyr Zelensky became President of Ukraine, they performed 'technological reshuffle' with former President Petro Poroshenko: Poroshenko is now forced to resort to cognitive censorship more often, while Zelensky actively uses administrative censorship.**

of hryvnias were embezzled from the Ukrainian defense complex. Moreover, the president's friend and business partner, member of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleg Gladkovsky and his 22-year-old son were involved in this scheme. Shortly afterward (March 1, 2019), an anti-Zelensky 'Letter of 27 Ukrainian intellectuals' was published, which, however, did not have a knock-on effect. A similar result showed the stovepiping of 'information' on the allegedly planned Russia's imminent occupation of 'two more' regions of Ukraine, as well as on the 'Pinocchio political project' with its outrageously delusive statement that 'documents from the hacked base of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party in 2014 outlined a plan that recalls Zelensky's campaign'.

Using the strategy of distracting the attention from the topic of corruption in Ukroboronprom, Poroshenko tried to discredit Zelensky due to his alleged relations with Ukrainian billionaire business oligarch Igor Kolomoisky; as a news hook was used quite sensitive to the electorate plot of the disappearance of $ 41,000,000 from PrivatBank (largest commercial bank in Ukraine) depositors later allegedly settled on the accounts of Studio Kvartal-95 comedians through lending to companies linked with Kolomoisky. In doing so, the information on corruption in the Poroshenko team was suppressed. This technology was also called on service in the second round of elections to divert attention during the preparation and conduct of the debate of presidential candidates, as well as to defend Poroshenko from attacks by Zelensky, including allegations of alcoholism (April 3–8). Below are two graphs of the distribution of this information: in the Ukrainian media (Fig. 1) and social networks (Fig. 2), which convincingly illustrate the chronology of the implementation of this strategy:
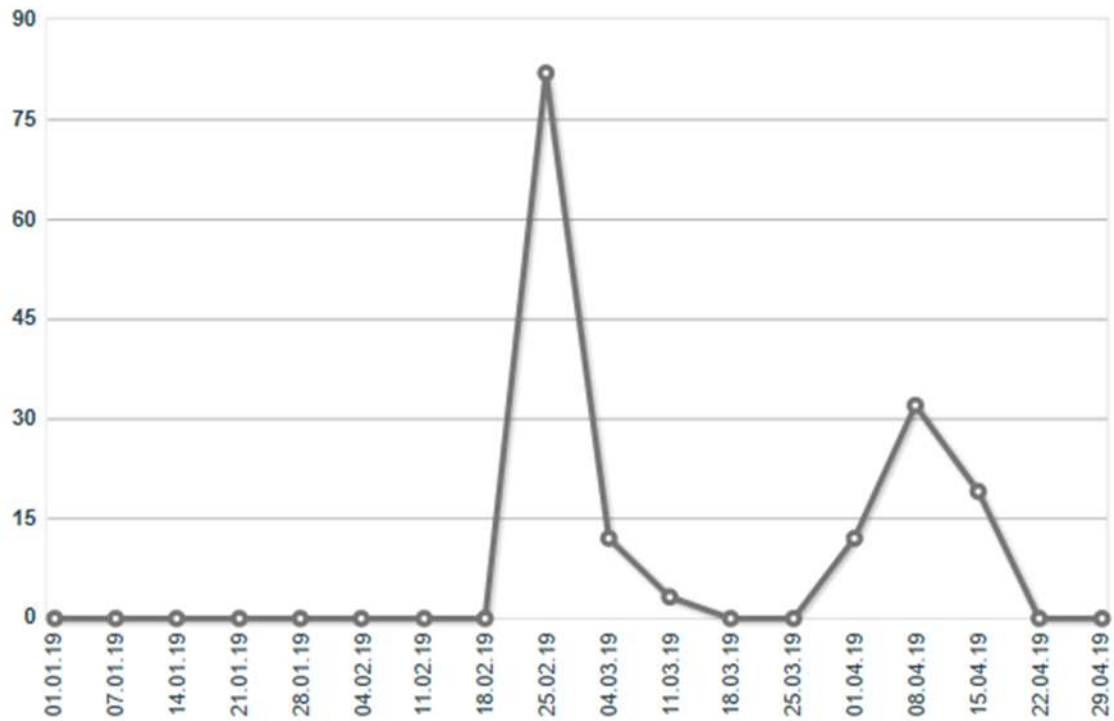
Fig. 1. Dissemination of information on the withdrawal of capital from PrivatBank in the

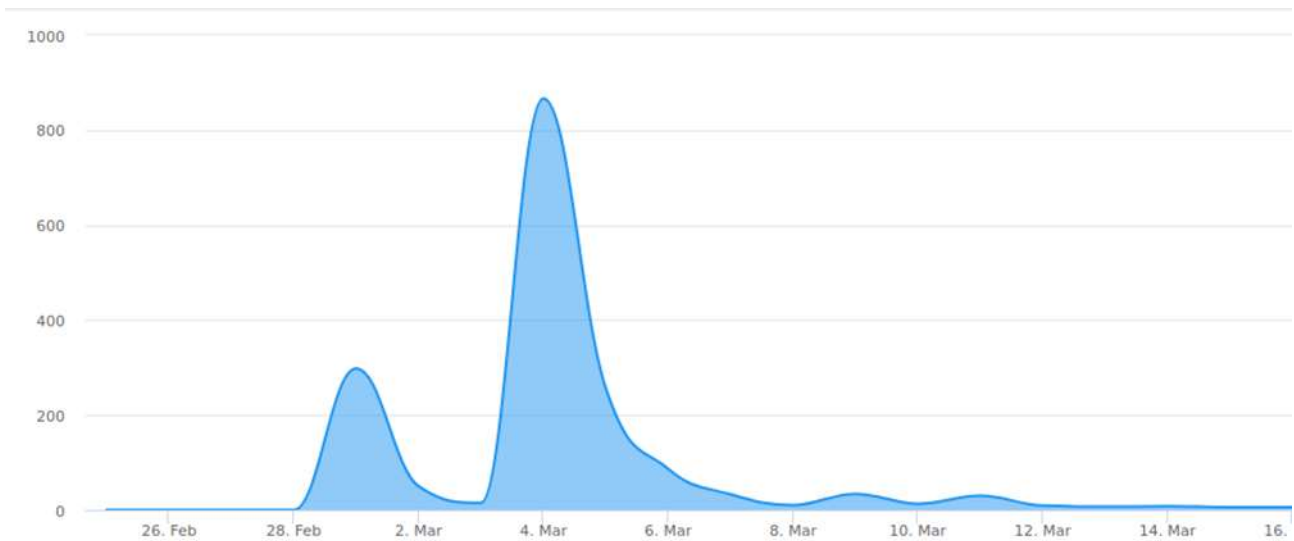Ukrainian media (according to Medialogy).

Fig. 2. Dissemination of information on the withdrawal of capital from PrivatBank in Ukrainian

social media (according to YouScan).

 No less active was the diversion strategy that Poroshenko team used in the case of stovepiping the 'information' on the alleged Zelensky's drug addiction. This newsbreak received the greatest distribution on April 4, 2019; however, even more indicative was the narrative (actively promoted by team Poroshenko) of Zelensky's weakness and cowardice, his incompetence and infantilism, dependence on the tycoon Kolomoisky, and even from Russian elites. All this was performed to initially devalue the role of Zelensky as a potential commander in chief of the Ukrainian armed forces. This narrative was intended to distract the audience from the corruption scandal with Ukroboronprom, moreover, on the issue-related field of 'defending the Fatherland'. The peak of the spread of this burst occurred just on April 1, 2019, although it has periodically emerged earlier (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Dissemination of information making absurd the role of Zelensky as commander in chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (according to YouScan).

For Zelensky, on the other hand, the most painful topics that he tried to 'suppress' with the help of cognitive censorship were news hooks on his drug addiction and incompetence, as well as the topic of election debates. His team also tried to neutralize the disadvantageous information through absurdization, thus suppressing the information to be censored by stovepiping counter-matters into the media environment. Thus, a mud-slinging on the drug addiction was suppressed by Zelensky's

team by promoting messages that Zelensky, on the contrary, allegedly saved Yevgeniy Koshevoy, his colleague from the Studio Kvartal-95, from drug addiction. According to Medialogy, chronologically this message was the most widespread just in the period of the scandal with alleged drug addiction (Fig. 4).
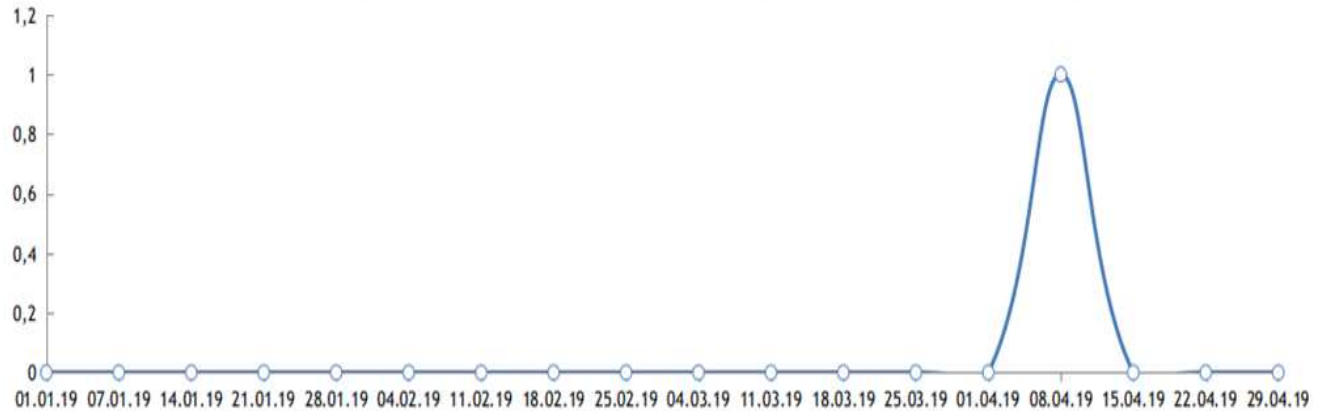

Fig. 4. Media coverage on Zelensky 'saving' Koshevoy from drug addiction (according to Medialogy).

One of the sizzlers of the second round of the presidential campaign was the requirement for candidates to undergo a medical examination with testing for drug and alcohol addiction. The reason was the allegations of Poroshenko supporters towards Zelensky's drug abuse, first went on public on February 9, 2019, by political activists in Lviv and actively promoted by pro-Poroshenko mass media (Video: Voters publicly accused… 2019). Later this topic was revalued on social networks also by Poroshenko supporters (Kravtsev, 2019).

According to some Ukrainian journalists, Poroshenko campaign headquarters was preparing a whole campaign to go viral with the 'information' on Zelensky's drug addiction, also with the involvement of relevant compromising evidence (Post by T. Nikolaenko on Facebook, 2019). This was indirectly confirmed by the public activity of the acclaimed political scientist Oleksandr Paliy, who demanded Volodymyr Zelensky to undergo a 'drug abuse screening test' (April 1, 2019, 'ELECTIONS 2019' Marathon), as well as by the scandal press conference of Zelensky's quondam friend Denis

Manzhosov, announced on April 11, 2019, but canceled under strange circumstances (Lukashova, Sarakhman, 2019).

In this situation, quite understandable appeared the desire of Volodymyr Zelensky to get ahead and try to censor the upcoming 'exposure' in the style of the mentioned strategy of absurdization. In a video published on April 3, 2019, on the YouTube channel and distributed via social media and calling for debate (Zelensky: 'Let's go to the debate!!!'… 2019), he seized the initiative and demanded a medical examination of his opponent, transparently hinting at rumors of Poroshenko's alcoholism, persisted in 2014-15. The absurdity of these hints was quite obvious since Petro Poroshenko has long time suffered from diabetes, so he could not be an alcoholic in any way, and by 2019 the Ukrainian society was well aware of this. Therefore, the topic of his alleged alcohol abuse was not used by any of Poroshenko opponents in the election race, either in the press or in social media. Despite this, the result in the form of a response in the media and networks was significant (judging by the Medialogy and YouScan data, see Fig. 5 and 6); however, this topic retained its link to the subject of the alleged Zelensky's addiction, which gives reason to doubt the success of his attempt at cognitive censorship.
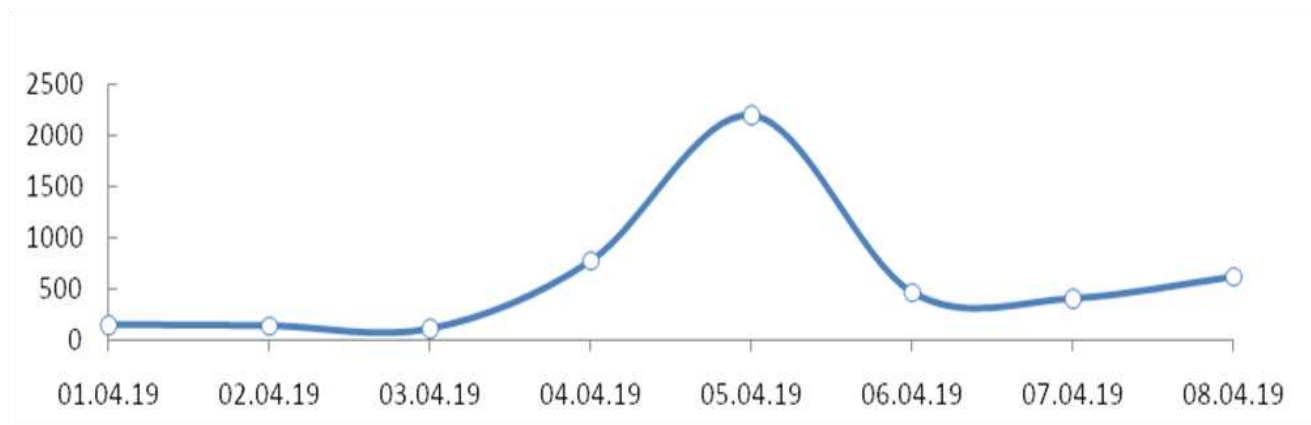

Fig. 5. Dissemination of the news break about Zelensky requiring Poroshenko to pass a medical examination (Medialogy and printed media).
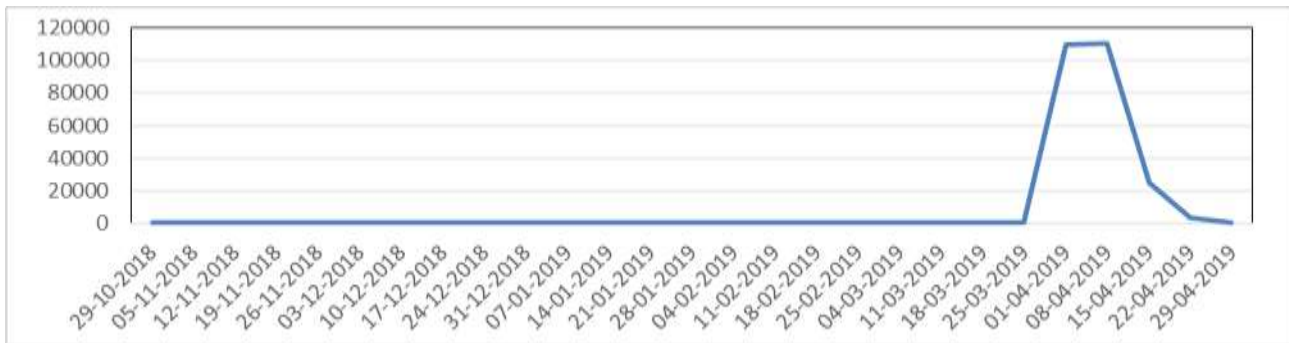
Fig. 6. Dissemination of the news break about Zelensky requiring Poroshenko to pass a medical examination (YouScan and social media).

The strategies of *falsification and distraction* employed by team Zelensky were more successful. Media loyal to this candidate also reacted with a series of fibs targeting acting President of Ukraine to reduce to absurdity quite justified criticism of the growing 'Ze candidate'. Thus, for example, the program 'Ukrainian Sensations', Season 10, Issue 8 '50 Shades of Poroshenko' on 1 + 1 TV channel, stovepiped the broadcast on Poroshenko allegedly killed his brother. However, due to its apparent absurdity, such 'information' could not be widely disseminated. A much greater resonance and enthusiasm of the voters was caused by the 'anti-fake' campaign launched by Zelensky in social media, which allowed declaring 'fake' any negative information on him. Also noteworthy was the creation and active promotion in social networks of 'Dark-PR Library n.a. Petro Oleksiyovych (Poroshenko)' (Fig. 5).
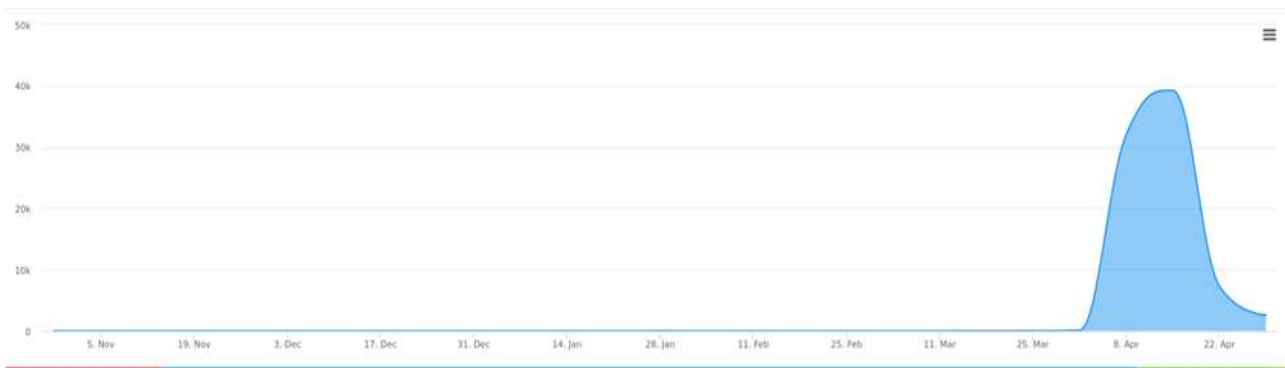

Fig. 5. Dissemination of information on the 'Dark-PR Library' in social networks (according to YouScan).

The hashtag *#shotutdumat'* (pidging Ukrainian for 'what is there to think') was the most popular one; it actually represented a whole campaign to discredit Poroshenko and the media under his control (see Fig. 6):
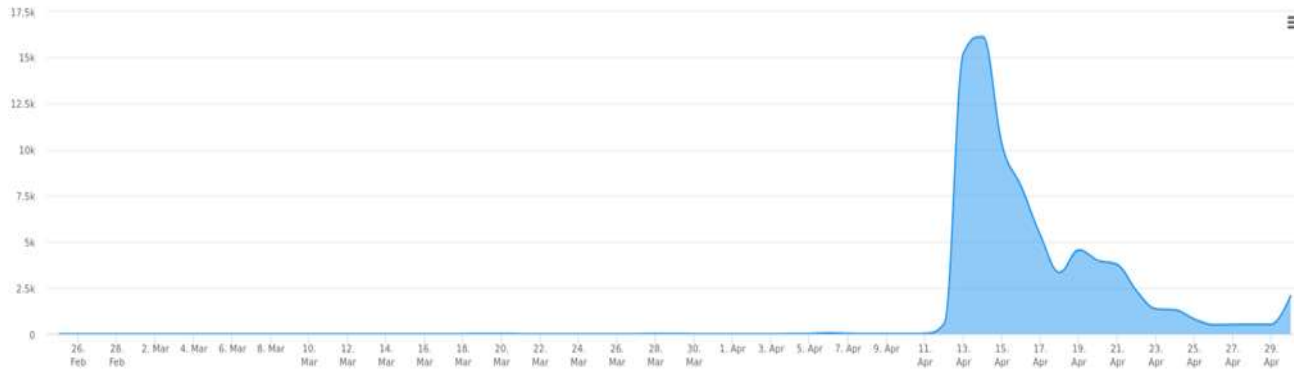

Fig. 6. Dissemination of 'Poroshenko fakes vs. Zelensky' in social networks, including the hashtag #shotutdumat' (according to YouScan).

But even more significant was the concomitant of the news feeds hashtag #nidebatam (Ukr. for 'No for debates'), which in April alone received 12166 messages. This move very effectively 'silenced' interest (previously heated by Poroshenko supporters) in the debate through an appeal to emotions: 'We don't need debate; we need children not to die! ... We don't need debate – we have already heard everything and see everything! No need to spend money – better give them targeted to each cancer patient, and there are 170 thousand of them! Go away, Petro Oleksiyovych!'[3].

Discussion.

The issue of new forms of political censorship is considered in the context of an up-to-date academic discussion around the role played by social media in the democratic system of society. Some authors (Vaidhyanathan, 2018) describe social networks as a propaganda machine that spreads fakes among a multimillion audience, distracts people from important issues, incites hatred and fanaticism, and

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[3] **Originated April 9 on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/markevichsumy/videos/2100494136686507/ This post gained 1.6 million views and 75 thousand reposts, it was spreaded until the end of April.**

undermines public trust - and at the same time participates in wide social supervision. The opposite point of view is shared by van Dijk, Poell, and de Waal [van Dijk, Poell, de Waal, 2018], who positively appreciate the opportunity provided by online platforms for instant access to Facebook news while bypassing official media institutions, which leads to the transformation of civic practices and seriously affects democratic processes.

However, both of these positions underestimate the potential of the discourse of modern media as the basis for new forms of political censorship. On the contrary, the Ukrainian case of the 2018–2019 election campaign provides samples of cognitive censorship as a way to protect the recipient from information that is objectionable to the initiator of this type of censorship and/or the person in whose interests this censorship is carried out. This is a relatively new kind of political control that has arisen along with the 'new media' and the adaptation of traditional media to the new realities of the 'information flooding' (through the popularization of 'live broadcasting', 'reporting from the scene', etc., when it turns out to be impossible to edit the material before launching it on the air). Although the 'blabbering' and discrediting of the interlocutor providing unfavorable information live on the air appeared as cognitive censorship techniques in traditional media talk shows, this type of censorship was most widely used in 'new media', namely, on electronic publications forums, on social networks, etc., that is, where it turned out to be impossible to block the flows or channels of information by means of direct administration. This change could not but be reflected in the practices of censoring information in the process of struggle for power and/or its preservation, with the only proviso that those in power possess administrative resources and therefore can use the traditional form of 'prohibitive' political censorship, while the absence of such resources from the opposition forces it to resort more often to the use of the latest censorship control technologies.

The phenomenon of cognitive censorship does not mean that the role of classical censorship is decreasing, especially in countries with an authoritarian form of government. However, effective censorship of this kind in the Internet environment is a costly affair that only powerful countries (like China) or political players within certain countries (such as possessing lobbying power or an 'administrative resource') can afford.

The first large-scale studies of the Chinese experience of direct censorship of political content in social networks (or rather a prompt removal of messages posted by individuals) date back to the early 2010s [Bamman, O'Connor, Smith, 2012]. A review of scientific research on this topic suggests the presence in China of several forms of direct Internet censorship, the most notable of which are the denial and concealment of facts, the absence of comments, and the contradiction of rumors (the common example could be the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and 2015 Tianjin explosions). However, even this large-scale national project does not provide for the establishment of total control over the Internet community. According to experts and researchers, way more effective in terms of influencing public opinion is the use by the Chinese authorities of such forms of censorship, which can be defined as 'cognitive strategies', and which are also strongly reminiscent of the Ukrainian case.

First of all, this is a strategy of distraction. Facts suggest that the Chinese government is hiring 'online commentators' to post propaganda on social networks. This group is derogatorily called 'The 50 Cent Party' or *Wumao*. This resource, for example, was used to struggle against and to debunk the leaders of the democratic movements in Hong Kong (Oiwan, 2012). Margaret Roberts believes that more subtle censorship, such as hiding search results or presenting distracting information on the Internet, is more effective than open censorship [Roberts, 2018]. Y. Cheng and S.J. Lee also consider strategic distraction, denial of rumors, myth, and censorship of media content as communicative crisis strategies (Cheng, Lee 2019).

The strategy of facts spinning is clearly represented in the Chinese experience of cognitive censorship. There is evidence that Chinese state-owned media such as the Global Times, Straits Today and Taihai Net first publish fake news, then Chinese cyber soldiers and 50 Cent Army report bogus stories via Facebook, LINE, and YouTube [Everington, 2018]. During the riots in Xinjiang in 2013, local governments themselves fabricated a media environment by publishing fake news or hiring other participants to promote and legitimize Chinese Communist Party policies (Cheng, Lee 2019). An integral part of the falsification strategy is rumor management practice, J. Zeng, K. Chan, and K. Fu highlighted two rumor management strategies based on the analysis of the content of the largest Chinese microblogging platform Sina Weibo on the 2015 Tianjin bombings in China, namely, the rumor moderation strategy with their (most often) refutation, and content removal (Zeng, Chan, Fu, 2017).

The success of all the mentioned strategies of governmental cognitive censorship in China is due to the also above-mentioned phenomenon of information flooding. When ordinary citizens become confused with the excess of information they have, organized groups with the resources and incentives to control this information, on the contrary, act purposefully, using information flooding and chaos as methods of control over the provision of information for Internet users (Roberts, 2014). The Chinese case also obviously demonstrated how the flooding is produced in the media environment. S. Bradshaw and P. Howard, exploring the organizational aspects of 'cyber squads' activities (governmental, military or political party teams seeking to manipulate public opinion through social networks), concluded that information warfare is becoming a global phenomenon. They contend that at least 28 countries use a significant amount of human and other resources to manage and manipulate public opinion on the Internet. Moreover, it was surprisingly noted that authoritarian regimes are guided more by citizens of their country, and democratic ones - by foreign audiences (Howard, Bradshaw, 2017).

Swedish political scientist Staffan I. Lindberg conducted a comparative analysis of two hundred states in terms of political censorship and concluded that Taiwan ranks first in the list of countries facing threats of misinformation; Lindberg also suggested that China is the main force behind the attacks (Tzu-ti, 2019). According to K. Everington materials, China has its own 'troll factory', which specializes in training domestic media and creating accounts on Weibo, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, PTT, and other social media platforms to launch 'cognitive space warfare' and intervene in elections in Taiwan (Everington, 2018).

For political players with less advanced technical capabilities than China, cognitive censorship is perhaps the only way to control the content of social networks. This is one of the theses that detailed in Z. Tufekci monograph, devoted to the new forms of political censorship.

Turkish academician also cites the Chinese authorities as an example, which, in her opinion, does not try to censor everything they don't like on social networks, but often flood the latter with distracting information and thereby block the public's access to unwanted information.

Zeynep Tufekci sees a similar practice in the media tactics of Recep Erdogan's government after the failed coup in Turkey in July 2016, when due to the overload of inconsistent information even she, being a professional sociologist, could not say exactly what was happening in some parts of her home country. A little later, impressed by this experience, Tufekci in one of her tweeted messages summarized the essence of cognitive censorship in the era of new media: 'It's no longer age of information scarcity. Censorship works by info glut, distraction, confusion and stealing political focus & attention' (Tufekci, 2016).

 Tufekci shows that in terms of the evolution of political censorship Turkey in recent decades 'went from a nation under severe military censorship to one in which over half the population is online' (Tufekci, 2017:31). At the very least, three types of political censorship replaced each other in the role of leaders: *firstly*, strict prohibitive censorship; *secondly*, soft political censorship as 'a new

censorship regime … based on ownership of mass media by corporations that depended on government favor for-profit' (Tufekci 2017:32). *Thirdly*, it is political censorship referred to in this article as 'cognitive', which Tufekci associates with the 'stealing political focus & attention' mentioned above. Tufekci considers the attention, on the one hand, as a decisive cognitive resource that limits other resources of social movements, which, however, is no longer the monopoly of the media. And on the other hand, Turkish academician interprets censorship in a broad sense 'as the denial of attention through multiple means' (Tufekci, 2017). The key point here is the loss of media monopoly on public attention. However, other cognitive functions, for example, the ability to coherently form an opinion on current events or store them in memory, can also be turned off by political censorship in the era of new media. Moreover, these cognitive functions are being turned off in relation to specific information, before which a barrier of ignorance and misunderstanding should be built for the general public.

CONCLUSIONS.

In the social and human sciences, the concept of cognitive political censorship has two kinds of premises: in one respect, it is the experience of conceptualizing political censorship as a social institution in a wider and more complex cultural context than in the case of the formal-legal concept of censorship; of the second part, it is the evolutionary logic of political censorship itself as a practice of governmental bodies.

In the first case, we are talking about the censorship effects of public discourse, which appears ideological just by its nature. Such is the meaning of the concepts of 'invisible censorship' (Bourdieu), 'media self-censorship' (Harris) and others, comprehended as manifestations of 'symbolic power' (van Dijk). Censorship is conceived here as a discursive act, the political and proper censorship status of which is often implicit and metaphorical. Symbols and metaphors of the political language 'censor' public discourse, guiding it to the direction desired by the authorities, but

this does not mean a deliberate weakening of the audience's basic cognitive abilities, which, on the contrary, is a feature of cognitive censorship. This is also directly related to the fact that all earlier forms of political censorship sought to build a barrier between the public and undesirable information did not require weakening the cognitive apparatus of the audience.

However, with the advent of new media featured by 'information overload', the situation changes dramatically: phenomena like the 'Gilmore law', 'Streisand effect', etc. make the censorship 'barrier' strategy ineffective. At the same time, the very 'information flooding' creates the ground for 'second-order censorship' (Pariser); this is represented by the new and more successful strategies for political censorship of public discourse, exploiting the disorientation of the audience of new media.

All of it means that effective political censorship, especially in technically inferior countries, in the digital age cannot rely on hiding (or blocking public access to) the text as a carrier of certain information. Therefore, the newest effective forms of censorship have explored not the textual, but the cognitive dimension of public communication, where restricting access to unwanted information (ideas) can be realized through the blocking of basic cognitive functions, and first of all, the ability to focus on certain topics and problems. Moreover, the mentioned blocking is conducted in the case of cognitive censorship, not as a side and inadvertent effect of ideological propaganda, but purposefully and situationally, with identifiable subjects and objects of censorship.

The above-cited experience of the PRC and Turkey proved the evolution of governmental political censorship from its direct (hard) forms to types of indirect (soft) and later cognitive censorship. Currently, it can be referred to as the mutual complementarity of all types of political censorship, which are simultaneously practiced in any country, but with different accents and depending on the situation. In this sense, there is no reason to limit political censorship only to the practice of

authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, but it is advisable to consider it as one of the stability factors of any political system.

Using the databases of the Russian media monitoring platforms Medialogy and YouScan, as well as conducted discourse analysis of key publications on the topic, the authors of the presented study identified at least three interrelated strategies of cognitive political censorship that were actively used in the media environment during the last presidential election in Ukraine: distraction through spread of sensational stories; falsification through a stream of genre-structured misinformation; absurdization of specific information through the mass distribution of fake counter messages.

The implementation of these strategies of cognitive political censorship was strengthened by traditional types of political censorship: administrative-governmental ('direct', 'prohibitive'), financial and economic ('indirect', 'soft'), and discursive ('symbolic').

Comparison of the Ukrainian case study with the diverse experience of cognitive censorship implemented by governmental authorities in China and Turkey shows the relevance of the mentioned strategies regardless of the sphere of application (protest or election campaign), the subject of censorship practice (government or non-state players) or political regime (authoritarian or democratic system).

The presented article is quite relevant in its conceptual part to the development of a special area of research devoted to censorship practices in politics and culture. Moreover, it makes a certain contribution to the general study of political communication, revolutionized by new media. The empirical material of the article can be used to further study the authors' concept of cognitive political censorship; it also may be of use for the analysis of current political processes in Ukraine.

Recommendations.

The concept of cognitive political censorship opens up a wide field for further research. First of all, the concept itself needs to be clarified in reference to other types of political censorship, which will

require not only concept analytics but also comparison and systematization of empirical material on other cases. Further research could, for instance, reveal cognitive censorship of politically undesirable information in its implementation through various kinds of amnesic effects produced by the new media information flooding. No less promising is the study of resistance practices to the latest (cognitive) forms of political censorship.

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