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## Entertainment media in the context of hybrid war in the post-Soviet countries: the case of Ukraine

### Abstract

The article provides a complex analysis of how entertainment media can serve to undermine a country's resilience and security amidst hybrid war using the case of Ukraine as an example.

The paper documents that before the launch of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014, Russian media products had been heavily present in Ukrainian media space, including the entertainment segment. In 2017, Ukraine restricted access to some Russian media products and social media in its territory in an effort to counter disinformation and the use of user data by Russian security services via their access to the social media based in the Russian jurisdiction. Despite the measures taken by the state to address security challenges, build resilience and fight disinformation in the media, the influence of Russian entertainment media in shaping public opinion remains significant.

In this paper, the authors analyze segments of the media space where Russian entertainment products are present in Ukraine, the tools used by Russia to enforce its narratives through media content, and the ways Ukraine has responded to these.

This paper aims at demonstrating the role of entertainment mass media in the resilience of countries and how it is used in the context of hybrid war. Also, it looks at the efforts to counter this influence.

The research shows that Russian entertainment media and content act as a soft power or cultural affinity element alongside misinformation or manipulations via news or information content. By using historical references, demonstrating civilizational and moral superiority, showing Slavic brotherhood, Russia and russocentric forces use entertainment media to shape and manipulate public opinion. As content consumption switches from linear media, such as television, to non-linear clusters of conventional and digital outlets, the room for the distribution of manipulative messages and narratives expands. Among other things, this undermines the resilience of countries and endangers their national security, especially in the hybrid war context.

Much is being done to counter this impact. Ukraine's restrictive measures against some Russian media, social networks and content have been effective in that they have decreased the consumption and the trust for Russian media amongst Ukrainian audiences. Offering alternative content, produced domestically and internationally, has contributed to diversification of the content, moving the audiences from the Russocentric cultural product to a more diverse one.

**Keywords:** Hybrid War; Television; International Politics; Security; Information War; Resilience; International Relations; Governmental Policy

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**Розважальні медіа в контексті гібридної війни в пострадянських країнах: кейс України****Анотація**

У статті на прикладі України проводиться комплексний аналіз того, як розважальні ЗМІ можуть впливати на стійкість і безпеку країни в умовах гібридної війни.

Дослідження показало, що до початку агресії Росії проти України в 2014 році російські медіа-продукти були широко присутні в українському медіа-просторі, у тому числі в розважальному сегменті. У 2017 році Україна обмежила доступ до деяких російських медіапродуктів і соціальних мереж на своїй території, щоб протистояти дезінформації та використанню призначених для користувача даних російськими службами безпеки через їх доступ до соціальних мереж, що знаходяться в російській юрисдикції. Незважаючи на заходи, що вживаються державою для вирішення проблем безпеки, підвищення стійкості й боротьби з дезінформацією в ЗМІ, вплив російських розважальних ЗМІ на формування громадської думки залишається значним.

У статті автори аналізують сегменти медіапростору, в яких представлені російські розважальні продукти в Україні, інструменти, використовувані Росією для просування своїх наративів за допомогою медіаконтенту, а також реакцію України на це.

Дослідження спрямовано на демонстрацію ролі розважальних засобів масової інформації на стійкість країн; на те, як це використовується в контексті гібридної війни; і на вивчення зусиль із протидії такому впливу, в тому числі шляхом просування альтернативного контенту й інтеграції України в європейські ЗМІ та культурний простір.

Дослідження показує, що російські розважальні ЗМІ та контент діють як елементи м'якої сили і сприяють відчуттю культурної близькості паралельно з маніпуляціями через новинний чи інформаційний контент. Використовуючи посилення на історію, демонструючи цивілізаційну й моральну вищість, говорячи про слов'янське братерство, Росія та російськоцентричні сили використовують розважальні ЗМІ для формування громадської думки й маніпулювання нею. З огляду на перехід споживання контенту від лінійних ЗМІ на кшталт телебачення до нелінійних кластерів традиційних і цифрових медій можливостей для розповсюдження маніпулятивних меседжів стає більше. Це, зокрема, підриває стійкість країн і ставить під загрозу їхню національну безпеку, особливо в контексті гібридної війни.

Багато робиться для протистояння маніпулятивному впливу. Обмежувальні заходи, запроваджені в Україні стосовно деяких російських ЗМІ, соцмереж і контенту, показали певну ефективність, оскільки змогли знизити споживання й довіру до російських ЗМІ та російського продукту в різних сегментах української аудиторії. Пропозиція альтернативного контенту, що виробляється в Україні та за кордоном, допомогла диверсифікувати й перевести частину аудиторії з російськоцентричного культурного продукту на більш різноманітний.

**Ключові слова:** гібридна війна; телебачення; міжнародна політика; безпека; інформаційна війна; стійкість; міжнародні відносини; державна політика.

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**Развлекательные медиа в контексте гибридной войны в постсоветских странах: кейс Украины****Аннотация**

В статье на примере Украины проводится комплексный анализ того, как развлекательные СМИ могут влиять на устойчивость и безопасность страны в условиях гибридной войны.

Исследование показало, что до начала агрессии России против Украины в 2014 году российские медиапродукты широко присутствовали в украинском медиапространстве, в том числе в развлекательном сегменте. В 2017 году Украина ограничила доступ к некоторым российским медиапродуктам и социальным сетям на своей территории, чтобы противостоять дезинформации и использованию пользовательских данных российскими службами безопасности через их доступ к социальным сетям, находящимся в российской юрисдикции. Несмотря на меры, принимаемые государством для решения проблем безопасности, повышения устойчивости и борьбы с дезинформацией в СМИ, влияние российских развлекательных СМИ на формирование общественного мнения остается значительным.

В этой статье авторы анализируют сегменты медиaproстранства, в которых представлены российские развлекательные продукты в Украине, инструменты, используемые Россией для продвижения своих нарративов с помощью медиаконтента, и то, как Украина на это отреагировала.

Исследование направлено на анализ влияния развлекательных средств массовой информации на устойчивость стран; демонстрацию того, как они используются в контексте гибридной войны, а также на изучение усилий по противодействию этому воздействию, в том числе путем предложения альтернативного контента и интеграции Украины в европейские СМИ и культурное пространство.

Исследование показывает, что российские развлекательные СМИ и контент действуют как элементы мягкой силы и создают ощущение культурной близости параллельно с информационными манипуляциями через новостной или информационный контент. Используя отсылки к истории, демонстрируя цивилизационное и моральное превосходство, говоря о славянском братстве, Россия и руссоцентричные силы используют развлекательные СМИ для формирования общественного мнения и манипулирования им. По мере перехода потребления контента от линейных СМИ по типу телевидения к нелинейным кластерам традиционных и цифровых медиа, возможностей для распространения манипулятивных сообщений и нарративов становится больше. Это, среди прочего, подрывает устойчивость стран и ставит под угрозу их национальную безопасность, особенно в контексте гибридной войны.

Многое предпринимается для противостояния этому влиянию. Ограничительные меры, введенные в Украине относительно некоторых российских СМИ, социальных сетей и контента, показали определенную эффективность, поскольку смогли снизить потребление и доверие к российским медиа в разных сегментах украинской аудитории. Предложение альтернативного контента, производимого в стране и за рубежом, помогло диверсифицировать контент и перевести часть аудитории с руссоцентричного культурного продукта на более разнообразный.

**Ключевые слова:** гибридная война; телевидение; международная политика; безопасность; информационная война; устойчивость; международные отношения; государственная политика.

## 1. Introduction

Information is an essential tool of international politics. Manipulation and distortion of information have proven to sow suspicion and distrust, intensify tensions in conflict zones and change the perception of facts as preferred by the actors that seek influence. Advancements in digital media, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data science so far have made it only harder to combat fake news, propaganda and preserve freedom and security on the Internet and in other media.

Technological progress in the means of broadcasting information abolishes borders and boundaries, leaving countries open and vulnerable to intervention into their political and information space by other states. Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and Georgia have been among strategic targets for Russian foreign policy among the post-Soviet countries. They have been subject to plentiful disinformation, hacker and troll attacks ever since they gained independence, and the Russian Federation is interested in maintaining their populations under its influence. All these countries have some top media broadcasting or publishing in the Russian language, which makes them an easier target for Russian bots, trolls and disinformation attacks. The latter work is done with the goal of increasing confusion, the amount of misleading information in popular media resources, fostering manipulation, spreading hate speech and changing public opinion to serve political purposes.

Together with the social media, conventional media, especially TV, play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and are still used as sources of manipulation and propaganda. The main challenge for each state therefore lies in the ability to counter manipulative information practices and build resilience against them in its population.

## 2. Brief Literature Review

A lot of research has been done on the topic of state resilience, hybrid war, disinformation, fake news, influence and intervention of bots and trolls into various political, economic and social aspects of life in different countries, including USA, Saudi Arabia, Finland, post-Soviet countries etc. (Darren L. Linvill and Patrick L. Warren, 2018).

The topic of resilience in Eastern Europe was discussed in the works of D. Bartha (2018), H. Maksak and S. Gerasymchuk (2018), A. Yeliseyeu and V. Damarad (2018); disinformation was studied in the works of D.A. Martin and J. N. Shapiro (2019), S.-D. Bachmann (2011), G. Routes and G. C. Pascariu (2019); the role of media in hybrid wars was demonstrated in the works of K. Giles (2020), B. Yuskiv and S. Khomych (2017), and others.

The mentioned topics of disinformation, fake news, propaganda, resilience and information wars have grown into a reason for concern in many countries. Researchers, civic activists and

prominent think tanks have conducted numerous studies of narratives. Among the organizations that have worked on the mentioned topics, the following could be mentioned:

- Bellingcat (UK), an investigative journalism website specialized in fact-checking and open-source intelligence.
- Hybrid Warfare Analytical Group (HWAG) of Ukraine Crisis Media Center (Ukraine), an NGO addressing the issue of Russian disinformation since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014. HWAG explores Russian domestic narratives in the Russian information space and how they correlate with the narratives distributed by the Russian Federation internationally.
- Foreign Policy Council Ukrainian PRISM (Ukraine), a think tank focused on analyzing Ukraine's resilience via Disinformation Resilience Index.
- StopFake (Ukraine), an organization, focused on verifying and debunking disinformation and propaganda about events in Ukraine circulated in the media.
- Texty.org.ua (Ukraine), an independent analytical online publication that combines conventional and data journalism. It studied the influence of Russian narratives during the 2019 presidential elections in Ukraine.
- Centre for East European Policy Studies (Latvia), a think tank that researches the buildup of expertise on Russia's foreign policy influences in the neighborhood.
- Latvian Institute of International Affairs (Latvia), an organization focused on international developments, regional security issues, and foreign policy strategy and choices.
- WatchDog.md (Moldova), a civil society group in Moldova acting as a think-tank. It brings together experts in various fields to analyze, evaluate and develop sectoral public policies in Moldova. One of its main objectives is to provide accurate and comprehensive information on the situation in critical areas in Moldova, including economics, public finance, democracy, election processes and human rights.
- Resilience League (Estonia), an international cooperation platform for experts and young professionals to create shared experience, obtain new practical knowledge and develop innovative methods for effectively counteracting hostile influence and disinformation.
- International Center for Defense and Security ICDS (Estonia), a top think-tank in Estonia specialized in foreign policy, security and defense issues.

In their reports, statements and publications, all these scholars, researchers and institutions have mentioned multiple times that, in order to secure freedom on the Internet and in conventional media, enforce freedom of speech and freedom of expression, and prevent the spread of hate messages, mass manipulations and disinformation by any manipulative actor, states should take measures to improve their resilience.

**3. The main purpose of the paper** is to demonstrate the role of entertainment media in undermining resilience of countries; to show how it is used in the context of hybrid war; and to examine efforts to counter this impact, including by bolstering the offer of alternative content and integrating Ukraine into the European media and cultural space.

#### 4. Results

In Ukraine, television has been the key mass medium for decades. A July 2020 survey by the Razumkov Center (2020), a sociological group, found that 65% of Ukrainians obtain information about domestic and international developments from national television, 52% from online media and 45% from social media. Other media lag behind: fewer than 19% watch local and regional television, 10% listen to radio, and around 7% read national and local press each.

Surveys by Detector Media and Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (2019) showed that 74% of Ukrainians watched TV for news in February 2019, 86% in February 2018, followed by Ukrainian online media with 27% and social media with 23% in both years. The popularity of local television, local websites, national radio, and national and local press was under 10%.

This shows that, in the past decade, the share of television has been declining while the popularity of online and social media has been growing. However, the two make some of the most effective tools when it comes to the reach of mass audiences.

In the near to mid-term prospect, media experts expect that the audience in Ukraine will increasingly switch to online and OTT platforms - especially for entertainment content, including shows and films. Conventional broadcasters are proactively developing their VOD platforms to

keep their audiences amidst growing competition from subscription-based service providers, both domestic and international. More generally, both news and entertainment content producers increasingly become cross-platform, creating media clusters comprised of various media channels and formats to reach the widest audiences possible.

The top fifteen TV channels in Ukraine offer infotainment content comprised of information and entertainment. This is an essential factor of their popularity among the wider audiences. The TV channels focused on news and analysis are ranked anywhere below position 20 in the nationwide TV panel (TOP-channel, 2020), although they, too, are used to broadcast narratives that fit certain political agendas, including pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian, anti-Western or anti-reform ones. The research of online content consumed by Ukrainians reflects preferences of entertainment content as well.

During the COVID-19 quarantine in Ukraine in spring 2020, 52% of respondents covered by the Gradus Research analysis (Sostav.ua, 2020) said they started watching more films and videos during that period - more people started following news, too; 36% watched more television, and 19% played more computer games. By contrast, 24% began to read more books, 18% watched lectures or consumed other educational content, and 13% started doing more sports. The most used mass media included social media (46% started using them more often during quarantine); online media (40%), television (33%) and messengers (22%). Just 4% of the polled listened to the radio more often, and a mere 1.4% started reading more press.

Data from Kyivstar TV (Economichna Pravda, 2020), a nationwide telecommunications provider, from mid-March to late April, the peak of the COVID-19 quarantine in Ukraine, showed that its TV service users watched 30% more TV channels and 65% more films from its VOD platform.

All this creates a favorable environment for the use of both news and entertainment content and media - from conventional to online and social media - to influence public opinions, perceptions and political sentiments in Ukraine, as well as in any other country. Such efforts are especially effective in the countries bordering on Russia that share some common elements with it, such as cultural patterns or language.

The Russian Federation uses information in order to promote its narratives and change public opinion to the needed direction. In order to reach its propaganda goals, Russian Federation often uses techniques and methods already developed and tested during the Soviet time. James K. Wither (2016) mentions that Soviet psychologist Vladimir Lefebvre developed the theory on influencing and controlling the decision-making process of the enemies: «... specially-prepared information that inclines an opponent to voluntarily make a decision that has been predetermined as desirable by the initiator of the information. Methods include blackmail, camouflage, deception and disinformation, all intending to interfere with an opponent's decision-making cycle in a way favorable to Russian policy». According to Peter Pomerantsev (P. Pomerantsev in G. Routes & G. C. Pascariu, 2018), «the new Russia doesn't just deal with the petty disinformation, forgeries, lies, leaks, and cyber-sabotage usually associated with information warfare. It reinvents reality». S.-D. Bachmann and H. Gunneriusson (2015) say that «Russia disseminates misinformation to distract, confuse and degrade the opponent's capabilities and counter a threat.» Keir Giles (2020), Director of the Conflict Studies Research Centre, Oxford, argues that «Russia now benefits from a highly developed information warfare arsenal which will be a key facilitator in preparing for further actions which the West will find unthinkable in advance, and unacceptable after the fact.»

The relation between Russian media propaganda and political targets was proven by B. Yuskiw and S. Khomych (2017) in their article *The role of media propaganda in the «hybrid war»*, where the authors built a regression model that proves a direct connection between the number of intensified shootings and shelling against the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Donbas and specific propaganda phrases used by the Russian *Russia Today* channel during those periods. The research demonstrated the correlation between hate words used in the Russian media during a certain period of time and the cases of shelling in Eastern Ukraine. The more hate speech was used in the Russian media, the more often separatists shelled the Ukrainian Army.

### ***Russian entertainment content in Ukrainian media and regulatory incompatibility***

A monitoring by the MediaSapiens project (Detector Media, 2015) found in 2015 that Ukraine's top TV channels broadcast anywhere between five and thirteen hours of Russian soap operas and TV series, as well as Russian and Soviet films daily. Generally, the presence of Russian media

products and producers in Ukrainian media space was strong in the years after Ukraine gained independence but declined gradually over the years.

NATO StratCom COE (S. Svetoka and A. Reynolds, 2015) published a report in 2015, mentioning that Russia's information war had strong coordination between the ideological base, traditional media and a well-developed network of Twitter users.

Analyzing the role of trolls and bots in hybrid wars, the authors of the report identified several patterns similar for every country, where strong troll attacks/disinformation campaigns occurred (e.g. Ukraine, Poland, Georgia etc.). Among them:

- aggression against other participants;
- labelling (use of particular names and terms to evoke specific associations);
- use of historical references (WW II);
- demonstrating civilizational or moral superiority;
- use of irony and sarcasm;
- conspiracy theories;
- blaming others (NATO, USA, EU);
- diverting discourse (there are other problems);
- slavish brotherhood;
- social Proof (everybody does this).

These very techniques are often used in traditional media, especially, in TV series, entertainment and pseudo-scientific programs (focusing on the historical events) (S. Svetoka and A. Reynolds, 2015).

Since 2013, Russia has introduced amendments in its Criminal Code and Constitution, penalizing the reflection of facts on its aggression against Ukraine and attempted annexation of part of its territory in the media content under the Russian jurisdiction. This adds a legislative layer to the covert and open censorship and self-censorship in Russian media resulting from the socio-political situation in the country and the Kremlin's official policy to stifle the narratives that risk undermining its concept of *Russkii Mir* (*the Russian World, in English*).

Introduced in late 2013, Article 280.1 of Russia's Criminal Code (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2013) penalizes «calls for actions aimed at undermining territorial integrity of the Russian Federation,» including in mass media or on the Internet. This led to prosecutions and imprisonment of people who posted or shared content referring to Crimea as not part of Russia or as part of Ukraine. As a result, any media products regulated by the Russian jurisdiction that refer to Crimea as part of Ukraine, to its attempted annexation or occupation by Russia, risk facing prosecution. This contributes to Russia's misleading narrative that runs against both Ukrainian laws and international norms, and seeks to legitimize its alternative reality.

In 2020, the Kremlin amended Russia's Constitution (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2020) with the following provision: «The Russian Federation ensures protection of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The actions aimed at alienating part of its territory... and calls for such actions are not allowed.» This, too, makes it impossible for media content to cover facts related to Crimea, forcing producers to stick to the Kremlin's official narrative.

Much of that entertainment media content contains elements Ukraine restricted in amendments to some laws, including the Law on Cinematography (2015), in 2015 in an effort to counter media manipulations from Russia as an aggressor state and propaganda of Russian and Soviet military or security narratives. These restrictions cover the following content or public figures:

- films featuring some actors sanctioned for breach of Ukrainian laws, aggressive anti-Ukrainian rhetoric or distribution of misinformation;
- films promoting a positive image of Russian or Soviet security, enforcement or military agencies;
- films that justify or recognize as legitimate the occupation of part of Ukraine's territory;
- films that portray ethnic, national, religious, racial or other groups as superior or inferior;
- films or TV shows produced in Russia after 2014.

For similar purposes, Ukraine restricted access to some Russian media products and social media in its territory in 2017. This was done in an effort to counter disinformation and the use of user data by Russian security services via access to social media based in the Russian jurisdiction. In 2014, VKontakte founder Pavel Durov revealed that Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) demanded from him personal data of Ukrainian EuroMaidan group organizers in VKontakte

during the initial stages of the protests in December 2013 (BBC, 2014). In 2014, VKontakte was acquired by Mail.ru Group (Novaya Gazeta, 2014), part of a holding controlled by Alisher Usmanov, a Russian oligarch. In 2020, speculations began about potential sale of Telegram, a popular messenger founded by Durov, to Mail.ru Group or another Russian oligarch. In June 2020, RosKomNadzor, Russia's telecommunications regulator, stopped blocking the messenger after two years of blocking for Telegram's refusal to give FSB the keys to decrypt the messaging of its users. Telegram operates freely in Ukraine and has already featured as a platform used for disinformation - including on the COVID-19 pandemic - in journalist investigations.

Despite the measures taken by the state to address security challenges, build resilience and fight disinformation in the media, the influence of Russian entertainment media in shaping public opinion remains significant.

In 2016 alone, Ukrainian TV channels have broadcasted 93 banned Russian movies and TV series (Detector Media, 2015). Most of such movies were shown on Channel Ukraine (42) and on Inter (18) promotes pro-Russian narratives (Korrespondent.net, 2016). In a study by Internews Ukraine (Words and Wars, 2018), Ukrainian media experts look at the images, narratives and messages spread through the Russian entertainment content, among others. They point to dozens of Russian series about Russian law enforcement and security agencies that the top Ukrainian TV channels broadcasted before the restrictions. This media content «consistently creates a picture of the world where the country is divided exclusively into those who violate the law and those who establish justice on the part of the state,» the experts conclude, leading to consistent promotion and glorification of the Russian police and FSB in top Ukrainian mass media.

Oksana Voloshenyuk, executive director of the Academy of Ukrainian Press, quoted in the research, points to xenophobic elements in one Russian TV series (Lesnik, i.e. Ranger, in English): impossibility of romance between an Armenian boy and a Russian girl or portrayal of Ukrainians as a ragged crowd that «have built the cowshed, so we sent them packing» to whom the series characters refer to as «*khokhols*», a derogatory name. Some of the actors, directors and producers involved in the production of this content were later involved in producing manipulative and propagandist entertainment media content that promotes Russian narratives on the developments in Crimea, Eastern Ukraine or generally justifying Russia's political, military and other actions.

Other entertainment content that features pro-Russian or Russian narratives includes music (on music channels), in televised concerts with Russian celebrities, and in TV shows and series where Russian actors play protagonist roles. On one hand, such entertainment content has no direct political focus. On the other hand, it often promotes purely pro-Russian narratives through its content. The most recent manifestation came with the massive engagement of Russian actors, performers and artists in the promotion of amendments to the Russian Constitution pushed by Vladimir Putin (Novaya Gazeta, 2020). The reasons to support Vladimir Putin's controversial amendments expressed by the Russian celebrities engaged in the promotion ranged from the protection of the Russian language portrayed as superior to any other language to protection of family values, to the protection of Russian historical memory about World War II and more.

More generally, as mentioned in NATO StratCom report (2015), such entertainment programs use historical references; demonstrate civilizational and moral superiority; shows Slavic brotherhood; provides social proof. For example, while music may seem to have nothing to do with politics, the lyrics says «Putin is my president» glorifying Russian President and all his initiatives Irony and sarcasm are used to show that the Ukrainian language is spoken by people with poor education, usually from the countryside or from poor neighborhoods.

Ukraine's moves to restrict access to some of Russian entertainment and infotainment media were preceded by developments in Russia that promote misinformation via legislative, judicial and other tools. Additionally, some activities, such as imposing information security as a part of governmental political and diplomatic agenda; implementation of respective laws, and monitoring of the content broadcasted on TV; investing more into Ukrainian music and film industry, and changing traditional diplomatic approaches to fight disinformation, should be implemented.

## 5. Conclusions

Using information, countries and malefactors influence political, economic, social and military developments in the world. Fake news, manipulations, propaganda and hate speech transmitted via television or Internet shape and polarize public opinion, change the situation in targeted countries to serve the malefactor's interest.

Information has a great impact on countries' resilience and on their ability to resist foreign influence on domestic politics. Such influence is manifested by Russia's intervention into the US election campaign, political and economic developments in Germany, UK, Syria, Australia etc. The best example is seen in the countries that share common elements with Russia due to historical reasons, including Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Estonia and more.

The experience of Ukraine shows that, in addition to bots and trolls on the Internet, conventional media - mainly television, and the increasingly popular online channels widely spread Russian narratives via entertainment content, such as reality shows, soap operas, films and series, and music shows. A combination of legislative actions to counter Russia's media influence and the government's initiatives to support Ukraine's own creative industries result in providing the increasingly popular alternative to the Russia-made content.

Moves to integrate Ukraine's creative and media space with that of the EU contributes to the improvement of Ukraine's information space too by offering more good quality entertainment content. Among other things, these steps help raise the awareness of Ukrainian audiences about political and democratic processes in the West, thus countering Russia's narratives about «hostile» or «decadent» West; provide an alternative to Russia's manipulative concepts, e.g. of cultural, spiritual, linguistic or other superiority of «Slavs» or Russian-speakers over other groups; and open more destinations and opportunities for the Ukrainian artists beyond the Russia-oriented space. These efforts should continue and evolve to help increase resilience against manipulative information influences.

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