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**PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND ITS LEGAL IMPACT: THE  
CONTEXT OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR**

Bachelor's Thesis

Programme HAJB, Specialisation in International Relations

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Tallinn 2022

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## ABSTRACT

The choice of this topic was influenced by the tragic events of February 2022, which were framed up by a full-scale invasion of the territory of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and its allied forces. Conceptually departing from the grand-debate on ‘soft power’<sup>1</sup> as well as the international law-promoted notion of ‘sovereignty’ (including societal sovereignty), this study builds on defining and discussing the phenomenon of public diplomacy (PD) and its utilization in the preparation for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, it has a particular focus on a mirror effect – the Ukrainian side’s global ‘answer’ to the challenge (through the same PD-bound framework) and its legal impact of a certain kind. In the discussional context of the study, strategic narrative theory<sup>2</sup>, Cull’s<sup>3</sup> understanding of PD mechanisms, and Brown’s<sup>4</sup> position on international politics through the prism of the normative theory are taken as providers for a discussional framework. It appears to be that, apart from its military response to the Russian aggression, Ukraine is effectively utilising a PD-linked instrumentarium to rebuff Russia’s aggressive behavior, while also substantially affecting the European Union-wide process of policymaking, let alone addressing the moral dimension of international affairs. This is to be this paper’s argument ready for testing. Before engaging into the discussion, this material will 1) craft its discussional framework via detecting some major factors and their interrelated connections, which allow for effective impact-making king activity of a high-level PD user? and then 2) get into data gathering on Ukraine’s modern PD that is objectively used as a means to stop Russia’s aggression and, from the legal perspective, comprehensively make a difference in the field of international policy making.

**Keywords:** soft power, public diplomacy, normative theory, policy-making, international relations, strategic narratives, Ukraine, Russia, war, advocacy, sovereignty, strategic communication, Zelenskyy.

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1 Nye, Jr. J., S. (1990). Soft Power, *Foreign Policy* No. 80, 166-168.

2 Miskimmon, A. B., O’Loughlin, L. Roselle (2013). Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power, *SAGE journals*, 74 – 77.

3 Cull, N. J. (2008). Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 35-38.

4 Brown, Ch. (1992). *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches*, New York: Columbia University Press, 255.

## INTRODUCTION

We started a new form of diplomatic activity – systematic and large-scale appeals to the parliaments and peoples of the world. And they showed that it can be more powerful than all other forms of classical diplomacy.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy (2022)

Should the Russian Federation be academically treated as a modern empire<sup>5</sup>, its imperial expansionism in the form of the latest and objectively unwelcomed intrusion into Ukraine on 24 February 2022 has dramatically infringed international law as well as the sovereignty of the Ukrainian state and the rights and freedoms of its citizens. From the time when Russia annexed Crimea and Russian-backed collaborators, together with the Russian military, took control of some parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine in 2014, until the moment when the Kremlin had ‘declared’ the independence of the latter two areas in 2022, it was simply a matter of time before the conflict would escalate to its current level of brutality as well as complexity. The situation’s prospective development became more evident in late 2021-early 2022 as Russian forces massed along Ukraine’s borders, and Ukraine started addressing serious concerns internationally<sup>6</sup>, predominantly appealing to the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United States, and the political West in general. By the way, the current Supreme Law of Ukraine refers to the country’s EU- and NATO-associated geo-strategic vectors four times<sup>7</sup>, but it is only something to keep in mind as a factor-premise in the context of this research work.

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<sup>5</sup> Zielonka, J. (2012). Empires and the Modern International System. *Geopolitics*, 17 (3), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Kuleba, D. (2022): ‘Ukraina mobilizovala naivuschyi riven' mizhnarodnoi pidtrymky z 2014 roku [Ukraine has mobilized the highest level of international support since 2014], Retrieved from <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/dmitro-kuleba-ukrayina-mobilizovala-najvishchij-riven-mizhnarodnoyi-pidtrimki-z-2014-roku>, 20 April 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Verhovha Rada of Ukraine (2019). Pro vnesennya zmin do Konstytutsiyi Ukrayiny shchodo stratehichnoho kursu derzhavy na nabuttya povnopravnoho chlenstva Ukrayiny v Yevropeys'komu Soyuzi ta v Orhanizatsiyi Pivnichnoatlantychnoho dohovoru [On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine on the Strategic Course of the State to Acquire Full Membership of Ukraine in the European Union and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization] no. 9, p. 50, Retrieved from <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2680-VIII#Text>, 20 April 2022.

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has been extensively discussed on the diplomatic, legal, and, of course, socio-political ‘fronts’ for many years. These discussions led to the creation of many sub-fields in political theory<sup>89</sup>, international law<sup>10 11</sup>, political economy<sup>12</sup> and other disciplines. At the same time, surprisingly, there are still many conceptual gaps in the process of analysing the ‘applied’ side of Russia’s behaviour (particularly, in the political and legal sense) as well as conceptual misinterpretations of Ukraine’s response and a capacity to make a difference in the same segments of activity, especially in the contexts of international affairs and policymaking.

On this occasion, it is not so relevant to have an in-depth analysis on what made the Russian side feel comfortable in adopting such an aggressive form of behaviour – a ‘snap-shot’ will be more than enough. However, it can be speculatively assumed that Russia’s objectively obvious confidence in the tangibly promising outcome of its aggression against Ukraine (including the legal impact made by the actions) may be related to the activity of the world’s largest country in the field of public diplomacy (PD) in the past twenty years<sup>13 14</sup>. For this research, it is by far beyond mere curiosity that Ukraine, too, in addition to its fierce and uncompromising military resistance<sup>15</sup>, has found it useful to ‘employ’ some mechanisms of PD in order to initiate an unprecedented ‘shake-up’ in a wide field that *quasi*-unifies international law, policymaking, and strategic communication in general. Intriguingly, regardless of the worldwide scholarly popularity of the theme, it should be noted that a segment of research that could have analysed the astonishingly multi-disciplinary nature of the process and, more specifically, the impact made from a PD-focused point of view is almost non-existent.

In other words, there is not much conceptuality available in the field on how the Ukrainian state frames up its communicational response to Russia and beyond. While detecting and observing

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<sup>8</sup> D’Anieri, P. (2007). Nationalism and international politics: Identity and sovereignty in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 3 (2), 13-15.

<sup>9</sup> McDoom, O. (2022). What political science can tell us about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. *The LSE Phelan US Centre*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Bellinger, J. (2022). *How Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Violates International Law*. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/article/how-russias-invasion-ukraine-violates-international-law>, 28 April 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Adetunji, J. (2022). Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is illegal under international law: suggesting it’s not is dangerous. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/russias-invasion-of-ukraine-is-illegal-under-international-law-suggesting-its-not-is-dangerous-179203>, 8 April 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, Ch. M. (2015). The Ukraine conflict, economic–military power balances and economic sanctions. *Post-Communist Economies*, 28 (2), 175-180.

<sup>13</sup> Vernygora, V., Belonosova, E. (2021). A modern empire and its public diplomacy: On Russia’s communication with Estonia. *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 53-54, 59-93.

<sup>14</sup> Lebedeva, M. M. (2021). Russian Public Diplomacy, Russian Public Diplomacy From USSR to the Russian Federation, 45 – 52.

<sup>15</sup> Bondarenko, E. (2022). Understanding Ukraine’s fierce will to fight. *University of Michigan*, 1.

many aspects of PD as well as elements of strategic communication (narrative, intended audience, hybrid threat, discourse, influence, *et cetera*), this paper's particular interest here can be and is objectively associated with theorising on normativity in international affairs, since, as argued by Williams<sup>16</sup>, normative theory can assist in tackling "issues of the legitimacy of war and aggression, or questions of social justice and obligations", outlining many problems and conceptual applicabilities of justice and morality when it comes to making an impact.

Therefore, being academically 'pushed' by the applied side of strategic communication and utilising the wealth of scholarly knowledge on PD, this paper is to test the following argument: from the beginning of the Zelenskyy era in 2019<sup>17</sup>, Ukraine gradually started leaning towards discovering plenty on the usefulness of PD-associated mechanisms, direct advocacy primarily, to fully engage these from 24 February 2022. This claim presumes that, apart from the military theater (where important 'hard-power' events are currently taking place), both sides are active in the broad field of strategic communication and strategic narrative crafting, getting effectively engaged in the process of policymaking the global state, be it within the EU, the USA, China or elsewhere. This normative dimension, currently under-researched, could be treated as the most important discussional framework's solidifying element, which can help in detecting plenty of the practicality of PD (in general) and the phenomenon's unprecedentedly evident effectiveness during the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Data gathering-wise, this research will predominantly engage with a high number of formal addresses and discourses of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. One could consider it surprising, but it was only during the current Ukrainian President's time, his country received its Foreign Policy Strategy<sup>18</sup> – for the first time in Ukraine's history, it began strategising on foreign policy objectives, prioritising some initiatives on enhancing its sovereignty, crafting a range of basic narratives on the aggressive stance of Russia *et cetera*. Apart from seminal studies on PD<sup>19</sup> and the field's current understandings of strategic communication, central to this study are

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<sup>16</sup> Williams, M. (2008). Constructivism is Concerned with Norms, but is it Normative Theory? *E - International Relations*, 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Vdovychenko, V., Vernygora, V. (2021). Naïveté as a beginning: Ze Ukrainian foreign policy. In M. Drabczuk, & T. Stępniewski (Eds.), *Ukraine under Zelenskyy: Domestic, Foreign and Security Policy in Flux*, 17-32. Institute of Central Europe. IES Policy Papers No. 10/2021 <https://ies.lublin.pl/ies-policy-papers/ukraine-under-zelenskyy-domestic-foreign-and-security-policy-in-flux/>, 5 -11.

<sup>18</sup> President of Ukraine 26.08.2021 / 448/202. "On the Strategy of Foreign Policy of Ukraine". Retrieved from <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/glava-derzhavi-zatverdiv-strategiyu-zovnishnopolitichnoyi-di-70413>, 1 May 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Cowan, G., Arsenault A. (2008). Moving from Monologue to Dialogue to Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public, Diplomacy. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (10), 11-12.

postulates of ‘soft power’<sup>20</sup>, strategic narrative theory<sup>21</sup>, and normative theory in the context of international relations<sup>22 23</sup>. All these conceptual elements provide for creating a positively effective critical juncture for establishing a discussional framework of this research.

The paper’s claim presumes that, because of its focus on the widest possible outreach, PD enjoys a certain degree of measurability to be fully utilised in this study. Thus, there is a chance to trace a range of crucial processes, which, in principle, have PD-linked activities on the one side (a nearly total pluralism) and a policy change on the other side (a very distinct normativity). The following set of research questions is proposed for tackling: 1) In both political science and applied socio-political research, what are the major factors and their interrelated connections, which allow for an effective legal impact-making activity of a PD user? 2) What are the features of Ukraine’s PD as a means to, firstly, stop Russia’s aggression and, secondly, mitigate its effect via making via influencing the international policy-making process?

Methodology-wise, both process tracing and (legal) discourse analysis will be extensively employed to understand the causality between different events as well as how narratives can get conceptualised into a strategy and policy making. The essence of research using the method of tracing processes is that this method in the social sciences is usually determined by the desire to trace causal mechanisms<sup>24</sup>. The latter can be defined as “a complex system[s] that produce [...] a result through the interaction of several parts”<sup>25</sup>. The study of causal mechanisms through process tracing techniques allows the researcher to draw strong inferences about the causal process by which outcomes are produced within a given case, allowing us to update the degree of our confidence in the validity of the theorised causal mechanism<sup>26</sup>. Thus, process tracing is “an invaluable tool that should be included in every researcher’s repertoire”<sup>27</sup>. This method is employed because few case studies methods allow drawing conclusions within a particular case.

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<sup>20</sup> Nye (1990), 153-155.

<sup>21</sup> Miskimmon, A. B., O’Loughlin, L. Rosell (2014). Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power. *Media, War & Conflict*, 7(1), 71-77.

<sup>22</sup> Zehfuss, M. (2002). *Constructivism in International Relations*. Cambridge University Press, 68.

<sup>23</sup> Brown, Ch. (1992), 117-121.

<sup>24</sup> Bennett, A. (2008). *Process-Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective*. The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology, 206 – 207.

<sup>25</sup> Glennan, S. (1996). Mechanisms and the Nature of Causation. *Erkenntnis*, 44 (1), 52.

<sup>26</sup> Beach, D. (2017). Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science, 4 – 11.

<sup>27</sup> George, A., Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. MIT Press, 224.

The second method that is used in this paper is discourse analysis and will be applied as we explore PB in the context of an advocated influence being projected right through into a policymaking process. It is necessary to consider the issue in more detail. It should be noted that the task of discourse analysis is not limited to the study of the formal properties of the language, legal language included; it also considers what linguistic technique is employed in a socio-political and cultural context as well as a legal norm, an advocacy's result in our particular case, that reflects the same contexts, resonating with the skillfully projected message of an outsider. Thus, discourse analysis studies the relationship between language (written, spoken, institutionalized forms of conversation) and the contexts in which it is used<sup>28</sup>. It is important that the original text is perceived as coherent with the corresponding norm, which allows to measure the actual impact. In our situation, it is on how PB-generated messages influenced the EU's policymaking in the socio-political and cultural contexts of Ukraine.

In order to determine its analytical instrumentarium, this research gets into elaborating on major definitions in the aforementioned multi-disciplinary field. How Ukraine acts now in the sphere of PD is directly affecting the outcome of the main debate on the future of the world's international system and the legal framework, which will be associated with it<sup>29,30</sup>. The data-gathering chapters will be focused on answering the proposed research questions to supposedly collect plenty of valuable data for the discussional segment of this research. The main idea is to observe this highly important interaction from an under-researched analytical angle and, as an analytical bonus, detect a degree of applicability of soft power-associated mechanisms in the process of contestation of different PD approaches, which appears to be resulting in a high-level impact made on different policies globally. After all, these days, Ukraine is competing with the aggressor for global attention.

The context of this paper plays an important role in the debate of differential analytical approaches – PD is in part both a new and already popular tool for the states, but its growing academic significance is to a certain extent associated with the multidisciplinary nature of the phenomenon. Thus, this is not just a hypothetical discussion, and such and similar research works cannot be left

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<sup>28</sup> Osisanwo, A. (2015). *Discourse Analysis*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 169-171.

<sup>29</sup> Masters, J. (2022). Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia. *Council On Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/background/ukraine-conflict-crossroads-europe-and-russia>, 12 October 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Nakanishi H. (2022). The impact of the war in Ukraine on the global system. *The Japan Institute of International Affairs*. Retrieved from [https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/ajiss\\_commentary/the-impact-of-the-war-in-ukraine-on-the-global-system.html](https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/ajiss_commentary/the-impact-of-the-war-in-ukraine-on-the-global-system.html), 29 September 2022.

unattended, since we are talking about the modernization of PD methods in the conditions of a full-scale war in the center of the European continent.

# 1. TRACING A CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN SOFT POWER AND NORMATIVE IMPACT VIA PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Objectively, PD-focused research is in abundance in the field. Melissen<sup>31</sup>, Nye<sup>32</sup>, Cull<sup>33</sup>, and Cowan and Arsenault<sup>34</sup> made it possible to enrich the debate with plenty of definitions and conceptual understandings, which interlink the theme with what Nye coined as ‘soft power’ a while before. According to Nye, soft power is the ability to influence others to get desired results through attraction and seduction rather than coercion or payment.<sup>35</sup> This approach, at the first glance, should please everyone who wants to elaborate on a ‘guns-n-roses’ topic. Indeed, it is with the help of soft power that the government of one country gradually influences the people of another country. It happens almost imperceptibly and in attractive ways. For example, it can be done through cultural values, cinema, and culture in general, and, of course, the context of promoting the country’s soft power had gone through its foundational studies period during the Cold War<sup>36</sup>, paving the way for the analytical relevance of PD. However, when it comes to making a normative impact out of PD – bringing normativity into a broader debate on the theme – one may trace the process further on, analytical terms wise. If a credible scholarly call was made on “Japan’s values-based diplomacy” in Central Asia, having analysed “speech acts by the political elites [...] [and] practices on the ground” and detected “the normativity [being] evident in Tokyo’s Central Asian policy”<sup>37</sup>, why not to search for a similar interlinkage between soft power-generated activities and normative impact via PD in the context of Ukraine’s strategic communication with the EU and at a time when it matters the most for the entire process of European integration (possibly, even for the survival of the process)?

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<sup>31</sup> Melissen, J. (2005). *The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice*. In *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 3-27.

<sup>32</sup> Nye, J. (2008). Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (1), 10-30.

<sup>33</sup> Cull, N. (2009). 31–54, Cull N. (2009). *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past*. Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 12-16.

<sup>34</sup> Cowan & Arsenault (2008). 10-30.

<sup>35</sup> Nye (1990), 153.

<sup>36</sup> Nye (2008), 12.

<sup>37</sup> Barber, B. (2018). Far, yet so Near: Normativity in Japan's Diplomacy with the Central Asian Republics, *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 45(1), 18-39.

## 1.1 Interlinking the notions of soft power and public diplomacy

As argued, the phenomenon of PD has a history of playing an important role in winning the Cold War.<sup>38</sup> Since PD, by its nature, includes cultural, educational, sports, media, scientific and other similar initiatives with focuses on interaction with the elite and society of other countries, it was inevitable for Nye to connect the concept of PD with soft power.<sup>39</sup> In the broadest sense, PD is a set of measures aimed at studying, informing, and forming a positive foreign public opinion regarding a particular state. Some scholars, even though it is a highly contested vision, argue that PD-originated activity can be not only be associated with governments and public authorities, but also with non-governmental organizations, the media, business structures, private groups, and individuals as participants in intercultural communications.<sup>40</sup>

In principle, when an international actor attempts “to advance the ends of policy by engaging with foreign publics”<sup>41</sup> is describes the PD’s very nature, in both normative and political senses. Generally speaking, conventional diplomacy as a phenomenon is responsible for managing relations between nations and countries and other entities through advice, designing and implementing foreign policy, negotiating and securing specific and broad interests.<sup>42</sup> Diplomacy is designed to advance national interests through the practice of persuasion.<sup>43</sup> Within the framework of this understanding, we can place the concept of public diplomacy in the two most commonly used definitions, Signitzer and Coombs<sup>44</sup> understand PD as “the way in which the government and private individuals and groups can directly or indirectly influence those public opinions and attitudes that directly affect foreign policy decisions another government”. Of course, PD must be distinguished from traditional diplomacy in that it involves interaction not only with governments but especially with non-governmental individuals and organisations.<sup>45</sup>

Where it becomes particularly relevant to our theme is when an impact is getting made and then measured. To detect and observe it, one needs to interlink PD with a range of issue-specific

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<sup>38</sup> Nye, J. (2019). Soft Power and the Public Diplomacy Revisited. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*. 14, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Nye, (2008), 23.

<sup>40</sup> Naumov A. (2016) "Soft Power" of the Land of the Rising Sun. *International relationships*. 2, 189.

<sup>41</sup> Cowan, G. And Cull N. (2008). Public Diplomacy in a Changing World. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (1), 6.

<sup>42</sup> Barston, R.P. (1988). *Modern Diplomacy*. London. New York: Longman, 190-210.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, G. S. (1999). *Reinventing Diplomacy: A Virtual Necessity*. Virtual Diplomacy Series. Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 21.

<sup>44</sup> Signitzer, B. H. & Coombs, T. (1992). Public Relations and Public Diplomacy. Conceptual Convergences. *Public Relations Review*, 18 (2), 137-147.

<sup>45</sup> Leonard, M. (2002). Public Diplomacy. *London: Foreign Policy Center*, 5.

strategic narratives, which, as argued, shape “behaviour in an observable way”<sup>46</sup>. Evidently, it enhances the role of a foreign government in the process of shaping and making some crucial decisions (i.e., policies) in a different country. As argued by Kasper and Vernygora, strategic narratives are, for example, crucial for the EU in the process of crafting its cybersecurity policy and then projecting it internationally “the process of strategising the EU’s communication with the world on the issue of cybersecurity has already begun, and this contribution is among the first to analytically detect and highlight the emergence of a new multi-faceted strategic narrative within the EU that has to now focus more on leading global engagement and, most probably, providing a unifying functional platform for cooperation on the issue”.<sup>47</sup> In principle, as argued by Roselle *et al.*, “[s]trategic narrative is soft power in the 21st century”, and it is crucial to understand “under what conditions soft power resources can be used to support foreign policy”<sup>48</sup>.

Getting back to the phenomenon of PD in general, according to Cull<sup>49</sup>, it has the following five components: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange, and international broadcasting. First, listening involves collecting and collating opinions from abroad about the policies of a foreign entity and using the data to reroute messages and adjust approaches to public diplomacy accordingly.<sup>50</sup> Second, advocacy involves conducting short-term information campaigns abroad to promote an action or subject of foreign policy among the foreign public.<sup>51</sup> Thirdly, cultural diplomacy, the most traditional tool of foreign policy, is designed to make the culture of a foreign actor known in other countries and to involve the international community in the process of recognizing and accepting the cultural achievements of the actor.<sup>52</sup> Fourth, exchange refers to programs that involve foreign professional groups in training, educational programs, and other forms of international social exchange.<sup>53</sup> Fifth and last, international broadcasting involves the foreign public in understanding and accepting the political activities of international actors.<sup>54</sup>

Depending on a country and its resources, a range of PD-associated channels used for projecting different strategic narratives can vary from being limited to broad. Arguably and irrespectively of the discussion on effectiveness of the actions, the Russian Federation, for example, is known for

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<sup>46</sup> Miskimmon, A. (2014), 142.

<sup>47</sup> Kasper, A., Vernygora, V. (2021). The EU’s cybersecurity. *Deusto Journal of European Studies*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Miskimmon, A. (2014), 71, 74.

<sup>49</sup> Cull (2008), 31–54.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid* 32.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

its usage of the broadest possible range of PD mechanisms. The same can be applied for the EU-, China-, and the USA-originated activities in the field of PD. Ukraine, on the contrary, has been known as a ‘recipient’ of another power’s strategic narratives – for example, of the EU or Russia<sup>55</sup>. Thus, it is academically intriguing to observe the applied angle of Ukraine’s strategic communication, because it is very evident that the Ukrainians state is currently, utilising the mechanisms of advocacy, recognising PD as a method to ensure the country’s ultimate survival, even not to mention the context of policymaking on the EU’s side. It has already been detected that, from the beginning of the *Ze* era in Ukraine<sup>56</sup>, the country “[g]radually, [...] managed to establish a distinctive strategic narrative that has a chance to get turned into a ‘thread’ of historic understandings of Ukraine on the true nature of its interrelations with Russia”, since it is featured by, for instance, “the apparent revival of the Crimean theme in the international grand-debate”<sup>57</sup>. As for the definition, strategic communications can be described as a holistic, value-based, interest-based approach to communication that encompasses everything an actor does to achieve goals in a conflict setting.<sup>58</sup> It is this approach that can be applied in PD, when there is a goal – to change the policy of other countries, having in the arsenal only the possibility of communication and appeal.

## 1.2 Public diplomacy’s combination with strategic communication

While reiterating the point that the PD context is dramatically under-researched when it comes to the current Russo-Ukrainian War and the process of contestation of strategic narratives by the two sides, it is necessary to note that both Russia and Ukraine are popular subjects when it comes to the PD-associated sub-field of research. For example, Chaban and Vernygora<sup>59</sup> focused PD practices of the EU when the entity had been confronting the challenge of reforming itself into a prospectively global power, while fighting then the ongoing economic crisis – the context of the EU-Ukraine interactions was offered in the paper. On Russia, Vernygora and Belonosova argued that, in order to effectively project its strategic identity, system, and issue narratives to Estonia,

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<sup>55</sup> Chaban, N. Vernygora V. (2013). The EU in the Eyes of Ukrainian General Public: potential for EU public diplomacy? *Baltic Journal of European Studies*. Tallinn University of Technology 3 (2), 14.

<sup>56</sup> Volodymyr Zelenskyy assumed office on 20 May 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Vdovychenko, V. Vernygora, V. Drabczuk, M. Polegkyi O. Stepniewski, T. D’Anieri, P. (2021). Ukraine under Zelenskyy: Domestic, Foreign and Security Policy in Flux. Institute of Central Europe, 8.

<sup>58</sup> Improving Nato Strategic Communications Terminology (2019) Published by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Chaban, N., & Vernygora, V. (2013). The EU in the Eyes of Ukrainian General Public: Potential for EU Public Diplomacy? *Baltic Journal of European Studies*, 3(2), 68-95.

Russia prefers using a range of PD mechanisms rather than other types of communicational strategies<sup>60</sup>. Given these points, it would be optimistic to note that as a communicational system, PD is the most sought-after tool for influencing one country on the inhabitants of other countries. In addition, it can be argued that soft power and PD always complement each other. Since soft power attracts, and PB convinces. It is worth noting that PD is also bound by a few strategic narratives on specific country issues<sup>61</sup>.

Moreover, to maximise your PD-originated activity, governments understand their actions as being in the line of strategic communications. This is a holistic approach to communication based on values and interests that encompasses everything an actor does to achieve objectives in a contested environment.<sup>62</sup> This influence process is implemented according to the following steps. Strategic communications begin with a hybrid threat<sup>63</sup>. This concept is explained as a threat of mixed origin to avoid a declaration of war and prosecution. Next, one can track such a step as a maneuver<sup>64</sup>. This is already the use of resources in the operating environment to achieve an advantage over the enemy. One way or another, you need to choose those who will have to be influenced. So here the intended audience is selected - the selected individuals or groups that need to be influenced<sup>65</sup>. To support strategic communication, the next step will be discourse<sup>66</sup> – adopted positions that limit debate and shape the worldview; they are created and maintained through communication. Thus, the narrative itself is formed. Finishing off with a narrative that is a moral drawn from stories<sup>67</sup>, it could be argued that, through such steps, strategic communication is formed to have an impact on the selected audience.

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<sup>60</sup> Vernygora, V., & Belonosova, E. (2021). A modern empire and its public diplomacy: On Russia's communication with Estonia. *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, 53-54, 59-93.

<sup>61</sup> Nye (2008), 15.

<sup>62</sup> Improving NATO Strategic Communications Terminology (2019) Published by the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 31.

<sup>63</sup> Improving NATO Strategic Communications Terminology, 30.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 30.



*Figure 1*<sup>68</sup>.

It appears that Ukraine, a neophyte in the field of PD, has strategic communications as one of the most important tools for influencing other actors.

### **1.3 How to detect a normative impact made?**

Finally on the analytical ‘instruments’, one can argue about the relevance of normative theory for the field of international relations – for example, Williams is referring to Wendt’s understanding of normative theory, when one of the founders of social constructivism treats “the norms (when he refers to them) as a priori elements of the structure of international relations”<sup>69</sup>. Williams goes on defining normativity in international relations as “the discussion of how things come to be, or how things ought to be, founded in analyses of change”, arguing that “[w]ork in the field of ‘normative theory’ then, tackles issues of the legitimacy of war and aggression, or questions of social justice and obligations and seeks to illustrate how our conceptions of justice and morality have emerged throughout history”<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Improving NATO Strategic Communications Terminology.

<sup>69</sup> Williams, M. (2008) 1-3.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

Building on one of the most recent as well as topic-associated analytical takes provided by the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy<sup>71</sup> and Carnegie Europe<sup>72</sup>, while utilising some analytical instrumentarium of the EU-Ukraine interactions provided by the Ukrainian Centre for European Policy<sup>73</sup>, this research aims at detecting possible impact out of Ukraine-originated as well as advocacy-channeled strategic narratives on the EU-wide process of policymaking through the prism of the following four angles: ‘Reflections on and deepening of the existing experience of integration’, ‘Association Agreement and its future’, ‘Reconstruction projects’, and ‘A shift in the EU-Russia interrelations during the war’. In order to collect the primary data on these points, this thesis is to engage with a number of online addresses made by Ukraine’s current President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to different international audiences of decision-shapers and decision-makers, focusing on such deliveries projected to the EU Member States.

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<sup>71</sup> Rabinovych, M. (2022). Ukraine-EU Cooperation During the War: Synergy of New and Old Formats European Pravda. Retrieved from <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/eng/articles/2022/11/8/7150040>, 8 November 2022.

<sup>72</sup> Meister, S. (2022). A Paradigm Shift: EU-Russia Relations After the War in Ukraine. Carnegie Europe. Retrieved from <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/11/29/paradigm-shift-eu-russia-relations-after-war-in-ukraine-pub-88476>, 29 November 2022.

<sup>73</sup> Vernygora, V. (2019). A place for Ukraine in a more cohesive European Union: synergising the two different integrations. *Ukrainian Centre For European Policy*, 23-25.

## **2. UKRAINE: REFLECTIVELY DISCOVERING A PUBLIC DIPLOMACY WAY**

As argued, PD has become an increasingly popular phenomenon in social sciences and across the academic board. For this research, it is important to underscore what Frangonikolopoulos and Proedrou called “strategic discursive public diplomacy”<sup>74</sup> – it is precisely associated with all sorts of exercises on crafting different strategic narratives for the sake of influencing the other country’s policymaking. Elaborating on a similar context, Vernygora and Belonosova, argued “for the current environment of international relations, the process can be driven by countries or, with an increasing visibility, different organisations, including even non-governmental”, and Russia evidently represents “the former rather than the latter”<sup>75</sup>. As stated in the introductory notes, on this occasion of tackling the thesis-bound argument, there is not much of relevance for this research to explicitly detect the Russian Federation’s way of adopting plenty of aggressive comfort out of the process of projecting its strategic narratives via PD mechanisms.

It is already known that Russia’s comprehensive usage of the entire spectrum of PD tools made it possible for the world’s largest country to make a substantial difference in the process of influencing foreign governments and societies. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that, in order to make what apparently was getting planned as a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin objectively needed internal ‘allies’ in Ukraine and the West, or, at least, decision-shapers over there who could ‘inspire’ the country’s population to accept Russia’s aggressive behaviour as a given. For that, presuming that Ukraine’s current reflective activity in the field of PD was largely provoked by Russia (especially, during the Putin’s era), a certain ‘snap-shot’ needs to be taken on the Russian version of PD before this research focuses on Ukraine.

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<sup>74</sup> Frangonikolopoulos, Proedrou, Ch., P. (2014). Reinforcing Global Legitimacy and Efficiency: The Case for Strategic Discursive Public Diplomacy. *Global Discourse*, 4 (1), 49-67.

<sup>75</sup> Vernygora, V., & Belonosova, E. (2021), 70.

## 2.1 What Russia did before

As Lebedeva<sup>76</sup> noted, the post-9/11 environment triggered the process of re-crafting the concept of PD for many countries, including Russia. Consequently, the Russian Federation “managed to create a range of atavistically archaic ‘скрепы’ (can be loosely translated as social ‘clams’/ ‘stapes’ or ‘spiritual shackles’), which are evidently as well as extensively applied by the Kremlin in the process of projecting strategic narratives, utilising the country’s old public diplomacy-related toolkit”<sup>77</sup>. From the other side, objectively, considering the role of Ukraine for both Euro-Atlantic interrelations and Russia’s own understanding of its geo-strategic significance<sup>78</sup>, there is plenty to gain for an interested party. Especially, when one takes the situation from an offensive realist’s point of view – it would only be a matter of time for Russia to intervene into Ukraine aggressively, justifying its actions by an excuse of protection the grand-power’s fundamental interests<sup>79</sup>. For our data-gathering process, it is worth briefly looking at the entire spectrum of Russia-originated activities through cultural diplomacy, international broadcasting, and exchange diplomacy, and advocacy.

One of the types of PD for the gradual intervention in the Ukrainian people and the consolidation of its narratives, Russia has chosen cultural public diplomacy. Growing out of ‘soft power’<sup>80</sup>, cultural diplomacy does not have a clear conceptual basis. Drawing on various concepts<sup>81</sup>, we understand cultural diplomacy as a discursive practice that seeks to use culture in support of a country’s foreign policy goals. One of the ways in which Russia’s cultural diplomacy has influenced since 2008 has been verbal unification and blurred boundaries between neighboring nations. Consequently, the concept of the Russian ‘I’ remained blurred, as the analysis of the following two expressions shows. The first is ‘compatriots’, which, in accordance with the 1999 law ‘On the State Policy of the Russian Federation’ means a wide range of persons, including both citizens of the Russian Federation permanently residing outside its territory, and individuals residing outside its territory, whose direct ancestors lived in Russia and who made a free choice spiritually, culturally, and legally connected with the Russian Federation. The second expression

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<sup>76</sup> Lebedeva, M. (2021). Russian Public Diplomacy: From USSR to the Russian Federation. *Routledge Focus*.

<sup>77</sup> Vernygora and Belonosova (2021) 70.

<sup>78</sup> Brzezinski, Z. (1996). Ukraine's Critical Role in the Post-Soviet Space. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, (20), 3-6.

<sup>79</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin. *Foreign Affairs* 93 (5), 77–89.

<sup>80</sup> Nye (1990), 153–171.

<sup>81</sup> Mark, S. (2010). Rethinking Cultural Diplomacy: The Cultural Diplomacy of New Zealand, the Canadian Federation and Quebec. *Political Science*, 62 (1), 62–83.

is ‘Russian world’, which will cover all men and women who have linguistic, cultural and/or religious (Orthodox) ties with Russia<sup>82</sup>.

Arguably, closer to our case, Russian cultural public diplomacy aimed to unite Russians with those Ukrainians, who saw something in common with Russians. Various methods have been used for this. That is why one another element of cultural diplomacy has been the Orthodox Church. This idea should have worked effectively. After all, even according to 2016 data, 81% of Ukrainians declare their belonging to any organised religion, namely 80% of respondents identify themselves as Christians<sup>83</sup>, so influence through religion was a logical path to project a few strategic narratives through the channels of cultural diplomacy. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow once sent a letter to the World Council of Churches, claiming that Ukrainians and Russians “come from the same Kiev font [...] and share a common historical destiny”. According to most Ukrainians, the statements of Putin and Kirill<sup>84</sup> ignore the long history of Ukrainian independence, which has fundamental to their national identity.<sup>85</sup>

International broadcasting has been another element of Russia’s PD. Described by Price<sup>86</sup> as “an elegant term for [...] the use of electronic media by one society to shape the opinions of the people and leaders of another”, it has almost a century of history<sup>87</sup>. There has been written extensively about the Russian disinformation campaigns and fake news efforts that have attacked Western countries in the past decade and have had various repercussions around the world<sup>88</sup>. Given the Kremlin’s objectively obvious fear of democracy, in other countries Russia has created chaos and political upheaval to slow down democratic development. Looking at Europe, where almost all countries depend on Russia’s energy resources, the media there, especially *Russia Today*, carried out aggressive information campaigns that eventually changed the perception of the country’s

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<sup>82</sup> Council of the Russian Federation (1999). Law on the support of compatriots living abroad.

<sup>83</sup> KIIS (2016). RELIGIYNA SAMOIDENTICHNIST' I MOLITVA V UKRAINI [RELIGIOUS SELF-IDENTITY AND PRAYER IN UKRAINE]. Retrieved from <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=638&page=1>, 1 April 2022.

<sup>84</sup> Allen, A. (2022). *Orthodox Patriarch blames Ukraine war on western ‘Russophobia’*. Crux. Retrieved from <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-europe/2022/03/orthodox-patriarch-blames-ukraine-war-on-western-russophobia>, 2 April 2022.

<sup>85</sup> Houston, A., Mandaville P. (2022). *The Role of Religion in Russia’s War on Ukraine*. The United States Institute of Peace. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/03/role-religion-russias-war-ukraine>, 7 May 2022.

<sup>86</sup> Price, M. (2003). Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of International Broadcasting. *Cardozo Arts and Entertainment Law Journal*, 21(1), 53.

<sup>87</sup> Rawnsley, G. (2016). Introduction to “International Broadcasting and Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century”. *Media and Communication*, 4 (2), 42 – 45.

<sup>88</sup> OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON (2022). *Russia’s Top Five Persistent Disinformation Narratives*. U.S Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/russias-top-five-persistent-disinformation-narratives/>, 10 April 2022.

leaders in the direction when the country could no longer imagine its development without Russia's energy resources<sup>89</sup>.

It should see everyone how propaganda helped Russia to avoid sanctions for the occupation of Crimea and some parts of the Ukrainian Donbas. Moreover, in the same 2014 was signed a contract about the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline.<sup>90</sup> Russian propaganda has been 'spoiling' Ukraine's image in the eyes of Western leaders for decades and has even been able to convince the world community that the conflict in Donbas is a Ukrainian crisis and 'Russia is not there'. The Russo-Ukrainian war has been going from 2014, but the diplomatic forces of Russia are still doing everything to convince everyone around that the problems in Donbas are an internal problem of Ukraine itself.<sup>91</sup>

Exchange diplomacy is an actor's attempt to manage the international environment by sending their citizens abroad and mutually accepting citizens from abroad for a period of study and/or acculturation<sup>92</sup>. Exchanges often overlap with cultural work but are also used for specific political and/or propaganda purposes, such as when aimed at developing or facilitating military engagement with an ally. According to Jowett & O'Donnell<sup>93</sup>, in fact, it is also the export of culture. Exchange diplomacy is about sending your citizens abroad, thereby exporting ideas and ways of doing business. Russia has been pursuing an active foreign policy for the past 20 years, which changes from time to time. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the opinions of Ukrainians have also changed. In Ukraine, a 2022-issued poll noted that when the question was asked: "How do you feel about the people of Russia?" almost 70% of the respondents noted that either 'cold' or 'very cold', with 9% being 'warm'. Four years ago, 47% were 'warm', and only 23% were 'cold'.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> European Parliament (2018). *Energy as a tool of foreign policy of authoritarian states, in particular Russia*. Policy Department for External Relations, 7-29. Retrieved from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603868/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603868\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603868/EXPO_STU(2018)603868_EN.pdf), 2 April 2022.

<sup>90</sup> Sydoruk, T., Stepanets, P., Tymofichuk, I. (2019). Nord Stream 2 as a Threat to National Interests of Poland and Ukraine. *Open Access Repository*, 468 – 470.

<sup>91</sup> Pankieiev, O. (2022). How Russia's unanswered propaganda led to the war in Ukraine. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/how-russias-unanswered-propaganda-led-to-the-war-in-ukraine-180202>, 12 April 2022.

<sup>92</sup> Cull (2008), 31-54.

<sup>93</sup> Jowett, G.S., O'Donnell V. (2012). *Propaganda and persuasion*. Sage, Thousand Oaks.

<sup>94</sup> Rating Group (2022). *The tenth national survey: ideological markers of the war*. Retrieved from [https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/desyatyy\\_obschenacionalnyy\\_opros\\_ideologicheskie\\_markery\\_voyny\\_27\\_aprelya\\_2022.html](https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/desyatyy_obschenacionalnyy_opros_ideologicheskie_markery_voyny_27_aprelya_2022.html), 10 May 2022.

In 2022, a renaissance of PD came with the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine. With the military conflict gaining momentum, it is already possible to track the evidence on Ukraine's activity in the field of PD. To simply put it, the *Ze* era in PD has begun.

## **2.2 *Ze* advocacy as a response to make a difference**

Evidently, for the first time from 1991, when Ukraine was chanced to regain its independence, the country embroiled in an existential ground war, whilst fighting to prove that it has some sort of credibility as a functional state. Back in 2015, when a study on 'State Narratives in Complex Environments: The Case of Ukraine'<sup>95</sup> underlined the fact that the Russian Federation have been making plenty of attempts to destroy Ukraine's identity in the post-Revolution of Dignity's geo-strategic environment, it was arguably only a matter of time for the Kremlin to move on into what eventually happened on 24 February 2022.

Objectively, in the context of this paper, the data-gathering process on the Ukrainian case was arranged to be predominantly out of the post-24 February 2022 speeches and addresses delivered by the country's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which may carry plenty of subjectivity and, to an extent, political bias. At the same time, a PD-driven activity by Ukraine towards Russia (and, of course, the EU as well as the rest of the world beyond the conflictual sides) can be considered as positively effective for Ukraine, only if a foreign country's policy has changed or a geo-strategic 'change of heart' can be observed. Thus, this in-built *quasi*-bias within the data-gathering process does not harm the very reason of observing this unique piece of primary data.

Another point to be made, before the data-gathering on Ukraine can start, is that the Zelenskyy presidency, often described in literature as the '*Ze* revolution of governance', as argued, "while making plenty of global socio-political trends, was destined to start comprehending its own grand-region from a more holistic perspective" when "generic objectives of [the country's] foreign policy started being transformed into a number of more nuanced direction-specific ideas and projects"<sup>96</sup>. Therefore, it is academically incorrect to treat Ukraine's current foreign policymaking process as

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<sup>95</sup> Walker, S. (2022). *Case Study | State Narratives in Complex Media Environments: The Case of Ukraine*. Georgetown University. Retrieved from <https://isd-georgetown-university.myshopify.com/products/case-331-state-narratives-in-complex-media-environment-the-case-of-ukraine>, 8 May 2022.

<sup>96</sup> Vdovychenko, V., & Vernygora, V. (2021). Naïveté as a beginning: *Ze* Ukrainian foreign policy. In M. Drabczuk, & T. Stępniewski (Eds.), *Ukraine under Zelenskyy: Domestic, Foreign and Security Policy in Flux*, *Institute of Central Europe*, 17-32.

something that has arrived ‘out of the blue’, being built on the conceptual nothing. Evidently, despite “a distinct period of cowboyish *naïveté*”, Zelenskyy’s pre-war “foreign policy-associated moves started featuring some sort of logic and, to an extent, sophistication”<sup>97</sup>.

Arguably, for the first time in the history of the existence of PD as such, and for the first time in the history of all parliaments, the leader of one country performs strategic communication via crafting strategic narratives for separate major and minor power with such a speed. It was Zelensky and his administration (in broader sense) who have been choosing different narrative formation strategies to address the message from Ukraine to Poland, Italy, Germany, the USA, the European Parliament, the Cannes Festival, and many other localities. There have been about 30 different parliamentary bodies that have heard the Ukrainian leader delivering his speeches online, but for this paper’s sample a few only are singled out to indicate some of the most striking examples of the PD-bound direct advocacy.

On 11 March 2022, President Zelenskyy addressed the Polish people through the Sejm. It is known that relations between Ukraine and Poland have been very different at different times. For historical reasons, for reasons of sympathy and antipathy for the leaders of the country and other reasons unknown to each other. In his address to Poland, the President of Ukraine made an almost historically important statement:

Poland and Ukraine went from cold to warm on the morning of February 24, when I did not yet know who would extend a generous helping hand to us. And Poland did it. We will share the victory with our brothers and sisters<sup>98</sup>.

Zelenskyy also recalled the words of the late Lech Kaczyński, which he said in Georgia in 2008:

Today Georgia. Tomorrow Ukraine. Then the Baltic States. And then maybe Poland<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Vdovychenko & Vernygora (2021), 17.

<sup>98</sup> President of Ukraine (2022). *Speech by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland*. Retrieved from <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/vistup-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-v-sejmi-res-73497>, 28 March 2022.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

Thus, using words that affect the sensitive, it affects the Poles, who before that might be having a cold attitude towards Ukrainians. These words have already made them accomplices in the future victory that the countries will deserve together

On 22 March, President Zelenskyy addressed *Parlamento italiano* and the people of Italy. Italy for a long time did not support the subjectivity of Ukraine and unofficially considered it not an independent unit. It should not be forgotten that Italy was *de facto* leaning to listening to Russia's arguments, but not necessarily against Ukraine; in the first month of the war, a reshuffle in the parliament nevertheless took place in favor of Ukraine. If until 24 February 2022, Italy played the role of a bridge between Moscow and Brussels to the last and was only concerned about its own state, then with the help of Ukrainian PD, Italy was convinced not to impede Ukraine's entry into the EU. Zelenskyy in his address put pressure on the most valuable thing that Italians have – families, beloved cities, and compared the long-suffering Mariupol with Genoa. He allowed them to think about the question of how the Italians would behave if children and women fled from their city Genoa, running away from the bombs.<sup>100</sup> Speaking on the context, Zelenskyy noted:

You know those who brought war to Ukraine. You know for sure. Those who order to fight. Also, those who promote it. Almost all of them use Italy. As a place to relax. So don't be a killer resort. Block them of all real estate, accounts, and yachts – from 'Scheherazade' to the smallest. Block the assets of all those who have influence in Russia. [...] Support greater sanctions against Russia. A complete embargo on trade, starting with oil. Maintain a ban on Russian ships entering your ports. That they feel the price for their aggression and for mining the sea<sup>101</sup>.

As a visual result, on the evening of 22 March, Italy announced that it wanted Ukraine joining the EU. This was stated by Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi.<sup>102</sup>

To resolve issues in different areas, it was necessary to influence influential countries. To those countries that are competent in a particular issue. One of these became Germany and the German people. On 17 March 2022, Zelenskyy crafted the strategic narratives for the *Deutscher Bundestag*. During his speech, he made several important statements. But it is important to note that Germany,

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<sup>100</sup> President of Ukraine (2022). *Address by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Italians and all Europeans*. Retrieved from <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/zvernennya-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-do-ital-73525>, 28 March 2022.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> European Pravda (2022) *Italian Prime Minister supported Ukraine's membership in the European Union*. Retrieved from <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/eng/>, 1 May 2022.

in turn, predicted the capture of Kyiv in the first hours of the invasion, but this opinion has also changed. And after 3 weeks of a full-scale invasion, Germany suddenly changed its defense and energy policy<sup>103</sup>. The address of the President of Ukraine to the politicians and people of Germany was precise and influential. He recalled how the issue of Nord Stream-2 was discussed:

At our last meeting, I told you that Nord Stream is a weapon and preparation for the Great War. And you answered that it is the economy. But it turned out that it was cement<sup>104</sup>.

At the beginning of 2022, even with the threat of a full-scale invasion, the German chancellor did not agree to abandon Nord Stream-2. But the beginning of the war in Ukraine and such loud statements by a leading political of the belligerent country forced the German government to revise its long-established energy transition plan. And in April 2022, another package of sanctions is already being considered, which may include a complete oil embargo. The same situation is with the supply of weapons. At the beginning of February 2022, 70% of the Germans were against the supply of weapons to Ukraine, but already at the end of March, the German Defense Minister decided to send at least 500 missiles to Ukraine. It cannot be denied that such a sharp change of opinion among the German people and authorities was caused precisely by the serious and influential image of the Ukrainian president and people. And of course, Zelenskyy's powerful phrase in an address to parliament certainly made world leaders think<sup>105</sup>:

The strongest bears the greatest responsibility (the strongest have the highest responsibility). Break down this wall like you did in the past. Give Germany the strength it deserves.

Considering how popular the current Ukrainian President is in the United States now, American politicians have no choice but to support Ukraine. Immediately after Zelenskyy's active appeals to Congress and the people of America, Zelenskyy is now trusted and respected by 72% of US citizens, according to a poll conducted from 21-27 March. That is more this year than any international leader, according to a Pew Research Center poll<sup>106</sup>. Since the United States is one of

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<sup>103</sup> The Odessa Journal. (2022). *Ambassador: In Berlin, Ukraine was given "a few hours" after the Russian invasion*. Retrieved from <https://odessa-journal.com/ambassador-in-berlin-ukraine-was-given-a-few-hours-after-the-russian-invasion/>, 05 May 2022.

<sup>104</sup> President of Ukraine (2022). *Address by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the Bundestag*. Retrieved from <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/promova-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-u-bundesta-73621>, 28 March 2022.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Knox, O. (2022). *Zelensky's hugely popular in the U.S. But there's a catch*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/01/zelenskys-hugely-popular-us-theres-catch/>, 5 April 2022.

the strongest world leaders, the requests to the country are appropriate: no-fly zone over Ukraine, the supply of the latest air defense, support for refugees and the complete cessation of America's cooperation with Russian enterprises. The Americans have not changed much in their position on Ukraine, they continue to support. But they did not immediately agree to accept the refugees. Already on 26 March, the USA adopted and prepared the program for receiving up to 100,000 military refugees from Ukraine<sup>107</sup>. But the US has not yet agreed to grant a no-fly zone. So, in his address to the United States, Zelenskyy evoked emotions and did not let anyone remain indifferent. During his speech, he showed a video of the war in Ukraine, which evoked emotions in everyone who watched. He also added<sup>108</sup>:

Today it is not enough to be the leader of the country. You must be the leader of the world. And to be the leader of the world is to be the leader of the peace.

USA wants to be the leader in everything. Therefore, due to this type of public diplomacy, it is possible to achieve the supply of high-tech weapons.

We ask for the answer. About the answer from the world. On the response to terror. Is this too much of a request? To create a no-fly zone over Ukraine is to save people. Humanitarian no-fly zone. Conditions under which Russia will no longer be able to terrorize our peaceful cities every day and night. If that's too much, we offer an alternative. You know what protection systems we need. S-300 and other similar systems.

The result of Ukraine's PD is already noticeable. Nord Stream-2 will never be commissioned. Nord Stream 2 AG was supposed to be responsible for the gas supply. However, this did not comply with EU and German regulations. Due to increased sanctions, Swiss-registered Nord Stream-2 AG has filed for bankruptcy.<sup>109</sup> According to a German newspaper<sup>110</sup>, the German Ministry of Defense has compiled a list of weapons worth 300 million euros, which will be sent to Ukraine. This is an offensive weapon. Moreover, this time the deliveries should be made directly from military factories in Germany, and not from the warehouses of the *Bundeswehr*. Another

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<sup>107</sup> The New York Times (2022). *United States Will Welcome Up to 100,000 Ukrainian Refugees*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/24/us/ukrainian-refugees-biden.html>, 1 April 2022.

<sup>108</sup> President of Ukraine (2022). *Address by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the US Congress*. Retrieved from <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/promova-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-pered-kong-73609>, 28 March 2022.

<sup>109</sup> Soltz, V. (2022, March 1). *The Nord Stream 2 operator has filed for bankruptcy*. ERR. Retrieved from <https://rus.err.ee/1608517214/operator-severnogo-potoka-2-podal-zajavlenie-o-bankrotstve>, 5 May 2022.

<sup>110</sup> Süddeutsche Zeitung (2022, March 31). Retrieved from <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/>, 5 May 2022.

important achievement of Ukraine's PD is that on 9 May 2022, President Biden signed the lend-lease agreement. This is a historic event. The last time such a document was signed was in 1941 to help the Soviet Army defeat Nazi Germany.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Wang, A. (2022). *Biden signs Ukraine lend-lease act into law, expediting military aid*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/01/zelenskys-hugely-popular-us-theres-catch/>, 9 May 2022.

### 3. DISCUSSION: MAKING A NORMATIVE IMPACT?

Indeed, international relations as a discipline and as a process are always about war and peace. Quite often, considering the number of existing and emerging theories, this factor leads to many terminological and conceptual confusions, which, together and separately, push the field very far from being known and recognised for its measurability. Those who are into econometrics would precisely understand this point. At the same time, if a debate on international relations is interlinked with the field's hidden, but nevertheless inborn normatively, one can easily get the things measured or, at least, modelled for measuring. In a more explicit way, this is all about making a difference in policymaking, while tackling the very essence of the international system and its basic operational instruments to prevent aggression or to stop an aggressor. After all, during a 'doom-n-gloom time', every country is required to answer a set of questions on whether or not this war is just, these sanctions or humanitarian interventions are justified, these new norms that are constructed to frame international behaviour are shaped to deliver a solid strategic policy narrative.

Given the push that was generated by the advocacy of Zelenskyy, it is objectively possible to detect the changes made to a wide range of policies, including the significant normative adjustments made within the four clusters on the EU-Ukraine cooperation: 'Reflections on and deepening of the existing experience of integration', 'Association Agreement and its future', 'Reconstruction projects', 'A shift in the EU-Russia interrelations during the war'. A foreign policy based on values does not preclude a competent and close partnership with non-democratic states. Nevertheless, the EU must avoid the kind of compromises it has made in the past with Russia.<sup>112</sup> For example, the most groundbreaking example from the first cluster would be "a process of making a decision to grant Ukraine the status of an EU candidate country, during which information about the fears and scepticism of individual states, such as the Netherlands and Denmark, appeared in the media at

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<sup>112</sup> Meister, S. (2022). *A Paradigm Shift: EU-Russia Relations After the War in Ukraine*. Carnegie Europe. Retrieved from <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/11/29/paradigm-shift-eu-russia-relations-after-war-in-ukraine-pub-88476>, 30 November 2022.

various stages”<sup>113</sup>. In the context of the Association Agreement – as argued, its “implementation as planned during the wartime is not only about aligning legislation and progressing to membership, but also a sign of quality and sustainability of [Ukraine’s] institutions”<sup>114</sup>, however, the EU, regardless of the wartime, has never questioned the process of approximation of the Ukrainian legislation as well as the entire document’s integrity.

Regarding the country’s reconstruction-focused projects, there is a growing number of normative documents that are getting issued on the topic. For example, as noted, in the post-February 2022 period, “the EU has been supporting the Ukrainian energy sector via different channels and means” such as “ENTSO-E [that] [...] has enabled the emergency synchronisation of the Ukrainian and Moldovan electricity grids with the Continental one to ensure the stability of the electricity system”<sup>115</sup>. In addition, it has already been confirmed that Ukraine’s “reconstruction priorities are well in sync with the EU’s ambition to promote Ukraine’s transformation towards an EU member state and to foster the country’s green and digital transition”<sup>116</sup>. On the fourth point of the EU’s normative shift *vis-à-vis* Russia, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Germany’s President, noted that his country’s policy towards Russia was not reflecting the actuality: “We failed on many points”, and “It is true that we should have taken the warnings of our eastern European partners more seriously, particularly regarding the time after 2014”<sup>117</sup>.

In principle, war is always a great confrontation with reality, and the reality of the Russian PD as well as the army has been so far removed from the depictions of greatness and power that it has been understood in Western capitals that such a Kremlin can be rebuffed instead of pacified. Such and similar changes are of specific interest for this research and its discussional chapter. In general, it appeared to be that a comprehensive range of PD-associated practices (on the Russian side) can be effectively counterbalanced, with a chance of winning, by very limited, predominantly advocacy-framed, instruments (on the Ukrainian side). In an attempt to measure the impact, one

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<sup>113</sup> Rabinovych, M. (2022). *Ukraine-EU Cooperation During the War: Synergy of New and Old Formats*. European Pravda. Retrieved from <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/eng/articles/2022/11/8/7150040/>, 9 November 2022.

<sup>114</sup> Rabinovych M. (2022). Association Agreement at the wartime and the road to membership. Vox Ukraine. Retrieved from <https://voxukraine.org/en/association-agreement-at-the-wartime-and-the-road-to-membership/>, 14 December 2022.

<sup>115</sup> European Commission (2022). *Ukraine Reconstruction: Commissioner Simson visits the country to boost the support for Ukraine's energy system*. Retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_22\\_6492](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_6492), 2 November 2022.

<sup>116</sup> Bergmann, J. Romanyshyn, L. (2022). Rebuilding Ukraine: How The Eu Should Support Ukraine’s Reconstruction And Recovery. *IDOS*, 5 - 8.

<sup>117</sup> DW (2022). *German President Steinmeier admits mistakes over Russia*. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/german-president-steinmeier-admits-mistakes-over-russia-policy/a-61362153>, 12 June 2022.

could evidently summarise the following achievements of the two sides, and let us start with what Russia has effectively achieved in Ukraine, during the Putin era and before the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

**Firstly**, the PD-bound initiatives substantially assisted the Russian Federation to depict Ukrainian statehood in a humiliating fashion, presenting Ukraine (for both Ukrainians and the rest of the world, including major countries like China, Brazil, and many others) as a ‘small coin’ in a big ‘currency exchange’ game. With that and for the global society, Ukraine was easily introduced by Russia as a country with an injected-by-the-West ‘Russophobia’, fueled by widespread nationalistic rhetoric. **Secondly**, there are loads of evidence of how effective Russia has been in projecting its strategic identity narrative on the concept of brand personality in the context of President Putin as well as his real and perceived successes and powers. These include an uncounted number of “official biographies, photographs, and interviews, as well as a wealth of ‘unofficial’ materials from popular culture, such as merchandise, *YouTube* videos, and memes”<sup>118</sup>. **Thirdly**, in general, it is important to underscore that the PD-preconditioned Russian ultimatum to the USA and NATO, which the Kremlin issued closer to the end of 2021, managed to effectively generate a great negotiation process, unsuccessful for Russia though, but the facts that both President Macron and Chancellor Scholz are still frequent callers to President Putin are arguably direct consequences of the ultimatum-linked debate.

On the Ukrainian side, which, prior to Russia’s December 2021 ultimatum to the West, had been very ‘shy’ in framing up and then effectively exercising its own PD-linked initiatives, nearly always being subjected to the other countries’, the approach dramatically changed on 24 February 2022. Due to the obvious lack of resources but effectively utilising the power of direct advocacy, President Zelenskyy went literally *va banque*, attempting to counterbalance Russia’s PD and, metaphorically, ‘bet’ equally to the Russian Federation’s diverse practices using his words only. As detected by this research, the results have been nothing short from being described as remarkable so far. **Firstly**, Ukraine’s partners have finally realised that as it is, albeit imperfect, the Ukrainian state can be a reliable ally and, in fact, it has already ‘strategically narrated’ itself to become the eastern fringe of the political West.

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<sup>118</sup> Beale, M. (2018). Defence Strategic Communications. *NATO Strategic Communications Centre.*, 5, 132 – 140.

Very much connected with this initial point, the **second** change is associated with Ukraine's well-projected strategic narrative that the country is entitled to choose its destiny for itself, legitimising its subjectivity before the West as well as Russia. As a direct consequence of this, the political West, despite the nearly fanatical desire of President Macron to keep communicating with President Putin, now refuses to sign any serious geostrategic agreements directly with the Russians on behalf or instead of Ukraine.

**Thirdly**, the debate on arms supplies to Ukraine is yet another illustration of how relations with the West have changed. On the eve of the third month of the war, Kyiv can finally boast that it has completely reversed this trend. And not only in countries far from the war, such as Bulgaria or Slovakia but also in the main lobbyists for Russia's integration into the Western world – France and Germany. The main change within this cluster that can be evidently proven – the discussion now is now taking place not on 'whether to give', but, instead, on 'what exactly you are after'. It was only a couple of months before when Ukraine's partners were insisting on their then unified policy (as well as a projected strategic narrative on the issue) that, if ever supplied to Ukraine, it had to be only Soviet-made weapons.

## CONCLUSION

From a normativity-associated impact point of view, this paper attempted at interlinking ‘soft power’, ‘strategic communication’, ‘PD’, ‘strategic narratives’, and ‘policy-making’. The context was of a particular kind – the Russo-Ukrainian War, which is likely to become a major catalyst in the process of global multi-polar geo-strategic redesign. In other words, speculatively, if a new international system is to emerge any time soon, the outcome of the Russo-Ukrainian War will be a crucial element of the process. Objectively, this paper found that nearly all PD-associated mechanisms can be effectively engaged to tackle the notion of sovereignty – Russia’s preparations for the invasion in February 2022 were directly interlined with different types of PD. The mirror effect – the Ukrainian state’s response – can also be detected and observed and being interlinked with PD, more specifically with advocacy, which is nearly a ‘single man’s job’ in Ukraine. Both Presidents, Zelenskyy and Putin, drive the process of ‘crafting’ strategic narratives, which then get gradually ‘converted’ into foreign policy changes in different countries, bringing normative theory back into action in the field of international relations. As argued by Walker<sup>119</sup>:

Going forward, the narrative that Ukraine chooses for itself about its legitimacy belongs to Ukraine. But we can all play a role in creating the conditions for its credibility. This will require a sustained and consistent effort to push back on the Russian Federation’s deliberately distorted version of Ukraine’s history and culture. This includes avoiding the trap of using Putin’s language to mask Russia’s responsibility for the current conflict. The success of Ukraine’s narrative depends on all of us—academics, journalists, diplomats, policymakers and opinion leaders—to get the facts right when talking about Ukraine. We must make space for Ukraine’s story, now, in its moment of peril.

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<sup>119</sup> Walker, V. (2022). *"Glory to The Heroes:" Ukraine’s War for Narrative Credibility*. USC Center on Public Diplomacy. Retrieved from <https://usepublicdiplomacy.org/blog/glory-heroes-ukraine%E2%80%99s-war-narrative-credibility>, 11 May 2022.

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