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PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
IN THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Abstract:	*This article aims to examine the theoretical and practical changes in the role of public diplomacy in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and to analyze the modalities of action and political and social effects because of public diplomacy campaigns initiated in the relations between Russia and Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the crisis in Ukraine since 2014. Specifically, the article analyzes the role of public diplomacy in relations between states and presents public diplomacy as an essential part of soft power until the 2014 Ukraine crisis.* *The research question is: what is Russia's message to the West and how is it conveyed? And to answer the question, qualitative research methods will be used: content analysis and evaluation of official documents and reports by the Russian and Ukrainian authorities. The importance of studying this issue stems from the fact that more and more countries have launched information campaigns in recent years, designed to contribute to foreign policy priorities, and the revelation of the paper is based on the changes that are taking place in the international arena, changes that have led to an increase in the importance of public diplomacy in international relations.*
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Introduction

Under the impact of globalization, contemporary international relations have registered a process of resizing, leading to the elimination of the state monopoly on foreign policy. As a result, a whole range of non-state actors influence the image of a country abroad, and information technologies provide them with multiple communication mechanisms. In this situation, diplomatic activities must be accompanied by a process of communication, both in its internal and external markets. Most researchers assume that the transformation of the modern world is due to changes in interstate relations after the end of the Cold War[315].

This change in interstate relations is an important structural element of the world's political organization. At the same time as changes in the political organization of the world, the role of social and humanitarian resources and, consequently, their means of influence increases; this is due to the importance of the human factor. Strengthening the role of social and humanitarian resources is associated with the development of communication and information technologies. With changes in the world's political organization, an increasing number of actors are involved in public diplomacy, and the instrument of public diplomacy is becoming more important for states. Alongside public diplomacy, other

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[315] Elena Gurgu, Dumitru Cociuban, *The Role of Public Diplomacy in International Relations in Full Process of Globalization*, in "Annals of Spiru Haret University, Economic Series", Universitatea Spiru Haret, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2016, pp. 125-143

tools related to social impact are widely used around the world, such as propaganda, strategic communication, public relations, etc.[316] In this case, it is essential to highlight the characteristic features of public diplomacy, which distinguish it from other instruments, such as soft power, propaganda, etc.

Russia is currently an active player on the world stage. The analysis of Russian public diplomacy will allow us to better understand how various state and non-state structures are involved in shaping the perceptions of the world through Russian public diplomacy and its implementation. The article emphasizes public diplomacy in general and Russian public diplomacy. The toolbox for public diplomacy is largely universal. However, the way it is applied, what technologies are used, and how public diplomacy is combined with other means of influence are specific to each state. The concept of public diplomacy was implemented in the Russian Federation and other countries through the Anglo-Saxon school of thought of international relations. Therefore, before considering Russian public diplomacy, it is important to consider what is generally understood by public diplomacy.

The changing nature of diplomacy has been a topic of interest throughout the 20th century and gained momentum both after World War II and after the Cold War. The growing importance of public opinion and the emergence of the media were key arguments in these debates. While the influence of the West expanded, the Soviet Union began to lag both due to the tenacious initiatives of the West (especially the US) and the Soviet Union's inability to improve its policies[317]. Soviet diplomacy was able to identify the increasing influence of public opinion after World War II, but it failed to capitalize on the full potential of this new source of power.

The article aims to examine the transformations at the theoretical and practical level regarding the role of public diplomacy in Russia's foreign policy and to analyze the ways of action and the effects on the political and social level as a result of the public diplomacy campaigns initiated in the relations between Russia and Ukraine in the immediate aftermath of the crisis in Ukraine. More specifically, the article analyzes the role of public diplomacy in relations between states and presents public diplomacy as the essential part of soft power, a concept around which the foreign policy of the two-state actors is sought. The question this paper intends to address is: What is Russia's message to the West and how is it transmitted? To answer the question, qualitative research methods will be used, namely content analysis and evaluation of official documents and reports made by the Russian and Ukrainian authorities. The importance of studying this issue comes from the fact that more and more countries have launched information campaigns in recent years, aimed at contributing to foreign policy priorities, and the relevance of the paper is based on the changes taking place in the international arena, changes that have led to the increase in the importance of public diplomacy activities in international relations.

The article presents public diplomacy as an essential part of soft power, being one of the soft power tools used by states in international politics. The article examines a general perspective on the concept of public diplomacy, the vision of political scientist Joseph Nye on the term soft power, and Russia's efforts to control and instrumentalize the sources of soft power and analyzes contemporary Russian public diplomacy, namely the objectives of Russian public diplomacy, its actors and instruments, and a brief analysis of Russian public diplomacy in Ukraine will be presented.

Public Diplomacy: a conceptual framework

The concept of public diplomacy is one of the most controversial topics in the discipline of international relations. While both practitioners of diplomacy and scientists recognize its existence as a tool in international relations, views on the sphere, usefulness, practice, and theoretical basis vary significantly. The concept of public diplomacy was first introduced into the academic sphere in 1965 by American diplomat Edmund Guillon, to describe the process by which international actors tried to achieve their foreign policy objectives by interacting with audiences in different countries. Thus, according to Gullion: "Public diplomacy deals with the influence of public attitudes in the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations, beyond traditional diplomacy (including): government formation of public opinion in other countries; interaction between

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[316] Henry Kissinger, *World Order,* Penguin Press, New York, 2015
[317] Wilson Dizard Jr., *Inventing Public Diplomacy: The Story of the U.S. Information Agency,* Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, and London, 2004, p. 255

private interest groups in different countries; informing people about international affairs and their influence on domestic policy; communication between those whose function is communication, such as diplomats and foreign journalists; (and) the process of intercultural communication"[318].

The definition of the term is very contested, being defined in different ways by several authors, thus there is no universally accepted definition; In this regard, to have a clearer picture of how public diplomacy is understood, we have selected some interpretations of practitioners, specialists, among them, Paul Sharp, he described public diplomacy as "the process by which direct relations with people in a country are cultivated to promote their interests and expand their values"[319]. Cull also claims that public diplomacy is an international actor's attempt to conduct his foreign policy by involving the foreign public[320].

However, public diplomacy has been understood not only as a process but also as a tool. Joseph Nye defined public diplomacy as "a communication tool that governments use to mobilize resources, communicate, and attract audiences from other countries. Public diplomacy tries to convince by drawing attention to these potential resources through dissemination, subsidizing cultural exports, organizing exchanges, etc."[321] A central aspect of public diplomacy is the concept of soft power, which was introduced by Joseph Nye, and which refers to the ability of an actor to get what he wants in the international environment due to his cultural attractiveness and values. and not because of its military or economic power. Therefore, public diplomacy can be seen as one of the mechanisms of using soft power by promoting the values of a state actor. While practical knowledge of public diplomacy has been significantly improved during the Cold War, public diplomacy debates have gained momentum since the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Many researchers who belong to the realistic school of international relations perceive the state as the only actor on the international relations scene. Constructivist and liberal approaches, on the other hand, also see the public as an actor in international relations. While the liberal approach highlights the importance of public opinion through its effect on national decision-making, the constructivist approach emphasizes the emergence of an international public sphere[322]. Marking public diplomacy as a mere propaganda tool implies that the public is a passive actor in international relations, which cannot exert influence in the international arena. However, the public increasingly appears as an actor in international relations through international organizations, as well as improvements in the media and the media. Therefore, we must recognize the public as an entity that interacts in the international arena and influences and is influenced by other actors. Nancy Snow supports this view by differentiating traditional diplomacy from contemporary public diplomacy. She argues that although traditional public diplomacy referred to governments dealing with public influence, it recently included both governments and individuals, as well as groups influencing public opinion and foreign policy decisions[323]. As we mentioned, public diplomacy can be better defined by differentiating its main features from those of traditional diplomacy. First, public diplomacy is transparent and widespread, while traditional diplomacy has narrower dissemination. Second, traditional diplomacy is passed on by governments to other governments and can be described as how states communicate with each other at different levels, while public diplomacy deals not only with governments but also with governments, as well as individuals and non-governmental organizations and focus on how governments, deliberately, through both officials and private individuals or institutions, communicate with citizens of other states. Third, the topics and issues that official diplomacy addresses are mainly about the behavior and policies of governments, while public

[318] Wilson Dizard Jr, *Digital Diplomacy: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Information Age,* Prager, London, 2001, p. 5

[319] Paul Sharp, *Revolutionary States, Outlaw Regimes and the Techniques of Public Diplomacy*, Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations,* Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, pp. 106-123

[320] Nicholas Cull J., *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American propaganda and public diplomacy, 1945–1989,* Cambridge University Press, New York, 2008, p. 15

[321] Joseph Nye Jr., *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power*, in "Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science", Vol. 616, 2008, p. 95

[322] Nicholas Cull J., *Public Diplomacy Bioregulator: The Evolution of a Phrase*, https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/public-diplomacy-gullion-evolution-phrase, (18.02.2023)

[323] Nancy Snow, *Rethinking Public Diplomacy,* Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy, New York, 2009, p. 6

diplomacy is concerned with the attitudes and behaviors of the public, which makes it more visible and effective[324].

Soft power: a conceptual framework

Political scientist Joseph Nye describes public diplomacy as a political expression of soft power, a concept he introduced in the early 1960ˢ. Nye defines soft power as the ability to attract and persuade to shape the preferences of others and to obtain the benefit sought by the one who uses it. The broad spread of the concept is due to certain actions by state or non-state actors that open a wide range of political implications or lead to the achievement of political or geopolitical objectives, without these actions being able to be framed in the patterns of coercive force[325]. Nye introduced this term at the end of the Cold War to define power that is based on attraction rather than coercion, and that refers to an actor's ability to achieve what he wants in the international environment because of its cultural attractions and its values. and not because of its military or economic power. Therefore, as I mentioned, public diplomacy can be the mechanism for using soft power, by promoting the cultural values of an actor and by convincing the population of other actors about the attractiveness of its cultural values. Soft power is a modern concept, which became more important, especially in the 20th century[326].

Joseph Nye first used the term soft power in his book - *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*[327]. He challenged the prevailing view that post-World War II American power was in decline. Instead, he argued that no other country matched the US not only in terms of economic or military power but also in what he called soft power. Nye also distinguishes two methods of exercising power: the first is that a country can channel its resources to target government elites to promote its support and thus achieve the desired result, and the second method is that resources can be channeled to foreign audiences to promote their support and achieve the desired results. The first method may be closer to soft power in classical diplomacy, while the second is a direct representation of public diplomacy itself.

Nye believes that gaining power in world politics is determined by the attractiveness of the model that a particular state represents and propagates: the admiration of "others" for its values, the imitation of example, and the aspiration for the level of prosperity are the cues of soft power. Thus, the concept of soft power offers the possibility of creating a favorable environment for the one who develops it for the long term; the use of soft power gives the state the possibility to "create such a favorable international environment in which the state, the holder of this power, will be able to realize its interests without resorting to direct and harsh influence or threats"[328].

Nye argues that a country's soft power is primarily based on three resources: its culture (where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it is a fundamental landmark both domestically and internationally), and its foreign policies (when acknowledged as legitimate), thus having the ability to persuade other actors in the same direction of the foreign policy objectives pursued[329].

In international politics, power is the ability of one actor to influence another to perform certain actions that he would not have taken otherwise. The form of power represented by soft power can be seen in contrast to the use of constraint. Hard power is the ability of one actor to compel another to execute certain actions and includes military intervention, coercive diplomacy, and economic sanctions as tactics. In contrast, soft power refers to the ability to persuade an actor to take those actions. The combination of the two represents smart power, which is born of the need for an actor to possess the necessary hard power capacity to achieve his foreign policy objectives, thus defining it by combining and

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[324] Ion Guceac, Sergiu Porcescu, *Diplomația publică – componentă indispensabilă a discursului extern în condițiile globalizării*, in "Revista de Știință, Inovare, Cultură și Artă Akademos", Vol. 1, No. 16, 2010, pp. 6-10

[325] Joseph Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics,* Public Affairs, New York, 2004, p. 5

[326] Joseph Nye Jr., *Soft Power*, in "Foreign Policy", No. 80, 1990, p. 159

[327] Joseph Nye Jr., *Bound to lead: The changing nature of American power,* Basic Books, New York, 1990

[328] Carnes Lord, „Public Diplomacy and Soft Power", ed. Michael Waller J., *Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counterpropaganda, and Political Warfare,* The Institute of World Politics Press, Washington D.C., 2008, p. 65

[329] Joseph Nye Jr., *Op.cit.,* pp. 94-109

efficiently using these resources together[330]. Soft power can be exercised both by states and by all actors in international politics (NGOs or international institutions).

Power, in the classical sense, is the ability to affect others to achieve desired results; behavior that can be affected either by threats of coercion or by attraction; an attraction that causes others to want what you want. Power also holds a significant share in the practice of state public diplomacy. If public diplomacy, in its essence, interacts with the foreign public, it is natural that power, in its classical sense (that is, military, political, and economic power) constitutes a part of the resources that are used for public diplomacy, besides culture, and other means of interaction.

Soft power in the Russian context

The internal protests and the crisis in Ukraine in 2014 brought to the forefront of Russian politics a growing concern for soft power. The concept began to be used in speeches and official documents and a series of measures were taken to avoid "dangers" and to streamline Russia's soft power[331]. This dichotomous approach to the "power of attraction" revealed the differences in the perception of soft power by Russian officials and Western counterparts.

The use of the term soft power is relatively new in Russian political circles but has recently become increasingly popular among Russian analysts and policymakers. The term itself was first used in Russian political discourse in February 2012 by Vladimir Putin. In the presidential election, V. Putin pointed out that soft power is "a set of tools and methods to achieve foreign policy goals without the use of weapons, but by exercising information and other levers of influence" and is frequently used by "large countries, international blocs or corporations...to develop and provoke extremist, separatist and nationalist attitudes, to manipulate the public and to intervene directly in the domestic politics of sovereign countries"[332].

A year later, *the* concept of soft power was introduced in a Russian official document - Концепция внешней политики Российской едерации[333] (Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation), approved by Vladimir Putin in February 2013. The document describes the principles, priorities, and objectives of Russia's foreign policy and defines soft power as *"a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives based on the potential of civil society, information, cultural methods and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy"*. However, like the definition of President V Putin, this document refers to soft power as "an indispensable component of modern international relations" but warns that soft power can sometimes be used in an "illegal or destructive" way to "exert pressure on sovereign states, interfere in their internal affairs, and do not interfere with the state of affairs. destabilize their political situation or manipulate public opinion"[334]. Therefore, Russia tries to remove the risks of soft power threats by nationalizing civil society, and at the same time, it also aims to instrumentalize soft power for its foreign policy objectives.

Moscow has a dichotomic approach to soft power. It perceives soft power simultaneously as a threat, when used by Western actors and also as a pragmatic tool that should serve Russia's national interests[335]. This approach led the Russian Federation to take a series of measures to prevent the "destructive" consequences of this power and to increase its effectiveness in achieving foreign policy objectives. However, these measures taken by the Russian government contradict the very logic of the "power of attraction".

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[330] Joseph Nye Jr., David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation,* Pearson, New Jersey, Ed. 9, 2013, p. 47

[331] Vasile Rotaru, *Instrumentalizing the Sources of Attraction: How Russia Undermines its Own Soft Power*, in "AcademiaEdu", Bucuresti, 2015, pp. 1-11

[332] Vladimir Putin, *Russia and the changing world*, https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-moskovskiye-novosti, (21.03.2023)

[333] *Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*, https://www.voltairenet.org/article202037.html, (21.03.2023)

[334] *Idem*

[335] Jeanne Wilson, *Soft Power as a Component of Russian and Chinese Discourse and Strategy. Constructivist and Realist Interpretations,* in "Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association", 2013, p. 24

All these efforts by the state to control civil society and access to information, to create governmental institutions to promote a desired national image abroad, show that Russia perceives power as a state project and an instrument of its foreign policy. Thus, while Nye sees a country's foreign policy as one of the sources of its soft power, for Russia, soft power is perceived as an instrument of foreign policy[336]. Thus, Russia understands soft power rather than the ability to influence public opinion in the target countries.

Contemporary Russian public diplomacy

Russia underwent a significant institutional restructuring after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This restructuring process has led Russia to take a rather passive position in the international arena. However, in the more recent period, Russia has emerged as an active and assertive actor in the international arena. Many researchers attribute the interest in public diplomacy by the Russian Federation to the presidential campaign of V. Putin in February 2012 and the official concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. The tone of the statements in the presidential campaign indicates that the Russian institutions assess the Russian foreign policy regarding the use of this instrument and attribute its use to the Western powers in an interventionist way toward the domestic policy of sovereign countries. Remarks by President V. Putin on the notion of soft power are an important indicator of how Russia perceives public diplomacy, more precisely, as a tool of Russian policy and a dangerous weapon in the hands of Western powers[337]. In 2003, a survey was conducted on the image of Russia in the eyes of American citizens, the result of which had negative connotations, which could be identified with the Cold War period and with communism. This poll showed President Vladimir Putin that the existing image of Russia in Western public opinion was problematic. However, the same article claims that while Russia opens its arms and smiles warmly toward the West, in the internal sphere, the windows are sealed against journalists and no opposition can be heard[338]. It follows that among the main challenges of Russian public diplomacy are image and credibility.

The image of Russia in the eyes of the foreign public is an aspect that must be taken into account when considering Russian public diplomacy. While Russia's image as an undemocratic, corrupt, and aggressive policy can be attributed to the Soviet image of the Cold War, the impact of foreign policy can be presented as important in terms of low credibility. This brings us again to the discussion of the relationship between foreign policy and domestic policy, as well as the importance of implications, rather than advertising in the field of public diplomacy. The Ukrainian conflict was an example that contributed to the image of an aggressive Russian Federation. The Russian occupation of Crimea has shattered its international image, which is seen as a rogue state by more and more countries and their citizens. Russia's image in the EU has been tarnished a lot, and while Vladimir Putin was talking about the weakness of NATO's Eastern European partners in Poland, Romania, and the Baltic states[339]; The Eastern Ukraine crisis of 2014 prevented Russia from making any move to establish its image, due to its association with an illegal and aggressor state.

In Russia, public diplomacy is closely correlated with national interests (preservation of current political regime, culture, achieving equal status with other major international actors, etc.), national security, and foreign policy objectives, making them Russian foreign policy instruments that are usually implemented by institutions affiliated to the government[340]. Over the past decade, Russia has made serious efforts to advance its practice of public diplomacy. Thus, another point to be considered in the analysis of Russian public diplomacy is its institutionalization. The Russian Federation has undergone a substantial institutionalization process, with many institutions regulating their public diplomacy efforts to

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[336] Jarosław Ćwiek-Karpowicz, *Limits to Russian Soft Power in the Post-Soviet Area,* in *"DGAPanalyse"*, Berlin, No. 8, 2012, pp. 1-9

[337] Vasile Rotaru, *Op.cit.*, pp. 1-2

[338] Julian Evans, *Spinning Russia*, https://foreignpolicy.com/2005/12/01/spinning-russia/, (20.02.2023)

[339] Elizabeth Pond, *Russia vs the West: The Consequences of Putin's Invasion of Ukraine*, https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/03/russia-vs-west-consequences-putin-s-invasion-ukraine, (20.02.2023)

[340] Anna A. Velikaya, *The Russian Approach to Public Diplomacy and Humanitarian Cooperation*, in "Rising Powers Quarterly", Vol. 3, No. 3, 2018, pp. 39-61

restore its image. These include the Russian Science and Culture Centers abroad, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. Currently, there are over 70 branches worldwide. The main purpose of these institutions is to facilitate academic exchanges. Another similar institutional example is the Federal Agency of Rossotrudnichestvo[341], established by Dmitry Medvedev in 2008, it acts as an institution for the coordination of Russian foreign humanitarian activity, and also has the role of promoting Russian culture and language through educational cooperation; 21 structures have also been created, such as the Alexander Gorchakov Foundation for Public Diplomacy, the Council of Russia, the Russkiy Mir Foundation and the Fund for supporting and protecting the rights of compatriots living abroad. News agencies, Russia Today (2005), RIA Novosti, Sputnik (2014), and TASS, can be presented as examples of international news agencies established to institutionalize public diplomacy[342]. These international dissemination tools have been developed because of several failures in shaping global public opinion on its political agendas. Key actors in the sphere of public diplomacy include[343] the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Emergencies, Russian NGOs (Russian Humanitarian Mission, Institute for Literary Translation), and think tanks (Valdai Club, Russian Committee for Research BRICS).

In different countries, public diplomacy has different forms, methods, and aspects. In Russia, as well as in most post-Soviet countries, public diplomacy is regarded as engaging the foreign public by encouraging cooperation in political, economic, and cultural spheres to promote the national interests of the country, whereas in Western countries (especially the US), public diplomacy combines two components: engaging allies (through educational and cultural activities) and confronting enemies (such as violent extremism). In Russia, public diplomacy is perceived as aiming to create an objective and favorable image of the country, without undermining the efforts of other actors[344].

A distinctive feature of Russian public diplomacy is not to use the "countering" component against foreign propaganda, or terrorist threats, which is seen as part of strategic communications. Unlike the public diplomacy of Western countries, Russian public diplomacy does not focus on exporting democracy but aims to promote international dialog and strategic stability among various international actors. Russian public diplomacy is used to attract allies and build a dialog with difficult partners. Through its public diplomacy, Russia promotes the message that the national state is the only reliable guarantor of international peace and stable world order. So the practice and terminology of public diplomacy are different in Russia from the United States, as it includes elements of engagement, not elements of combat[345]. In addition, the term is interpreted in a very narrow sense in Russia compared to other countries.

The existing literature has a huge gap in public diplomacy policies. The Soviet Union, being one of the two main warring powers of the Cold War, provides a significant case study of the practice of public diplomacy. As the main successor to the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation also offers a crucial case in terms of the practice of public diplomacy.

Russian public diplomacy in Ukraine

Ukraine is one of the countries that Russia has considered an inseparable part of its sphere of influence for historical, cultural, and strategic reasons. Historically, Ukraine is seen as the cradle of Russian politics due to the emergence of Kievan Rus as the first political entity for Eastern Slavs. Similarly, Ukrainians and Russians share a deep cultural connection in terms of language, religion, and long history together, in addition to the significant Russian-speaking minority in eastern Ukraine. Strategically, access to the Ukrainian coastline constitutes a significant part of Russian capacity in the

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[341] Federal Agency for Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation

[342] Greg Simons, *Russian public diplomacy in the 21st century: Structure, means and message,* in "Public Relations Review", Vol. 40, No. 3, 2014, pp. 445- 447

[343] Tatiana Zanova, *Public diplomacy and its actors*, https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/public-diplomacy-and-its-actors/, (20.02.2023)

[344] Borishpoletz, K.P., *Public diplomacy in EEU region: understanding the phenomenon and its development*, in "MGIMO Journal", Vol. 5, No. 44, 2015, pp. 42-55

[345] Anna A. Velikaya, *Op.cit.*, pp. 39-61

Black Sea, especially given the existing naval bases on Ukrainian soil (especially in Crimea). Tensions between the two countries return to the EU's Eastern Partnership Program initiated in 2009[346].

The Ukrainian balance between the EU approach and the Russian counteroffer of the Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) led to a period of internal turmoil for Ukraine, which led to the exit of President Yanukovych, who was supported by a Russian-speaking minority[347]. These events led to an armed uprising (supported by the Russian Federation) in the eastern and southeastern regions of the country, which are largely inhabited by the Russian-speaking minority, as well as the annexation of Crimea following a referendum under Russian occupation. Despite Russian claims focused on the right to self-determination, the referendum was not recognized by the UN and the related resolution indicated the referendum as illegal[348]. Ukraine was trying to find a diplomatic solution to the 2014 conflict by inviting the Russian Federation to the table, while Russian occupation and armed conflict between the Ukrainian army and Russian-backed rebels were still ongoing[349].

The situation in Ukraine is characterized by instability, lack of predictability, and asymmetric threats. Funding political parties or mass communication agencies, creating blogs and web pages, manipulating people's emotions through social networks, and supporting subversive corruption are just some of the methods used by the Russian propaganda apparatus to spread uncertainty and disinformation in Ukrainian society and Eastern European countries; the Ukrainian crisis has become a complex geopolitical battlefield. Moscow's aggression took place in both real and virtual space and was multi-dimensional. Through these means, Moscow[350] tried to convince both domestic and foreign public opinion that the post-Soviet space remains "our" territory.

Russian public diplomacy aimed to discredit the distinctiveness of Ukrainian identity. The main reason behind this approach was to get the Ukrainian public to associate with Russian culture to have a long-term positive effect on future policies. Russian public diplomacy has set itself the goal of achieving this goal by various means, including through culture and religion. An example of this is the Russian Orthodox Church. Especially after the appointment of Patriarch Kirill I, the Russian Orthodox Church pursued a policy of limiting the autonomy of the Kyiv Patriarchate by registering new parishes within the Moscow Patriarchate[351].

The practices of public diplomacy in Russia were applied through mechanisms of control of public opinion, thus, to promote its objectives in the countries of the former Soviet space, Russia used media channels[352]: this method consists of creating speeches delivered to the public through newspapers, television, radio and any other technical support that provides information; another instrument is Russian, which is the most spoken foreign or maternal language in former soviet countries; Russian ethnic minorities are other sources of public opinion control. These measures were complemented by coordinated campaigns, using Western PR firms, think tanks, and interest groups to achieve Moscow's foreign policy objectives.

Regarding the situation in the current period, in general, the Russian strategy has turned towards force tactics rather than more subtle ways of spreading influence. Joseph Nye wrote that "while hard

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[346] Dragneva, R., Wolczuk, K., *Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?,* in "Russia and Eurasia Programme", Chatham House, London, 2012, p. 10

[347] Staff Reuters, *Yanukovych denounces "coup", says staying in Ukraine,*
https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-crisis-yanukovichidINDEEA1L04320140222?edition-redirect=in, (21.02.2023)

[348] *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March,*
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/a_res_68_262.pdf (21.02.2023)

[349] Holly Ellyatt, *Ukraine leader says meeting Putin is key 'if we want to end the war in the Donbas region,*
https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/10/ukraines-president-says-meeting-putin-is-key-to-ending-war.html, (21.02.2023)

[350] Suslov Mihail, *The Utopia of 'Holy Russia Today's Geopolitical Imagination of the Russian Orthodox Church: a Case Study of Patriarch Kirill,* "Plural: History, Culture, Society", ed. ARC, Moldova, vol. 2, no. 1-2, 2014, pp. 81-96

[351] Alexander Bogomolov, Oleksandr Lytvynenko, *A Ghost in the Mirror: Russian Soft Power in Ukraine,* "Russia and Eurasia Programme", Chatham House, London, 2012, p. 12

[352] Martin, Kragh; Sebastian, Åsberg, *Russia's strategy for influence through public diplomacy and active measures: the Swedish case,* in "The Journal of Strategic Studies", London, Vol. 40, No. 6, 2017, p.2

military power will decide the outcome of Russia's war in Ukraine, the power of values, persuasion, and attraction are hardly irrelevant. Though soft power tends to operate more subtly and over a longer time horizon, it has nonetheless emerged as a key feature of Ukraine's defense"[353]. Thus, it follows that, in the short term, hard power is more efficient than soft power. The effects of soft power tend to be slow, in the sense that we can see the effects of bombs immediately, while the attraction of values and culture can only be seen in the long term; and the war in Ukraine offers these lessons. The short-term battle was, of course, dominated by hard power. How this situation will play out, in the long run, will depend in part on the outcome of the war.

Conclusions

Currently, many countries face international crises either as participants or as peacemakers, and since we are facing increasing conflicts worldwide, public diplomacy is becoming an increasingly necessary tool, able to put the foundations of international cooperation and promote the international agenda. Public diplomacy initiatives may be the time to prevent the global confrontation we are witnessing today. Public diplomacy is one of the most important concepts of political communication, becoming an indispensable component of the foreign policy of states, but also a topic on the agenda of international organizations.

Currently, Russian public diplomacy is becoming increasingly important to effectively promote a positive, balanced, and unifying international agenda. As we have noted, the Russian approach to public diplomacy differs from the Western one that appeals to the agenda of human rights, transparency, and the rule of law. Russia does not agree that values (free speech, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, equality of men and women) prevail over national interests. The destabilization of vast regions through the practice of regime change demonstrates this message.

The term soft power has also become popular among Russian politicians. However, their approach to the concept differs from how the West understands it. While scholars point out that soft power cannot be controlled by governments to the same extent as hard power, and that many soft power resources often operate indirectly, are separate from the government, and can only partially serve the purpose of the state, Russia sees soft power as a state-centered project and an instrument of its foreign policy.

For Russia, soft power is perceived as an instrument of its foreign policy, which must serve the state's interests in international affairs. Moscow understands to have full control of soft power and to use it only in the service of "state interests". However, this approach can be dangerous and counterproductive. Russian government soft power audiences are becoming warier of Moscow's instrumentalization of soft power resources and questioning their reputation and credibility. Thus, rather than increasing the effectiveness of Russia's pull power, government actions to nationalize and instrumentalize pull sources undermine their potential to generate soft power.

The Ukrainian crisis demonstrates that public diplomacy can be used as a weapon to achieve political and strategic goals. Public diplomacy works at the level of human interaction and thus provides a solid basis for building trust in a certain area of geopolitical interest, in our case Ukraine. The battle for information as a weapon has become vital in the Ukraine crisis. Both the West and Russia have used the image as a weapon to achieve their strategic and military goals.

Given the complexity of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis and implicitly its evolution at this time, by using this qualitative methodology on documents and articles it is inevitable that some limits will emerge.

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