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Digitization of Public Diplomacy of Russia and Ukraine during the War

Working paper: November, 2024

Digitization of Public Diplomacy of Russia and Ukraine during the War

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1 Introduction

Diplomacy has traditionally focused on confidential, state-to-state negotiations to achieve foreign policy goals, often using hard power tactics like economic pressure and military influence (Frey & Frey, 2023; Cohen, 2021). However, digital technologies have expanded this field, leading to public and digital public diplomacy.

Public diplomacy employs soft power tools, such as cultural programs and digital platforms, to shape global narratives (Huang, 2021b; Cull, 2019). Digital public diplomacy, particularly through platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, enables real-time, two-way communication, allowing states to directly engage with non-state actors, scholars, and global audiences (Gilboa, 2008). This shift reflects a move towards more transparent and responsive diplomacy.

This study examines how Russia and Ukraine have adapted their diplomatic strategies using digital tools, particularly during the information warfare of 2022-2024. It explores the historical and institutional backgrounds supporting their digital diplomacy efforts, focusing on how they shape international perceptions during geopolitical tensions.

Using a mixed-method approach—including historical-discursive and network analyses—this research examines the use of digital platforms for engagement and strategic communication. It draws on frameworks to show how states use digital diplomacy to influence narratives and engage global audiences, highlighting the transformative impact of social media in modern diplomacy and information warfare.

2 The Evolution of Diplomacy: From Traditional Practices to Digital Public Engagement

Definition and Focus

Diplomacy is defined as the establishment and management of international relations through dialogue, negotiation, and strategic communication among officials of sovereign states. Its primary objectives include reducing conflicts, building partnerships, and promoting national interests while fostering peaceful interactions. This typically involves formal discussions, treaties, and agreements addressing political, economic, and cultural issues (Frey & Frey, 2023).

Traditional diplomacy, rooted in historical practices, emphasizes confidential negotiations between states to resolve political dilemmas and establish strategic alliances. It evolved into a systematic framework following the Treaty of Westphalia, which laid the foundation for modern, state-centric diplomatic practices (Mulki et al., 2024).

Modern diplomacy, by contrast, reflects the contemporary management of international relations, incorporating broader objectives beyond political concerns. It is characterized by permanent representation, the integration of technology, and new communication tools, which have reshaped the nature, scope, and mechanisms of diplomatic engagement (Mulki et al., 2024). This evolution has expanded diplomacy to address economic, social, and cultural dimensions, involving a more diverse set of actors and methodologies.



The global diplomatic landscape is undergoing a significant shift, driven by the rise of influential actors such as China, Russia, and Africa, who are reshaping regional and global dynamics toward a multipolar order (Teodosiev, 2024). This shift involves strategic engagement, economic opportunities, and geopolitical maneuvers aimed at challenging Western dominance. The transformation is marked by a move from traditional state-centric diplomacy to more complex, multilateral, and interdisciplinary approaches. The interplay of various global actors and the emergence of new diplomatic fields, such as digital diplomacy, corporate diplomacy, environmental diplomacy, and cultural diplomacy, highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of contemporary international relations.

Russia has renewed its engagement with Africa through summit diplomacy and multi-vector strategies, aiming to strengthen political and economic ties, expand trade, and foster cooperation in humanitarian, educational, and technological sectors (Fedorchenko et al., 2022; Abramova, 2020). This renewed focus aligns with broader efforts to counter Western sanctions and deepen partnerships with African nations. On November 9–10, 2024, Russia hosted the First Ministerial Conference of the Russia–Africa Partnership Forum in Sochi, attended by delegations from all 50+ African countries, including high-ranking officials, representatives from the African Union, regional organizations, and private sector leaders. The conference featured 19 roundtables addressing key areas such as security, economy, healthcare, digital governance, and diplomatic training, reflecting President Vladimir Putin’s commitment to enhancing political and economic relations with Africa. The forum builds on the momentum of the 2023 Russia-Africa Summit, emphasizing long-term collaboration through intergovernmental bilateral commissions on trade, economic, and scientific-technical cooperation. Russia’s efforts are complemented by partnerships in strategic sectors, such as nuclear energy development agreements with Rwanda and joint ventures in energy, telecommunications, and mining with countries like Mali and Burkina Faso. These initiatives are part of a broader geopolitical strategy to reposition Russia as a key partner in Africa's development, countering perceptions of Western neocolonialism and fostering a multipolar world order (Fituni, 2021). Through such engagements, Russia seeks to expand its influence in Africa, leveraging the continent's strategic importance and abundant resources in the evolving global diplomatic landscape.

Another example is the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—which seek to transform global diplomacy by counterbalancing Western dominance and promoting cooperation among emerging economies. Key initiatives, such as the establishment of the New Development Bank, have bolstered the bloc's influence by reducing dependence on Western financial institutions (Rached & Sá, 2024). The bloc's expansion at the 16th BRICS Summit in 2024 (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Argentina) further underscores its ambition to include more emerging economies and strengthen its global presence. However, economic collaboration within BRICS remains inconsistent due to disparities among member states and fragmented interdependencies, emphasizing the need for greater alignment to realize its full potential (Silva, 2018).

The Russia-Ukraine war has profoundly transformed the global diplomatic landscape, exposing the fragility of existing international frameworks and prompting a reassessment of alliances and strategic partnerships. The conflict has reshaped European security dynamics, particularly within NATO, and underscored the limitations of institutions like the United Nations in resolving complex disputes (Abdulrasheed & Mumuni, 2024; Kapitonenko, 2024). Ukraine's alignment with Western institutions has further influenced its diplomatic engagements, while violations of international norms, such as Russia's annexation of Crimea, have intensified global sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Additionally, the war has disrupted global energy markets and trade, highlighting the interconnectedness of the global economy and the need for diversified energy strategies (Liu & Su, 2024). Beyond regional impacts, the conflict has shifted global security paradigms, emphasizing the role of information warfare and the necessity for innovative defense strategies (Hu, 2023).

Another significant focus in modern diplomacy is the impact of advancements in information technology and the rise of social media. These developments have revolutionized diplomatic practices by enabling real-time communication and fostering broader public engagement in diplomatic processes (Teodosiev, 2024). However, they also pose challenges, including the proliferation of misinformation and the necessity for diplomats to adapt to rapidly evolving communication platforms (Teodosiev, 2024).

Public diplomacy is the strategic use of direct communication by international actors to engage foreign publics, with the aim of shaping global public opinion and advancing foreign policy objectives (Huang, 2021b). It leverages a nation's soft power through methods such as cultural exchanges, international broadcasting, advocacy, and relationship management to build favorable perceptions and foster cooperation (Cull, 2019; Golan et al., 2019). This engagement extends to civil society, journalists, and scholars, facilitating the construction of narratives that support a state's strategic interests (Byrne, 2024).



As a tool for projecting soft power, public diplomacy enhances a nation's global image and promotes international partnerships (Zaiets, 2024). During wartime, public diplomacy plays a vital role in managing perceptions and restoring trust among affected societies (Hlihor, 2024).

Public diplomacy's effectiveness draws on a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from communication, political science, marketing, and public relations. Techniques such as agenda-setting, cultural influence, and network interactions are employed to shape international perceptions (Gilboa, 2008). Despite its broad interdisciplinary scope, scholars highlight the essential connection between public diplomacy and foreign policy, ensuring that communication strategies align with broader geopolitical objectives (Ayhan, 2018).

Digital public diplomacy refers to the strategic use of digital technologies and platforms to achieve diplomatic objectives, emphasizing two-way communication and engagement with foreign audiences. Unlike traditional public diplomacy, which often relied on one-way messaging, digital public diplomacy incorporates interactive and participatory methods to build relationships and enhance soft power. This approach leverages various tools, including social media, virtual platforms, and big data analytics, fostering dynamic and transparent diplomatic engagements.

Digital public diplomacy utilizes network power and soft power to engage audiences through platforms such as X, YouTube, and Facebook. This interactive approach contrasts with traditional methods focused on propaganda and unidirectional communication (Akil & Gallenius, 2024).

The incorporation of advanced digital tools, including WhatsApp, big data analysis, and algorithms, has enabled more nuanced and efficient diplomatic activities. This integration allows diplomats to tailor strategies and respond to complex international dynamics effectively (Manor, 2023).

Digital platforms facilitate greater interaction between diplomats, organizations, and the public, promoting transparency in diplomatic practices. This shift is evident in the strategies employed by Ukraine and Russia, where digital tools play a central role in managing international relations ("Understanding Digital Diplomacy Through Ukraine-Russia Events", 2022).

Innovative forms of engagement, such as "Internet meme diplomacy" and interactive promotional campaigns, reflect the participatory nature of digital communication technologies, highlighting the evolving landscape of public diplomacy (Mazumdar, 2021).

Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook serve as central tools for MFAs, enabling real-time communication, countering disinformation, and engaging with global audiences. These platforms have transformed diplomacy into a more transparent and participatory practice, allowing diplomats to quickly manage crises, shape narratives, and expand networks (Manor, 2023).

By integrating digital tools and fostering real-time engagement, digital public diplomacy represents a paradigm shift in international relations, aligning diplomatic practices with the

demands of a highly connected and dynamic global society.

However, the rapid pace of digitalization requires flexible adaptation by public diplomacy institutions to balance technological possibilities with societal and institutional needs. The digitization process varies globally, influencing how public diplomacy is practiced across different countries (Budak, 2022).

The concept of information warfare is increasingly intertwined with digital public diplomacy, reflecting the shifting dynamics of modern conflicts and global relations. Information warfare is defined as a multi-faceted strategy integrating virtual and physical actions to achieve geopolitical or military objectives (Hewitt, 2010). Traditionally focused on fostering mutual understanding and cooperation, public diplomacy has evolved into a strategic tool in information warfare, employing digital platforms to shape narratives, counter disinformation, and influence audiences globally.



In conflict scenarios, public diplomacy seeks to restore trust, address misperceptions, and maintain societal cohesion by providing objective information (Hlihor, 2024). However, in contemporary conflicts, digital diplomacy often becomes a mechanism for managing perceptions in real time, leveraging platforms like Facebook and X to enhance legitimacy,

shape public opinion, and mobilize support (Yarchi, 2024). This "new era" of mediated diplomacy emphasizes cultural resonance and the strategic use of digital tools to influence perceptions effectively.

A defining aspect of modern information warfare is the strategic dissemination of disinformation, which can manipulate both domestic and international perceptions. States with closed networks, such as China, face risks of internal disinformation, while open systems, like in the United States, are more susceptible to widespread misinformation (Zhou et al., 2024). Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms, governments must implement robust strategies to counter these threats, safeguard information ecosystems, and enhance the transparency of diplomatic efforts.

Digital public diplomacy integrates tools like social media, real-time content dissemination, and big data analytics, enabling states to engage with audiences instantly, shape narratives, and counter competing information campaigns. The war in Ukraine exemplifies the critical intersection between digital diplomacy and information warfare, highlighting the need for adaptive, transparent, and culturally nuanced approaches to address these interconnected domains.

The Ukrainian-Russian war exemplifies how information warfare operates as a multifaceted strategy designed to influence public perception, undermine societal cohesion, and achieve geopolitical objectives. In this context, information warfare involves manipulating narratives through both traditional media and advanced technologies, reflecting the evolving complexity of modern conflicts.

Information warfare in Ukraine is defined as the strategic use of information to shape public consciousness, disrupt infrastructure, and control the information space. Key objectives include launching information attacks on opponents, maintaining dominance in the narrative sphere, and enhancing the effectiveness of military operations (Venglinskyi, 2024).

Russia has employed an array of tactics in its information warfare efforts against Ukraine, including media manipulation, disseminating propaganda through state-controlled outlets; troll and bot factories, amplifying false narratives and fostering discord on digital platforms; and deepfake technology, producing fabricated content to discredit Ukrainian leaders and

institutions (Plazova et al., 2024).

These strategies aim to destabilize Ukrainian society and influence international perceptions by spreading disinformation and false narratives.

Ukraine has countered these efforts through strategic communication initiatives, including media literacy programs aimed at educating the public to resist propaganda (Plazova et al., 2024), strategic communication centers to coordinate accurate information dissemination, and efforts to promote national unity while providing verified updates on the conflict (Plazova et al., 2024).

Despite Russia's initial advantages in information warfare, Ukraine has effectively countered these tactics through proactive measures and international support. The government's strategic use of digital platforms and the spontaneous actions of its citizens have been instrumental in maintaining national unity and countering disinformation (Bartnicki et al., 2023).

However, the dynamic nature of information warfare requires continuous adaptation and collaboration with global partners. As seen in Ukraine, information warfare remains an evolving challenge that underscores the critical need for effective digital public diplomacy to manage perceptions and foster international stability.

Methods

Traditional diplomacy employs a variety of approaches to manage international relations, ranging from traditional state-centric practices to more dynamic, inclusive strategies.

State-Centric Focus

Traditional diplomacy remains largely focused on negotiations between state officials, prioritizing formal agreements and treaties to advance national interests. This approach emphasizes intergovernmental dialogue, with minimal involvement from non-state actors, maintaining a state-centric framework (Çiçek, 2022).

Limited Public Engagement

Unlike public diplomacy, which actively engages foreign publics to shape perceptions and foster cooperation, traditional diplomacy focuses on elite-level negotiations. Direct interaction with the general public is minimal, as the emphasis remains on state-to-state communication rather than broader societal engagement (Çiçek, 2022).

Bilateral and Multilateral Negotiations

Traditional diplomacy frequently employs bilateral negotiations between two states or multilateral discussions involving multiple parties. These methods reflect the historical evolution of diplomatic relations, focusing on conflict resolution, alliance-building, and addressing shared challenges (Cornago, 2022).

Permanent Representation

The establishment of resident ambassadors and permanent diplomatic missions has become a cornerstone of modern diplomacy. These missions enable continuous dialogue, effective crisis management, and relationship-building between nations. Permanent representation ensures regular communication channels are maintained to manage international relations and address emerging issues (“Diplomacy,” 2021).

Formalized Diplomatic Practices

Modern diplomacy relies on structured mechanisms such as bilateral or multilateral meetings, the signing of treaties, and official state visits to strengthen international relations and address global challenges (Cornago, 2022).

Public diplomacy integrates traditional engagement strategies with modern digital and informational tactics to influence global perceptions, foster international relationships, and achieve strategic objectives. The incorporation of information warfare into digital public diplomacy has further expanded its scope and impact.

Media and Cultural Engagement

Public diplomacy utilizes media campaigns, cultural programs, social media, and public events to shape global perceptions and enhance a nation’s image. These initiatives build goodwill, foster mutual understanding, and strengthen diplomatic ties (Pavón-Guinea &

Codina, 2024).

Direct Communication with Global Audiences

Engaging civil society organizations, journalists, and the general public allows public diplomacy to foster open dialogue and influence public opinion. This approach moves beyond state-to-state negotiations, encouraging active interaction with foreign populations to broaden diplomatic influence (Byrne, 2024).

Soft Power Strategy

Public diplomacy projects influence through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion, leveraging cultural and informational assets to create favorable perceptions and reinforce international relationships (Parubochaya & Kovach, 2022).

Digital Transformation and Real-Time Interaction

Digital technologies have revolutionized public diplomacy, allowing for real-time communication and expanded global outreach. Social media platforms, virtual forums, and big data analytics enable swift responses to global events and targeted audience engagement (Павлюх & Кушней, 2022; Palieieva & Todoroshko, 2023).

Strategic Use of Digital Platforms

Digital public diplomacy employs tools like social media, interactive campaigns, and algorithms to enhance soft power and long-term relationship building. These platforms allow states to protect national interests while engaging foreign audiences through participatory communication (Palieieva & Todoroshko, 2023).

Two-Way, Interactive Communication

Digital public diplomacy emphasizes two-way communication, fostering participatory engagement. For example, innovative methods such as "meme diplomacy" and cultural branding initiatives (e.g., Virtual YouTubers) effectively use interactive tools to engage foreign audiences (Akil & Gallenius, 2024).

Information Warfare in Public Diplomacy

The convergence of information warfare and digital public diplomacy has transformed the global diplomatic landscape.

Disinformation Campaigns: The deliberate spread of false information to manipulate public opinion and erode trust in institutions has become a prevalent tactic, facilitated by digital platforms (Huang, 2024).

Psychosemantic Warfare: Social media platforms are used to shape perceptions and ideologies through psychosemantic tactics, employing strategic language to influence public opinion (Shafie, 2022).

Psychological Operations: These operations aim to influence international perceptions as part of broader national information strategies, coordinating efforts across agencies to disseminate information effectively (Torres, 1995).

Convergence of Information Warfare and Public Diplomacy: Information has become a principal weapon in the "battlespace," targeting the cognitive processes of audiences to achieve diplomatic and security objectives (Campbell & Armistead, 2004).

While these methods achieve strategic goals, they also raise ethical concerns regarding manipulation, trust erosion, and risks to democracy and global security. Comprehensive legal and ethical frameworks are necessary to mitigate these risks (Floridi & Taddeo, 2014).

Communication Style and Approach

Traditional diplomacy is characterized by a state-centric approach that prioritizes confidentiality, ritualized communication, and skilled negotiation to achieve strategic objectives.

State-Centric, Closed-Door Interactions

Traditional diplomacy focuses on government-to-government engagements conducted behind closed doors to protect sensitive information. Confidential discussions are essential for negotiating treaties, resolving disputes, and forming alliances, ensuring minimal public scrutiny.

Confidential, One-Way Communication

This approach relies on tightly controlled, one-way communication, emphasizing the strategic management of information. Diplomats focus on safeguarding state interests by carefully managing the flow of information to their counterparts (Frey & Frey, 2023).

Use of Persuasive Language

Diplomatic discourse is marked by the strategic use of linguistic techniques, including metaphors, idioms, and formal etiquette, to subtly influence opinions and negotiation outcomes. These rhetorical tools enhance the credibility and effectiveness of diplomatic communications (Aljarelah, 2024).

Ritualized Communication

Adhering to established norms and practices, traditional diplomacy employs ritualized communication to foster trust and credibility. These formalized interactions ensure decorum and respect between negotiating parties (Jönsson & Hall, 2003).

Focus on Skilled Negotiation

Skilled negotiation is central to traditional diplomacy, emphasizing win-win solutions that benefit all parties. Effective negotiation techniques help resolve conflicts, form strategic partnerships, and align with national interests (Dewi et al., 2017).

Public vs. Private Communication

Diplomats balance public statements with private discussions. Public communication signals intentions and shapes perceptions, while private exchanges enable candid dialogue critical for reaching agreements. Nonverbal cues, such as gestures and tone, play a crucial role in diplomatic exchanges (Jönsson & Hall, 2003).

Relationship Management

Traditional diplomacy emphasizes sustaining harmonious relationships through continuous engagement and cooperation. Ministries of Foreign Affairs manage these relationships to

align diplomatic efforts with national goals, often drawing on philosophical principles like ‘Confucian improvement’ to foster mutual respect (Qin, 2020).

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Diplomatic success relies on both verbal articulation and nonverbal communication, including tone, facial expressions, and gestures. These elements ensure that messages are understood within their ritualized context, fostering clarity and rapport (Bayram & Ta, 2019).

Public and digital public diplomacy take a more transparent, inclusive, and audience-centered approach, leveraging modern technologies and interactive communication.

Two-Way, Open Communication

Public diplomacy prioritizes two-way dialogue and engagement with foreign publics. This participatory approach builds mutual understanding and trust, contrasting with traditional top-down communication methods (Šahinpašić & Džihana, 2021).

Transparency and Openness

Digital technologies have made diplomacy more transparent, meeting public demand for accountability. Open communication fosters trust and credibility, allowing diplomats to showcase actions and intentions while reducing skepticism (Manor & Huang, 2022).

Audience Engagement and Real-Time Feedback

Digital public diplomacy enables real-time interaction, providing immediate feedback from global audiences. This dynamic feedback loop allows diplomats to adjust messaging strategies to align with public sentiment, optimizing communication effectiveness (Holmes, 2024).

Utilizing Diverse Digital Platforms

Beyond traditional platforms, digital diplomacy employs tools such as messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp), big data analytics, and visual content like memes to shape public perception

and drive engagement. Visual tools simplify complex issues, making diplomatic messages more accessible (Manor, 2023).

Direct Engagement with Foreign Publics

Public diplomacy emphasizes direct interaction with foreign audiences, fostering long-term goodwill and influencing global perceptions. This strategy builds relationships that advance national interests and promote cultural understanding (Byrne, 2024).

Convergence with Information Warfare

Public diplomacy increasingly overlaps with information warfare, leveraging digital platforms to shape narratives and counter disinformation. Methods include disinformation campaigns, psychological operations, and psychosemantic tactics to influence public perception, raising ethical considerations (Huang, 2024; Shafie, 2022).

While digital diplomacy expands reach and immediacy, it also faces challenges such as the proliferation of misinformation and ethical concerns. Diplomats must navigate these complexities to maintain credibility and adhere to ethical standards, ensuring that their actions support democratic values and international stability (Fasinu et al., 2024; Bjola et al., 2019).

Key Concepts

Traditional diplomacy is built on foundational principles and historical practices that prioritize negotiation, confidentiality, and state-to-state engagement. Below are the key concepts of traditional diplomacy:

Hard Power

Traditional diplomacy frequently employs hard power strategies, such as economic sanctions and military strength, to achieve national objectives and influence other states. Coercive means are central to securing agreements and protecting state interests.

Historical Development

Diplomacy has its origins in the ancient Near East, with early practices emerging alongside the development of writing and urbanization. Civilizations such as Babylon, Assyria, Greece, and Rome formalized diplomatic protocols, which were later expanded during the Renaissance with the establishment of embassies and structured procedures (Cohen, 2001).

Core Principles

Negotiation and dialogue remain central to traditional diplomacy, focusing on fostering peaceful relations between states. A fundamental principle is the inviolability of diplomats, ensuring their protection and freedom to communicate and negotiate, which is critical for maintaining trust and stability in international relations (Frey & Frey, 2023).

Communication and Language

Language serves as the primary tool for conveying intentions, resolving conflicts, and negotiating agreements. Traditional diplomacy relied on bilateral exchanges, though modern diplomacy incorporates multilateral discussions to address the complexities of global interactions (Sayin & Sayin, 2013; Cornago, 2022).

Diplomatic Traditions and Theories

Diplomacy has been shaped by intellectual traditions such as radical, rational, and realist theories, which influence how conflicts are managed and international relations are approached. The diplomatic tradition emphasizes maintaining international stability through negotiation and cooperation (Sharp, 2009).

Public and digital public diplomacy represent a shift from state-centric, confidential engagements to transparent, inclusive, and technologically driven approaches. Below are the key concepts of public and digital public diplomacy:

Soft Power

Public and digital public diplomacy rely on soft power—using persuasion, cultural influence, and attraction rather than coercion to shape international perceptions and achieve foreign policy goals (Tom, 2023; Zubair, 2023).

Engagement with Diverse Publics

Public diplomacy actively engages civil society, opinion leaders, and foreign publics to influence opinions, build trust, and foster goodwill. This approach allows nations to directly communicate their narratives and align foreign publics with their strategic interests (Byrne, 2024).

Image and Reputation Management

Maintaining a positive national image is integral to public diplomacy, as it helps shape global perceptions and align foreign audiences with a nation's goals. Reputation management is essential for fostering long-term international partnerships (Byrne, 2024).

Digital Tools and Platforms

Digital public diplomacy utilizes technologies such as social media, big data analytics, and network analysis to amplify diplomatic efforts. These tools enable states to communicate efficiently, reach global audiences, and shape narratives in real-time (Manor, 2023; Palieieva & Todoroshko, 2023).

Cultural Diplomacy via Social Media

Social media platforms play a central role in promoting cultural diplomacy. Digital content is used to showcase cultural values and engage foreign publics, creating spaces for interaction beyond traditional state-driven methods (Grincheva, 2023).

Strategic Direction in Public Diplomacy

Digital public diplomacy has become a strategic tool for protecting national interests and responding to global changes. Its rapid and flexible nature makes it an essential component of modern diplomacy (Palieieva & Todoroshko, 2023).

Challenges of Secrecy and Privacy

In the digital era, the boundaries of diplomatic secrecy have blurred. Increased public scrutiny and the risk of information leaks require diplomats to carefully navigate issues of privacy and information security to maintain credibility (Fletcher, 2023).

Diaspora Outreach

Digital technologies facilitate engagement with diaspora communities, expanding public

diplomacy beyond traditional Western audiences. This outreach strengthens ties with citizens abroad and builds support for national policies (Manor, 2023).

Evolution of Digital Diplomacy

The focus of digital diplomacy has shifted from simple engagement with foreign publics to managing information flows, crafting national narratives, and countering disinformation. This evolution reflects the complexities of modern geopolitical communication (Manor & Huang, 2022).

Soft Power vs. Propaganda

The digital age has blurred the distinction between soft power and propaganda. While soft power focuses on engagement and persuasion, propaganda often involves manipulation and disinformation. This convergence raises questions about the efficacy of soft power in an environment dominated by military and economic forces (Manor, 2023).

Semiotics and Visual Communication

Visual content, including images, memes, and infographics, has become a critical tool in digital diplomacy. However, oversimplifying complex issues into visual formats can lead to unrealistic public expectations and potential disillusionment with diplomatic processes (Manor & Huang, 2022).

Targeting Multiple Publics Across Platforms

Digital platforms allow diplomats to tailor messages for specific audiences. For instance, Facebook is used for general engagement, Twitter for elite discussions, and Instagram for younger audiences. Algorithm-based targeting ensures that messages resonate effectively with diverse publics (Manor, 2023).

Target Audience

Traditional diplomacy primarily focuses on state-centric communication, targeting government officials and state representatives as its key audience. However, the evolving geopolitical landscape has expanded its scope.

Government Officials and State Representatives

The primary audience of traditional diplomacy consists of government officials and diplomats, emphasizing state-to-state communication. Diplomats act as intermediaries between states, ensuring credible dialogue and negotiation, particularly in complex geopolitical contexts (Cornago, 2022; Lindsey, 2023b).

Transnational Audiences

Although traditional diplomacy historically focused on state representatives, the rise of global media and cultural exchanges has broadened its reach. Diplomats now consider the influence of international organizations, NGOs, and even the general public, whose opinions can shape diplomatic outcomes (Luo, 2016; Athique, 2014).

Effective traditional diplomacy requires a deep understanding of cultural nuances within target audiences. Crafting culturally resonant messages ensures that diplomatic initiatives are positively received and fosters better engagement in diverse geopolitical settings (Athique, 2014).

Public and digital public diplomacy significantly expand the range of target audiences, engaging non-state actors, broader publics, and emerging digital demographics to shape narratives and achieve strategic goals.

Broader Audience Engagement

Public diplomacy extends beyond traditional state actors to actively engage journalists, civil society organizations, and the general public. By influencing public perceptions, governments can shape narratives that align with foreign policy objectives on a global scale (Cull, 2019).

Civil Society and Opinion Leaders

A key target of public diplomacy includes civil society representatives, journalists, and scholars. These opinion leaders help amplify diplomatic messages, ensuring that they resonate across domestic and international spheres, thereby influencing public opinion and advancing foreign policy goals (Byrne, 2024).

Digital Natives

The rise of social media and digital communication tools has introduced a new demographic of digital natives. This group, accustomed to real-time interaction, significantly influences how states project their identities and respond to global events. Engaging with digital natives requires adaptive strategies to meet their expectations for instant, transparent communication (Holmes, 2024; Manor, 2023).

Diaspora Communities

Digital public diplomacy increasingly targets diaspora populations, leveraging digital technologies to maintain connections and influence perceptions abroad. By engaging diaspora communities, states strengthen ties with citizens overseas and use their influence to promote national interests, fostering a sense of unity and alignment with state policies (Manor, 2023).






DIPLOMACY VS PUBLIC DIPLOMACY		
ASPECT	TRADITIONAL & MODERN DIPLOMACY	PUBLIC & DIGITAL PUBLIC DIPLOMACY
 DEFINITION AND FOCUS	Diplomacy builds relations through dialogue (Frey & Frey, 2023). Traditional diplomacy involves confidential negotiations; modern diplomacy expands with broader goals and technology (Mulki et al., 2024).	Public Diplomacy: Strategic communication to influence foreign publics and advance policy goals using soft power like cultural exchanges and media (Huang, 2021b; Cull, 2019). Digital Public Diplomacy uses digital tools, such as social media, for two-way engagement with global audiences (Gilboa, 2008).
 METHODS	Relies on formal negotiations and state-centric interactions to achieve diplomatic goals. (Cornago, 2022), (Çiçek, 2022).	Utilizes media, cultural programs, and real-time digital engagement for broader outreach. (Pavón-Guinea & Codina, 2024), (Byrne, 2024)
 COMMUNICATION STYLE & APPROACH	Emphasizes one-way, confidential communication primarily among state representatives. (Frey & Frey, 2023), (Aljarelah, 2024), (Jönsson & Hall, 2003).	Promotes open, two-way communication through digital platforms to foster transparency and dialogue.(Šahinpašić & Džihana, 2021), (Manor & Huang, 2022), (Holmes, 2024).
 KEY CONCEPTS	Based on hard power strategies, including economic leverage and military influence.(Cohen, 2001), (Sayin & Sayin, 2013); Cornago, 2022).	Leverages soft power, using cultural influence and compelling communication to build positive relationships.(Tom, 2023), (Zubair, 2023), (Manor, 2023); (Palieieva & Todoroshko, 2023)
 TARGET AUDIENCE	Primarily targets government officials and diplomats.(Lindsey, 2023b), (Luo, 2016), (Athique, 2014).	Reaches a broader audience, including civil society, journalists, scholars, and digital natives.(Cull, 2019), (Holmes, 2024); Manor, 2023), (Byrne, 2024).

Table: Comparative Analysis of Traditional, Modern, and Public Digital Diplomacy

3 Conceptual Framework

A comprehensive framework that integrates conceptual insights and robust research methodologies. The theoretical foundation is grounded in the principles of public diplomacy

and digital transformation, with a particular focus on the strategic adoption of digital technologies by the foreign ministries of Russia and Ukraine. Key activities include social media engagement, virtual meetings, and the use of digital communication platforms, all of which play a vital role in shaping global public opinion and participating in information warfare.

Public diplomacy, defined as the strategic use of direct communication by international actors to convey and implement foreign policy objectives, is essential for influencing international public opinion (Huang, 2021, p.204). With the integration of digital technologies, particularly social media, public diplomacy enables broader outreach and real-time interaction with global audiences, making it a critical tool in contemporary international relations. In the context of conflicts, public diplomacy assumes an even greater significance in shaping global perceptions of warfare.

Digital diplomacy refers to the strategic application of digital technologies by foreign ministries and international organizations to engage global audiences and advance foreign policy goals. This includes activities such as social media interaction, virtual conferences, and digital communication tools, which enhance transparency, participation, and reach in diplomatic efforts (Manor & Huang, 2022b).

Information warfare, on the other hand, involves the deliberate use of information to achieve military, political, or societal objectives, often through the manipulation of perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors on a global scale. The evolution of mass communication technologies has transformed traditional information warfare into digital warfare, where operations are increasingly conducted within the digital domain (Romanyuk & Kovalenko, 2023).

This framework highlights the interconnected roles of public diplomacy, digital diplomacy, and information warfare in the modern geopolitical landscape, illustrating how advancements in digital technologies have reshaped strategies for influence and engagement on the global stage.

Conceptual Framework: Historical–Discursive Analytical Method in Public Diplomacy (lessons from Zhao Alexandre Huang)

This conceptual framework introduces an interpretative sociological approach to study the formation and evolution of public diplomacy institutions, focusing on how governments rationalize and institutionalize public diplomacy through a historical-discursive lens. (Huang, 2021d). A historical–discursive analytical method for studying the formulation of public diplomacy institutions.

Cognitive Analysis in Public Policy

Cognitive analysis plays a central role in understanding how governments frame and formulate public diplomacy strategies. It identifies the cognitive and normative frames that underpin policy-making, linking these frames to broader historical and institutional contexts. This analysis allows us to explore how ideas, beliefs, and values shape public diplomacy, guiding the direction of institutional change.

Historical-Discursive Approach

The historical-discursive method integrates elements of historical institutionalism and discursive analysis to study the institutionalization of public diplomacy. This approach examines how political discourse, historical events, and social context interact to shape the establishment and evolution of public diplomacy institutions. By analyzing official narratives, political speeches, and diplomatic rhetoric, the framework uncovers how governments justify and legitimize their foreign policy objectives through discourse.

Institutionalization of Public Diplomacy

The framework explores the dynamic relationships between institutions and political actors, highlighting the continuous process of institutional change in public diplomacy. It demonstrates how governments use rhetorical and discursive practices to institutionalize public diplomacy, adapting to new geopolitical contexts and evolving social expectations.

This conceptual framework presents the historical-discourse analytical method as a powerful tool for understanding the development of public diplomacy institutions. By integrating

cognitive analysis with historical and discursive perspectives, the framework sheds light on how governments shape, legitimize, and evolve their public diplomacy efforts over time.

Conceptual Framework: Digitalization of Public Diplomacy (lessons from Ilan Manor)

Ilan Manor defines the digitalization of diplomacy as an ongoing process that reshapes four key areas of diplomacy: institutions, practitioners, audiences, and practices.

Digitalization as a Process: Diplomacy evolves with digital technologies, requiring diplomats and Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) to adapt continuously to new tools and strategies.

Impact on Institutions: MFAs integrate social media and digital platforms, reshaping policies and procedures to engage in real-time, data-driven diplomacy.

Practitioner Shifts: Diplomats engage more openly with online publics and non-state actors, forming temporary alliances and using digital platforms to advance diplomatic goals.

Audience Transformation: Social media enables two-way communication, fostering transparency and interaction with global audiences.

Real-Time Diplomacy: Digital diplomacy becomes collaborative and networked, emphasizing speed and engagement during crises and international events.

Role of Social Media

Manor emphasizes that social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) are central tools for MFAs to shape global narratives, counter disinformation, and engage with international audiences. These platforms facilitate real-time communication and allow direct, two-way interaction, transforming diplomacy into a more transparent and participatory practice. Social media helps diplomats reach global audiences quickly, managing crises and building broader networks. (Manor, 2023).

Conceptual Framework	
Huang's Historical-Discourse Analytical Method	Manor's Digitalization of Public Diplomacy
<p>Focus: Huang's method examines how public diplomacy institutions evolve over time through historical narratives and discourse. It highlights the cognitive frames and normative structures that influence policy-making, helping to explain the institutionalization of public diplomacy.</p> <p>Application: Useful for analyzing the long-term institutional changes in public diplomacy, such as how governments use historical discourse to rationalize foreign policy. For example, public diplomacies of both states can be understood through its historical narratives and strategic use of rhetoric to shape international perceptions.</p> <p>Key Insight: Public diplomacy is shaped by historical legacies and the evolving discourse used by governments to legitimize their foreign policy.</p>	<p>Focus: Manor's framework explores the transformative impact of digital technologies on public diplomacy. It emphasizes how social media and digital tools like Twitter and Facebook enable real-time diplomacy, reshaping diplomatic practices and global engagement.</p> <p>Application: Focuses on how governments use digital platforms for real-time engagement with global publics, countering disinformation and shaping international opinions. Ukraine and Russian strategic use of social media during geopolitical conflicts exemplifies this shift to digital diplomacy.</p> <p>Key Insight: Digital platforms have shifted diplomacy from hierarchical, one-way communication to participatory and transparent interactions with global audiences.</p>

Table: Conceptual Frameworks for Analyzing Public Diplomacy

4 Research Framework and Research Methodology: Comprehensive Approach

Research Framework

Historical and Institutional Overview: a historical-discursive methodology serves as the underpinning of the study, delineating the development and institutional background of public diplomacy in Russia and Ukraine. This approach offers a framework for comprehending the changes in public diplomacy tactics and policy-making procedures that impact present digital interactions.

Public Diplomacy Digital Transformation examines the shift of Ukraine and Russia's public diplomacy strategies to digital platforms, with a particular focus on platform X and Facebook.

Comparative Analysis: the digital public diplomacy efforts between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine and Russia for engaging in framing the war on social media platforms. Highlight similarities and differences in their approaches, strategies, and narrative within the specified period of 2022-2024.

Digital Diplomacy in Action: the strategic deployment of digital diplomacy by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Ukraine and Russia on platform X and Facebook, emphasizing their engagement in information warfare, including critical digital campaigns and narratives during the 2022-2024 timeframe, aimed at influencing international public opinion and furthering geopolitical interests.

Research Methodology

The research being undertaken involves a detailed and comprehensive analysis of official documents and digital media outputs from the Foreign Ministries of both Russia and Ukraine. This methodical documentary examination is meticulously crafted to illuminate the strategic and institutional foundations underpinning their digital diplomacy initiatives. Through an exhaustive review of these primary sources, the study aims to elucidate the frameworks that are pivotal in shaping their geopolitical engagements, with a particular focus on understanding the fundamental principles and operational applications of their digital diplomacy strategies. This in-depth scrutiny holds substantial academic importance as it crucially contributes to identifying the specific manners in which these nations utilize digital platforms within the wider context of their international relations and policy-making processes.

Theoretical Foundation with the historical-discursive approach, the strategic foundations and cognitive mechanisms underpinning Russia and Ukraine's digital public diplomacy. It merges historical institutionalism with cognitive policy analysis to scrutinize the strategic use of digital & public diplomacy, forming the analytical basis for investigating narrative strategies in the digital age.

Document Analysis of the official documents & digital media outputs from the Russian & Ukrainian Foreign Ministries. The goal is to delineate the strategic and legal bases of their digital diplomacy efforts, identifying frameworks employed in their geopolitical engagements.

Digital Nethnography (Fieldwork methods): Fieldwork conducted in the context of this research is primarily focused on engaging in nethnographic observations and participatory

analysis activities carried out across various digital platforms, with a particular emphasis placed on platforms such as X and Facebook. The use of this methodological framework is extremely important as it plays a crucial role in gathering real-time data on the use of these digital platforms in the context of information warfare, and their impact on shaping international narratives. Through the application of ethnographic observations and participatory methodologies, the research endeavor is able to acquire a comprehensive and in-depth comprehension of the strategic utilization of these digital spaces to shape global perceptions and partake in conflicts related to narratives. This dual-pronged approach serves as a valuable asset, enabling the generation of a robust dataset that effectively captures the fluid and constantly evolving strategies employed in the realm of digital diplomacy.

Analytical Framework: This framework facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the complexities inherent in the application of digital diplomacy strategies. It employs a mixed-methods approach, combining social network analysis, statistical methodologies, and narrative techniques. This integrated methodological framework is crucial for elucidating the intricate dynamics and strategic subtleties that define the utilization of digital platforms in geopolitical contexts.

Particularly, the analysis concentrates on the ways Russia and Ukraine utilize digital platforms for shaping international narratives and conducting information warfare. The research contributes to the field by providing insights through cognitive policy analysis, thereby enhancing understanding of the strategic deployment of digital diplomacy by both nations during conflict situations.

This comprehensive methodological framework is essential to elucidate the strategies and impacts of digital diplomacy implemented by Russia and Ukraine. Specifically, this approach is indispensable for addressing the research questions posed in this study, which seek to uncover the underlying institutional and policy frameworks that support the public diplomacy efforts of both nations, particularly in their use of social media platforms like X and Facebook from 2022 to 2024.

The inquiry into how these frameworks inform and shape the strategies for digital engagement is pivotal for understanding the dynamics of digital diplomacy. Additionally,

the investigation into the strategic use of digital platforms by the Foreign Ministries of Russia and Ukraine as instruments of geopolitical strategy is crucial for discerning how these platforms are utilized within their broader information warfare tactics to influence international perspectives and manage geopolitical disputes. This aspect is deeply explored through references such as Manor & Huang (2022b) who discuss the strategic use of digital technologies in public diplomacy and Zinovieva (2022) who examines the nuances of cyber diplomacy under great power competition.

Moreover, the exploration of the key differences in the utilization of digital platforms for information warfare between Russia's and Ukraine's Foreign Ministries provides essential insights into how these distinctions impact the effectiveness of digital diplomacy in modifying international perceptions and narratives. This nuanced examination helps reveal the efficacy of digital diplomacy strategies in the complex landscape of international relations, emphasizing the transformative role of digital platforms in contemporary geopolitical engagements. The integration of frameworks from Bjola & Manor in "The Oxford Handbook of Digital Diplomacy" (2024) and the insights from Huang (2021) regarding the historical-discursive analytical methods for studying public diplomacy institutions are particularly valuable for this analysis.

Additionally, the empirical rigor brought by the inclusion of quantitative techniques, supported by Manor & Huang (2022b), ensures a robust analysis of the effectiveness and scope of digital diplomacy efforts. This methodological expansion is further justified by the work of Romanyuk & Kovalenko (2023), which delves into information warfare tactics and their implications in the digital realm.

Research Framework and Research Methodology: Comprehensive Approach	
Research Framework	Details
Historical and Institutional Overview	Examines the historical and institutional framework of Ukraine & Russia public diplomacy institutions, including their foreign policy decision-making processes and the evolution of public diplomacy strategies.
Public Diplomacy Digital Transformation	Analyzes the shift to digital platforms, particularly platform X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, and how public diplomacy strategies have adapted to these platforms.
Digital Diplomacy in Action	Focuses on the strategic deployment of digital diplomacy by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs highlighting information warfare campaigns and narratives during 2022-2024.
Comparative Analysis	Conducts an analysis of digital diplomacies of both states, emphasizing their strategies, approaches, and narratives on social media platforms to influence global perceptions.
Research Methodology	Details
Theoretical Foundation	with the historical-discursive approach, the strategic foundations and cognitive mechanisms underpinning digital public diplomacies. It merges historical institutionalism with cognitive policy analysis to scrutinize the strategic use of digital & public diplomacy, forming the analytical basis for investigating narrative strategies in the digital age.
Analysis	of the official documents & digital media outputs from the Foreign Ministries of both states. The goal is to define the strategic bases of its digital diplomacy efforts, identifying frameworks employed in their geopolitical engagements
Fieldwork methods	the nethnographic observations & participatory analysis on digital platforms, alongside a critical examination of relevant literature.
Analytical Framework	with a mixed-methods approach, incorporating social network, statistical, and narrative analyses to understand the strategies of digital diplomacy during the war.

Table: Research Framework and Methodology for Analyzing Digital Public Diplomacy

5 Current Insights from Ongoing Research

RUSSIA

Preliminary findings: Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: Cultural Diplomacy and Public Engagement	
Main Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focus efforts on supporting and promoting the Russian language and the cultures of the peoples of the Russian Federation in foreign countries, emphasizing their unique contributions to the cultural and civilizational diversity of the modern world and fostering partnership among civilizations.● Strengthen civil society institutions' resources and initiatives in public diplomacy to enhance international cultural and humanitarian cooperation as a means of fostering inter-civilizational dialogue, achieving mutual understanding, and promoting interreligious dialogue.
Core Policy Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The fundamental goal is to build and strengthen relationships of understanding and trust with foreign countries, fostering equal and mutually beneficial partnerships.● Increase Russia's participation in the system of international cultural cooperation and integrate the country into the global cultural landscape.● The presence of Russian culture abroad, as well as the presence of foreign cultures in Russia, should contribute to securing Russia's rightful place on the global stage, reflecting its historical legacy, geopolitical position, and overall capabilities.
Strategic Approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Policies in international cultural and humanitarian cooperation should aim to project a comprehensive image of Russia as a country that preserves its rich historical cultural traditions while simultaneously fostering a dynamic cultural life characterized by diversity, creative freedom, pluralism of opinions, and the absence of censorship.● Cultural connections should reflect the federal structure of the Russian state, recognizing the equal dignity of all the cultures of its diverse population.● Effective policy implementation in this domain requires alignment of interests between central and regional authorities while maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation.

Table: Key Objectives and Strategies of Russia's Foreign Policy in Cultural Diplomacy and Public Engagement

Preliminary findings: Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation: Cultural Diplomacy and Public Engagement	
Russian Federation's Foreign Policy Concept (March 31, 2023)	
	<p>"43. In order to strengthen Russia's role in the global humanitarian sphere, shape a positive image abroad, reinforce the global standing of the Russian language, counteract the anti-Russian campaigns led by unfriendly foreign states and alliances, as well as to enhance mutual understanding and build trust among nations, the Russian Federation intends to prioritize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 3) Developing public diplomacy mechanisms involving individuals and <i>institutions from civil society</i> who are positively inclined towards Russia, as well as <i>political scientists, experts, scholars, youth groups, volunteer organizations, and other social movements.</i>"
	<p>(Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation // Presidential Decree No. 229, March 31, 2023., n.d.).</p>
Key Directions of Russia's International Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation Policy	
	<p>In the current critical phase of global development, and particularly in response to active efforts to counter propaganda campaigns aimed at "containing" Russia, cultural diplomacy has gained even greater importance. As a unique tool of "soft power," cultural diplomacy can effectively bolster the country's international authority and serve as compelling evidence of Russia's resurgence as a free and democratic state.</p>

Table: Key Elements of Russia's Foreign Policy Concept in Cultural Diplomacy and Public Engagement

**Preliminary findings:
Concept of Russia's Humanitarian Policy Abroad: Utilizing Media and Modern Technologies to Shape an Objective Perception of Russia on the International Stage**

- **70.** Mass media play a significant role in shaping the image of a state on the international arena. In the context of globalization, media can foster cultural integration, primarily through the Internet, and contribute to the development of dialogue and mutual understanding between representatives of different cultures. Mass media serve as a powerful tool for influencing public opinion, disseminating information, and fulfilling an educational function.
- **71.** It is essential to develop international cooperation among information agencies, organize **journalistic exchanges, broadcast Russian television channels aimed at international audiences, including compatriots living abroad, and promote the distribution of Russian periodicals in foreign countries.**
- **72.** Special emphasis should be placed on the role of **Russian mass media** in implementing Russia's humanitarian policy and shaping its objective perception abroad. Russian television channels and "new media" (**social networks, messengers, and blogs**) are the most effective tools of "soft power," promoting Russian culture, advancing the Russian language abroad, and providing informational support for various Russian humanitarian events.
- **73.** It is crucial to actively communicate to foreign audiences the significant achievements of Russian companies in the field of information and communication technologies, including digital education. The high level of development in digital services and communication technologies can positively influence the perception of Russia as a digital state on the international stage.
- **74.** The widespread adoption of modern digital technologies creates new opportunities for showcasing Russia's humanitarian activities abroad, providing foreign audiences with accurate information about our country, and allowing citizens of other nations to remotely participate in various **cultural, scientific, and sports events** held in Russia, access education in Russian, and enhance their qualifications.
- **75.** Expanding Russia's online presence and **engaging with Russian-speaking users** and international Internet audiences is crucial for promoting domestic achievements in the humanitarian field, fostering dialogue, and increasing interest in **Russia's history and culture**. Promoting Russian digital educational platforms and social networks abroad will significantly enhance the effectiveness of Russia's "digital diplomacy" tools."

(Concept of Russia's Humanitarian Policy Abroad // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. September 14, 2022. (n.d.).

Table: Russia's Humanitarian Policy Abroad: Media and Digital Tools for Shaping International Perceptions

Preliminary findings - literature review: Russia: 1/2

Key Insights on Russian Public Diplomacy & Paradiplomacy

Strategic Goals of Public Diplomacy

- Russia leverages cultural exchanges, language promotion, and educational initiatives to project soft power and counter Western narratives.

Core Strategies in Public Diplomacy

- **Language & Cultural Promotion:** Enhancing global ties by promoting the Russian language and supporting Russian-speaking communities abroad.
- **Engagement with Civil Society:** Involving NGOs and cultural institutions to shape perceptions through cultural exchanges and educational programs (Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 2023).
- **Digital Diplomacy:** Utilizing platforms like VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Twitter, and Facebook to counter disinformation and engage audiences. Influencers and state media are mobilized during geopolitical tensions, e.g., the Ukraine conflict.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Emphasizing traditional values and inter-civilizational dialogue to influence regions with significant Russian-speaking populations (Antoncheva, 2024).

Paradiplomacy: Regional and Subnational Strategies

- **Paradiplomacy** involves subnational entities (regions, cities) in international cooperation through both formal and informal channels, often based on cultural and historical ties.

Key Forms of Paradiplomacy

- **Positive Regional Image:** Building a favorable image through official visits and diplomatic engagements.
- **Sister City Agreements:** Facilitating cultural and economic collaborations between cities.
- **International Participation:** Engaging in global forums to extend regional influence.
- **Informal Activities:** Hosting international conferences and exhibitions to promote regional interests.

Table: Key Insights and Strategies in Russian Public Diplomacy and Paradiplomacy

Preliminary findings - literature review: Russia 2/2

"Turn to the East" Strategy

- A strategic shift towards Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East to diversify export markets and establish new trade regimes, particularly in energy.
 - **Logistics & Transport:** Developing new networks and corridors.
 - **Scientific Cooperation:** Promoting research and technological partnerships.
 - **Financial Independence:** Establishing new financial and insurance infrastructures.

Integration of Public Diplomacy and Paradiplomacy

- The integration of public diplomacy with paradiplomacy enhances Russia's soft power, especially in border regions and key internal territories.
- This approach leverages regional resources for transnational engagement beyond traditional state-level diplomacy.

Key Focus Areas

- **Economic Paradiplomacy:** Regions focus on expanding exports, attracting investments, and organizing international business missions.
- **Spiritual & Social Diplomacy:** Cultural, spiritual, and educational initiatives build trust with foreign communities (Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 2023).

Space Diplomacy (Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 2023).

New Frontiers in Public Diplomacy: Russia is expanding its public diplomacy efforts into the realm of space, using space exploration and technology as instruments of international engagement. By fostering collaborations in space missions and scientific exchanges, Russia seeks to enhance its global influence and showcase its technological prowess.

Scientific Diplomacy (Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, 2023).

A Tool for Foreign Policy: Russia leverages scientific diplomacy as a strategic instrument to strengthen international relations. This involves the promotion of research collaborations, joint scientific projects, and the exchange of knowledge to build trust and foster diplomatic ties, especially in areas where political channels may be limited.

Gas or Energy Diplomacy (Warda, 2023)

Energy as a Diplomatic Lever: In times of global instability, Russia uses its vast energy resources, particularly natural gas, as a tool of influence. Gas diplomacy is employed to secure geopolitical interests, negotiate favorable trade agreements, and establish strategic dependencies, particularly in regions heavily reliant on Russian energy supplies.

Table: Russia's Strategic Approaches in Public Diplomacy and Paradiplomacy

Summary: Strategic Overview of Russia's Public and Digital Diplomacy	
Aspect	Details
Main Objectives	Promote Russian language and culture abroad. Strengthen civil society initiatives to foster inter-civilizational dialogue and international cooperation.
Core Policy Goals	Build trustful and equal partnerships with foreign countries. Increase Russia's participation in global cultural cooperation. Expand the presence of Russian culture abroad to enhance Russia's influence on the global stage.
Strategic Approach	Focus on international cultural and humanitarian cooperation. Reflect cultural diversity and absence of censorship in Russia's public diplomacy. Align cultural initiatives with Russia's federal structure and regional interests.
Key Focus Areas in Public Diplomacy	Leverage cultural exchanges, language promotion, and education. Utilize digital platforms (VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, Facebook, X) to counter disinformation. Emphasize traditional values and civilizational dialogue.
Key Diplomatic Strategies	
"Turn to the East"	Diversify trade with Asia, Africa, and Latin America
Paradiplomacy	Engage regions and cities in international cooperation beyond state-level diplomacy. Utilize Sister City agreements and informal activities to promote regional interests.
Space & Scientific Diplomacy	Expand public diplomacy in space, science, and technology collaboration to boost global influence. Use scientific diplomacy to strengthen research partnerships and diplomatic ties.
Gas/Energy Diplomacy	Leverage energy resources to secure geopolitical influence and favorable trade agreements.
Media & Digital Diplomacy	Promote Russian narratives using mass media, digital platforms, and social networks. Focus on countering anti-Russian campaigns through online engagement and information dissemination.
Humanitarian Policy Abroad	Emphasize international cooperation through media and modern communication technologies. Use digital services to shape perceptions of Russia as a digital state.
Spiritual & Social Diplomacy	Cultural, spiritual, and educational initiatives build trust with foreign communities

Table: Strategic Overview of Russia's Public and Digital Diplomacy Approaches

Strategic Overview of Russia's Public and Digital Diplomacy: Examples



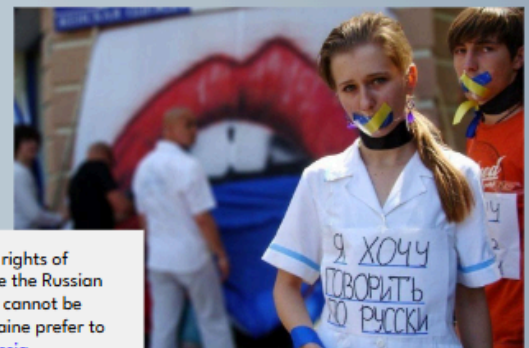
The 16th BRICS Summit was held from October 22 to 24, 2024, in Kazan, Russia. Existing BRICS Member Countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa; New BRICS Members (joining in 2024): Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Argentina. Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



The First Ministerial Conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum, held on November 9-10, 2024, in Sochi, Russia, saw the participation of delegations from all 54 African countries. Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



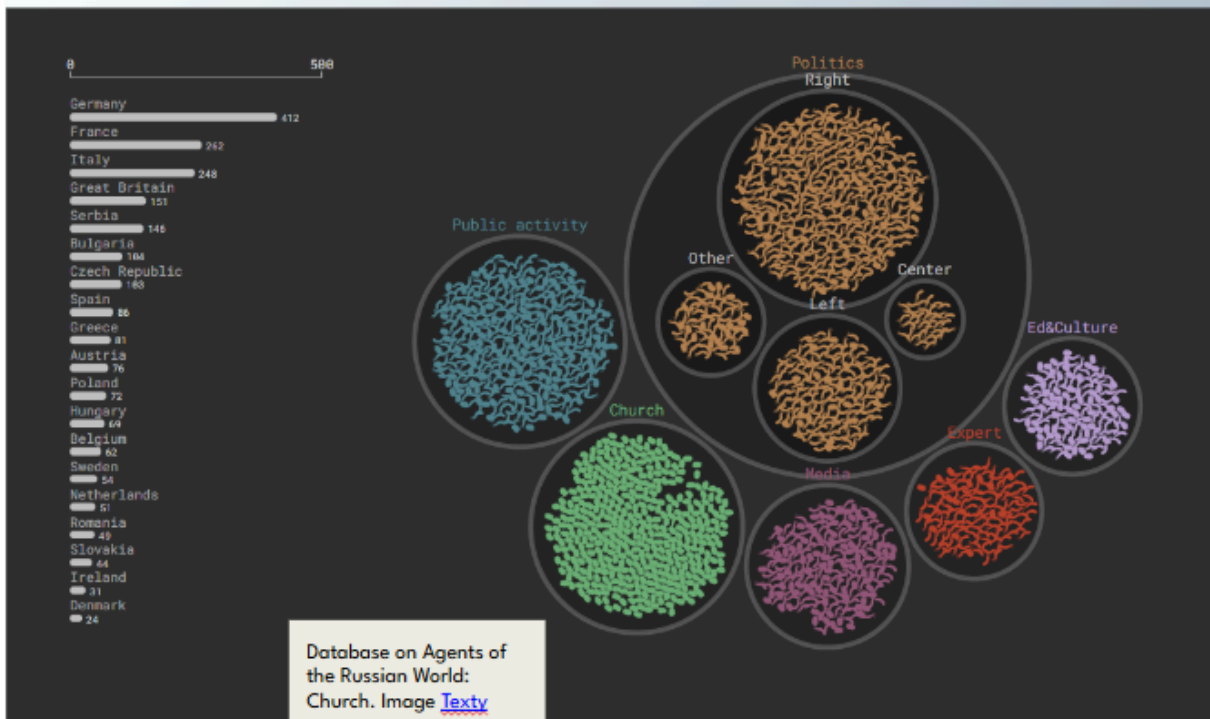
The 18th International Film Festival "#RussianDiaspora," held from November 7 to 14, 2024, with over 50 films dedicated to 20th-century Russian history and the heritage of the Russian world. . Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



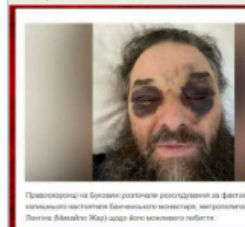
In Ukraine, the practice of "strangling" the rights of Russian speakers, especially the right to use the Russian language, continues. The Russian language cannot be destroyed. More and more residents of Ukraine prefer to communicate in Russian. . Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



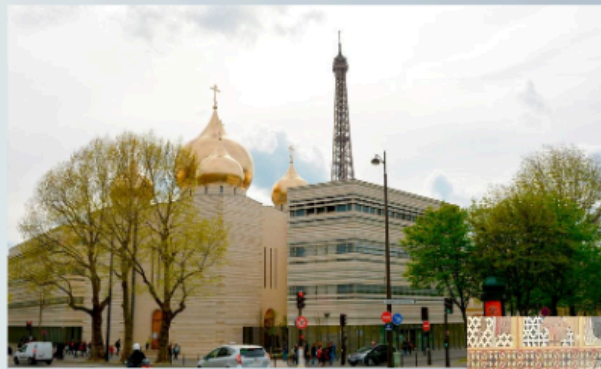
#Lavrov: "Throughout all times, the Russian Orthodox Church has stood by its flock, inspiring heroic deeds in defense of the Fatherland. For diplomats, the efforts of the ROC are particularly valuable, as they are aimed at uniting the Orthodox world, defending historical truth, and promoting our culture." Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



Russian Orthodox Church in Africa. Number of parishes and churches -197. Image: [Texty](#)



On January 22, neo-Nazis in Kiev attacked Metropolitan Longin of Bancheny, who in the 1990s, played a crucial role in saving hundreds of children. We urge specialised international organisations to condemn Kiev's repression against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



We are witnessing difficult times for the Russian and Ukrainian peoples, with nationalist forces in Kyiv since 2014 imposing a neo-Nazi ideology. Photo: [Le Centre Spirituel et Culturel Orthodoxe Russe](#)

Russian Embassy in the Netherlands: On November 11, the "Altro coro" contemporary choral ensemble, led by A.S. Ryzhinsky, Rector of the Gnessin Russian Academy of Music, performed at the Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Church in Rotterdam. Photo: [FB Russian Embassy in the Netherlands](#)





President #Putin during talks with DPM Aleksandar #Vulin: Russia plays a crucial role in supplying Serbia with energy resources, doing so efficiently & at a high level, always in a timely manner & on favourable terms for Serbia. Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



A third batch of Russian humanitarian aid (24 tons) has been delivered to Beirut by plane: Essential supplies, Medicines, Baby food and other products. The return flight brought 89 Russian citizens back to Moscow Photo: [X MID Russia](#)

The US forced Europeans to stop energy imports from Russia and sign contracts with US liquefied natural gas (#LNG) exporters, but failed to guarantee uninterrupted supplies. The US has discredited itself as a reliable energy supplier. Photo: [X MID Russia](#)



The US has paused the approval process for new LNG export contracts overseas

On October 11, 2024 a concert by the Mariinsky Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Valery Gergiev, took place at the Atatürk Cultural Center in Istanbul. The performance by the Russian orchestra was warmly received by the Istanbul audience. Photo: [X MID Russia](#)

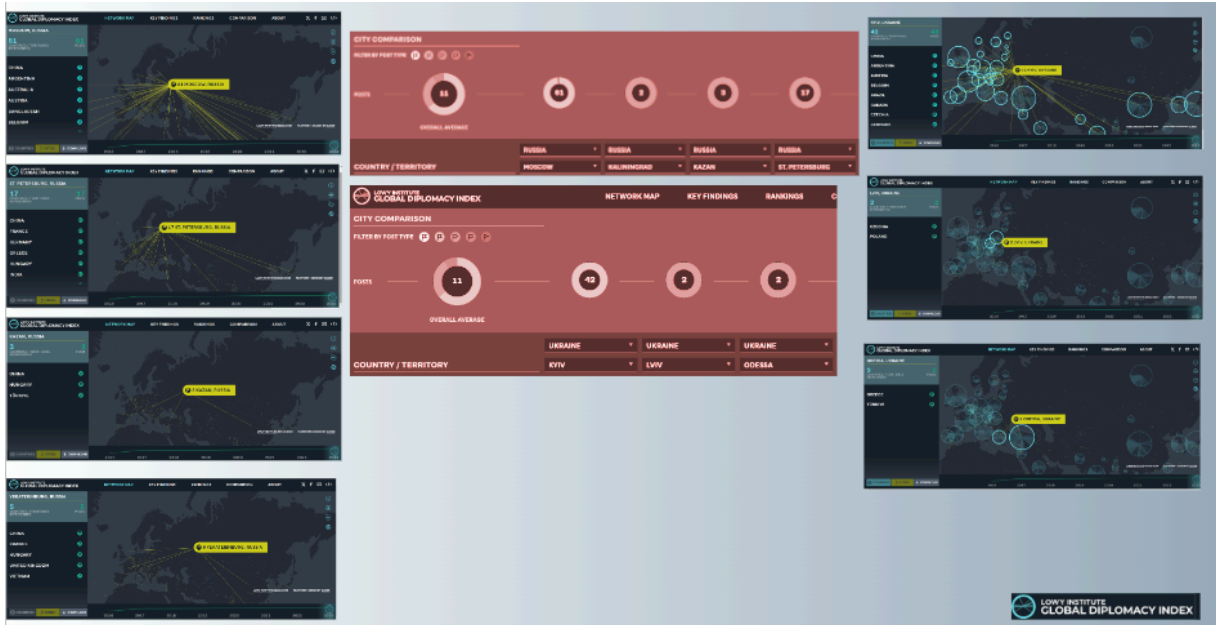


Table: "Global Diplomacy Index: Comparative Analysis of Russian and Ukrainian Diplomatic Networks"

Russian Cities in Diplomacy (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Kaliningrad)

Ukrainian Cities in Diplomacy (Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa):

Russia's Diplomatic Network: Russia demonstrates a broader global reach with a higher number of embassies and consulates, reflecting its historical and geopolitical positioning.

Ukraine's Diplomatic Network: Ukraine's network is more concentrated in Europe, emphasizing partnerships and support in the context of its ongoing geopolitical challenges.

Russia outpaces Ukraine in terms of overall diplomatic presence, leveraging its historical ties and superpower status.

Ukrainian diplomatic efforts prioritize strategic alliances, especially in Europe, while leveraging regional hubs to enhance cultural and trade relations.

Russia's public and digital diplomacy have undergone significant transformation, reflecting the demands of a shifting global communication landscape and the geopolitical complexities of the Russia-Ukraine war. Digital tools, advanced technologies, and strategic narratives have become central to Russia's efforts to project influence, counter Western narratives, and adapt to the challenges of contemporary international relations.

Digital diplomacy serves as a cornerstone of Russia's foreign policy, integrating populism-driven approaches, data analytics, and cybersecurity measures. This multifaceted strategy enables Russia to shape public perception, maintain psychological advantages, and enhance its ability to forecast foreign policy outcomes. However, despite notable successes, challenges such as ethical concerns, overreliance on disinformation, and countermeasures from adversaries threaten the long-term viability of these approaches.

Key Features of Russia's Digital Diplomacy:

Strategic Narratives and Information Warfare:

Russia strategically crafts narratives that portray democracy as flawed, emphasize its resurgence, and frame the West as an existential threat. These narratives aim to resonate

with targeted audiences, create divisions within Western societies, and foster alignment with Russian interests (Oates, 2024).

Cyber Activities:

The cyberspace domain is central to Russian information warfare. Cyber operations disrupt networks, steal sensitive data, and spread false information, often in tandem with kinetic military actions, as observed during the Ukraine conflict. These operations amplify disruption and extend Russia's influence in digital spaces (Radu, 2022).

Information Manipulation and Propaganda:

Disinformation, propaganda, and manipulation are key pillars of Russia's information operations. These tactics are employed to weaken societal resilience, destabilize opponents, and bolster Russia's geopolitical standing. Active measures enable Russia to conduct anti-Western campaigns that are difficult to counter, enhancing its narrative dominance (Olchowski, 2022).

Data Diplomacy and Cybersecurity:

Russia's use of "data diplomacy" incorporates AI and big data analytics to influence foreign audiences, manage information flows, and block adversarial content. Its emphasis on cybersecurity and information sovereignty highlights its prioritization of control over digital platforms in contrast to the multistakeholder models favored in the West.

Integration of Public and Digital Diplomacy:

Through platforms like VKontakte, Facebook etc, Russia engages global audiences and counters disinformation, particularly during geopolitical tensions such as the Ukraine conflict. This integration extends to leveraging cultural and regional ties, exemplified by its paradiplomacy efforts and "Turn to the East" strategy targeting Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Despite its successes, Russia's digital diplomacy faces significant challenges, including the need for more diverse communication strategies and the growing global focus on countering disinformation. Ethical concerns, such as the use of propaganda and manipulation, continue to attract criticism, potentially undermining Russia's credibility on the international stage.

In conclusion, Russia's public and digital diplomacy reflect a sophisticated and adaptive response to the evolving demands of modern international relations. By combining traditional soft power elements with digital innovation and information warfare strategies, Russia has effectively positioned itself as a key influencer in global geopolitics. However, the ethical and operational challenges it faces underscore the complexities of maintaining influence in an increasingly interconnected and scrutinized global environment.

UKRAINE

Ukraine's Pre-2022 Invasion: Stages of the Developments of the Public Diplomacy			
Stage	Years	Description	Key Milestones
Early Stages	Pre-2005	Ukraine's public diplomacy was fragmented, focusing on educational and cultural promotion without a unified branding strategy.	Cultural-Information Centres (2006): Established by Presidential Decree No. 142/2006 to promote international cooperation in culture, education, science, tourism, and sports while maintaining ties with the Ukrainian diaspora. 2007 – Euro 2012 Promotion: Ukraine's preparation for co-hosting Euro 2012 with Poland began in 2007. This was a significant public diplomacy initiative aimed at improving Ukraine's global visibility and tourism potential through sports diplomacy. Various campaigns were launched to promote Ukraine's cultural heritage and infrastructure development to attract international attention.
Strategic Shift	2005–2010	Ukraine adopted a structured approach, launching state-led initiatives to improve its international image, particularly in cultural, tourism, and European integration projects.	2007 – "Ukraine – The Open Door" Campaign: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated the "Ukraine – The Open Door" campaign in 2007. This public diplomacy effort aimed to promote Ukraine as an attractive destination for tourism and business. Cultural festivals, exhibitions, and media outreach programs were organized globally to enhance Ukraine's image abroad. 2007 – Open Ukraine Foundation: In July 2007, Arseniy Yatsenyuk established the Open Ukraine Foundation. This foundation aimed to strengthen Ukraine's public diplomacy by promoting the country's international reputation. Key initiatives included organizing the Kyiv Security Forum, an annual event that brought together regional and international actors to discuss security issues.
Brand Development	2010–2013	Ukraine introduced the "Ukraine" brand to boost its international presence through global events such as Euro 2012, aiming to attract foreign investment and improve its global standing.	2010 – Introduction of the "Ukraine" Brand: In 2010, Ukraine introduced the "Ukraine" brand, a significant public diplomacy initiative aimed at boosting its international presence. This initiative sought to attract foreign investment and improve Ukraine's global standing through participation in large-scale events like Euro 2012. The brand also promoted Ukraine as a country open to tourism, business, and international cooperation. 2011–2012 – Promotion of Euro 2012: Continuing from the earlier efforts, in 2011 and 2012, the promotion of Euro 2012 remained a central part of Ukraine's public diplomacy. The tournament not only brought global attention to Ukraine's ability to host international events but also provided a platform for promoting Ukrainian culture and enhancing its international image.
Strategic Renewal	2014–2020	After the 2014 geopolitical crisis, Ukraine's public diplomacy focused on countering Russian aggression and disinformation, updating its communication platforms for global outreach.	Sustainable Development Strategy "Ukraine-2020" (2015): Promoted the "Ukraine" brand globally. Creation of Public Diplomacy Department (2015): Formed to manage Ukraine's international image-building efforts. Social Media Rebranding (2015–2016): Revamped social media presence. Concept of Promoting Ukraine Globally (2016): Aimed at advancing Ukraine's political, economic, and socio-cultural interests. Doctrine of Information Security (2017): Focused on countering Russian disinformation. Ukraine NOW (2018): National brand to promote investment and tourism.
Communicative Engagement Era	2021–2024	Focused on global engagement, particularly with African and Asian nations, while enhancing Ukraine's image through digital platforms.	Public Diplomacy Strategy (2021): A five-year strategy focused on institutionalizing public diplomacy efforts through cultural, economic, and digital platforms.

Table: Stages of Development in Ukraine's Public Diplomacy: Pre-2022 Evolution

Ukraine's Communicative Engagement Era: 2021–2024	
Direction	Description
Cultural Diplomacy	- Aims to improve recognition of Ukraine's cultural diversity and create a positive attitude abroad. - Promotes national achievements and fosters trust and understanding.
Expert Diplomacy	- Involves systematic work with expert communities, think tanks, and research institutions. - Aims to influence foreign policy through formal and informal channels.
Economic Diplomacy	- Focuses on promoting Ukraine's investment, tourism, and exports. - Public diplomacy tools are used to enhance Ukraine's international economic presence.
Culinary Diplomacy	- Aims to shape Ukraine's image through the promotion of national cuisine and culinary arts. - Supports foreign trade and investment through enogastronomic tourism.
Scientific & Educational Diplomacy	- Builds partnerships with other countries and addresses global and national challenges through science and education. - Uses scientific achievements to inform policy decisions.
Digital Diplomacy	- Involves using digital platforms to protect national interests. - Engages in direct communication via social media to shape foreign citizens' perceptions of Ukraine.
Sports Diplomacy	- Promotes international dialogue through sports events. - Strengthens intercultural ties and contributes to the country's global prestige.

Table: Key Directions of Ukraine's Communicative Engagement Era (2021–2024)

Ukraine's Communicative Engagement Era: 2021–2024	
Principles of Public Diplomacy	
Principle	Description
Project Management	All public diplomacy activities are based on principles of project management, including leadership, accountability, and control.
Innovation	Public diplomacy actors utilize new technologies and innovative approaches to improve operational efficiency.
Respect for Cultural Diversity	Acknowledges and preserves cultural diversity, counteracting discrimination and hostility in public diplomacy activities.
Human Centricity	Focuses on the highest value of human beings and their rights.
Responsibility	Complies with laws and ethical standards, both domestically and internationally.
The Dimensions of Work (Digital Diplomacy)	
Dimension	Description
Interaction with international digital platforms	Promotes Ukraine's positive image and protects national security through international digital platforms.
Use of digital tools	Organizes public diplomacy events and projects using digital tools.
Social media engagement	Uses social media and online communities to create a positive image of Ukraine and promote national interests.
Collaboration with global platforms	Collaborates with Ukraine's Digital Ministry and platforms like Facebook, Google, Netflix, and HBO to promote Ukraine globally.

Table: Principles and Dimensions of Ukraine's Communicative Engagement Era (2021–2024)

Ukraine's Communicative Engagement Era: 2021–2024	
Communicative Engagement Era 2021–2024	<p>Focused on global engagement, particularly with African and Asian nations, while enhancing Ukraine's image through digital platforms.</p> <p>Public Diplomacy Strategy (2021): A five-year strategy focused on institutionalizing public diplomacy efforts through cultural, economic, and digital platforms. Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine (August 26, 2021) Communication Strategy for Ukraine-Africa Relations (2024-2026) Communication Strategy for Ukraine – Latin America and the Caribbean States (2024-2026)</p>
Projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> BRAND UKRAINE International Conference 2024 The first international conference on Ukraine's national brand in the context of the full-scale war. <input type="checkbox"/> Nations Against Disinformation 2.0 Countering propaganda and fake news in the age of AI. <input type="checkbox"/> What We Are Fighting For 2.0: Thanksgiving Day Campaign A digital campaign created for Thanksgiving, highlighting the value of American aid to Ukraine through real human stories. <input type="checkbox"/> What We Are Fighting For An international communication campaign emphasizing the 603,628 reasons Ukrainians continue to fight for freedom and peace. <input type="checkbox"/> #FreeTheLeopards A flash mob campaign advocating for the supply of German Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine. <input type="checkbox"/> Russian Famine Games Campaign aimed at unveiling the truth about Ukraine's food supplies during the war and countering Russia's narratives. <input type="checkbox"/> Data-driven Campaign to Counter Disinformation in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East Focused on tackling disinformation in these regions. <input type="checkbox"/> #TheUnityWave An Instagram flash mob uniting Ukrainians and the British on the eve of the Eurovision 2023 final in Liverpool, part of the #OpenYourHeartForUkraine campaign. <input type="checkbox"/> Eurovision 2023 A project by Ukraine.ua presenting Ukraine to the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 audience, featuring a communication campaign and interactive space at Eurovision Village in Liverpool. <input type="checkbox"/> Russia's War Crimes An online archive documenting war crimes committed by Russia. <input type="checkbox"/> Ukraine.ua Ukraine's official website and social media profiles. <input type="checkbox"/> Culture: From Idea to Ideology A communication campaign featuring an interactive quiz and a series of articles. <input type="checkbox"/> Cities of Freedom A campaign depicting cities of Ukrainian freedom and what they were like before the full-scale war. 	

Table: Key Projects and Strategies of Ukraine's Communicative Engagement Era (2021–2024)

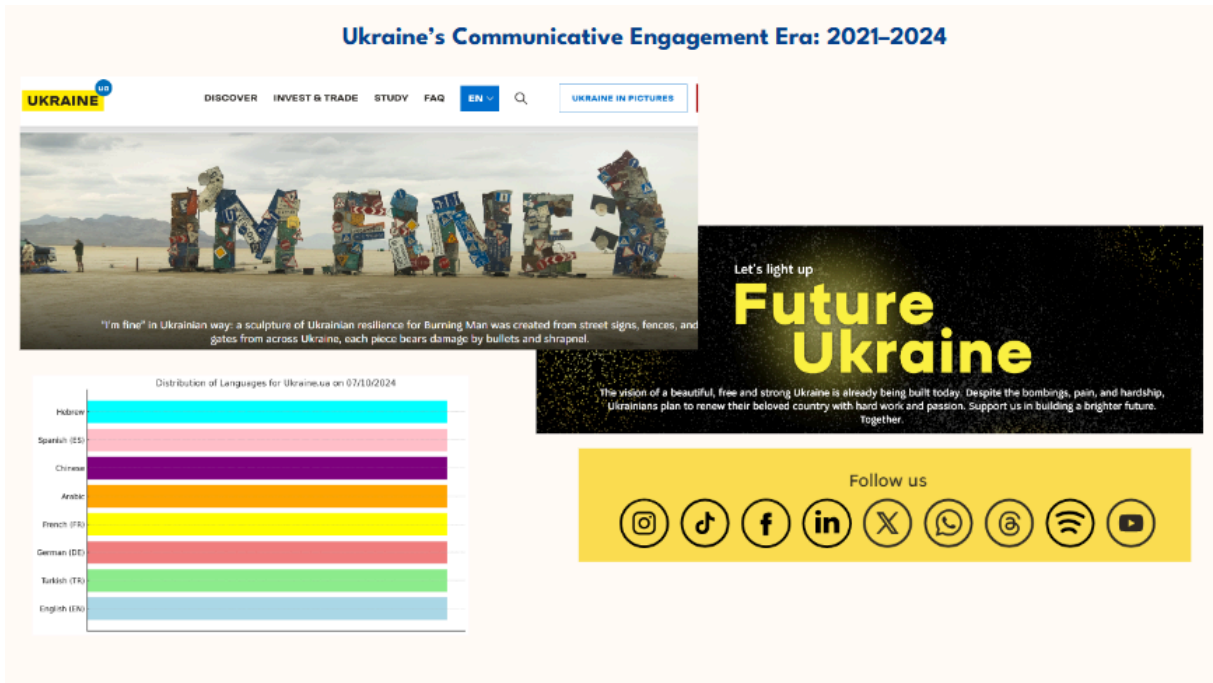


Table: Visual Representation and Digital Outreach: Ukraine's Communicative Engagement Era (2021–2024)



Table: Digital Advocacy and Global Outreach: war.ukraine.ua Initiative in the Communicative Engagement Era (2021–2024)

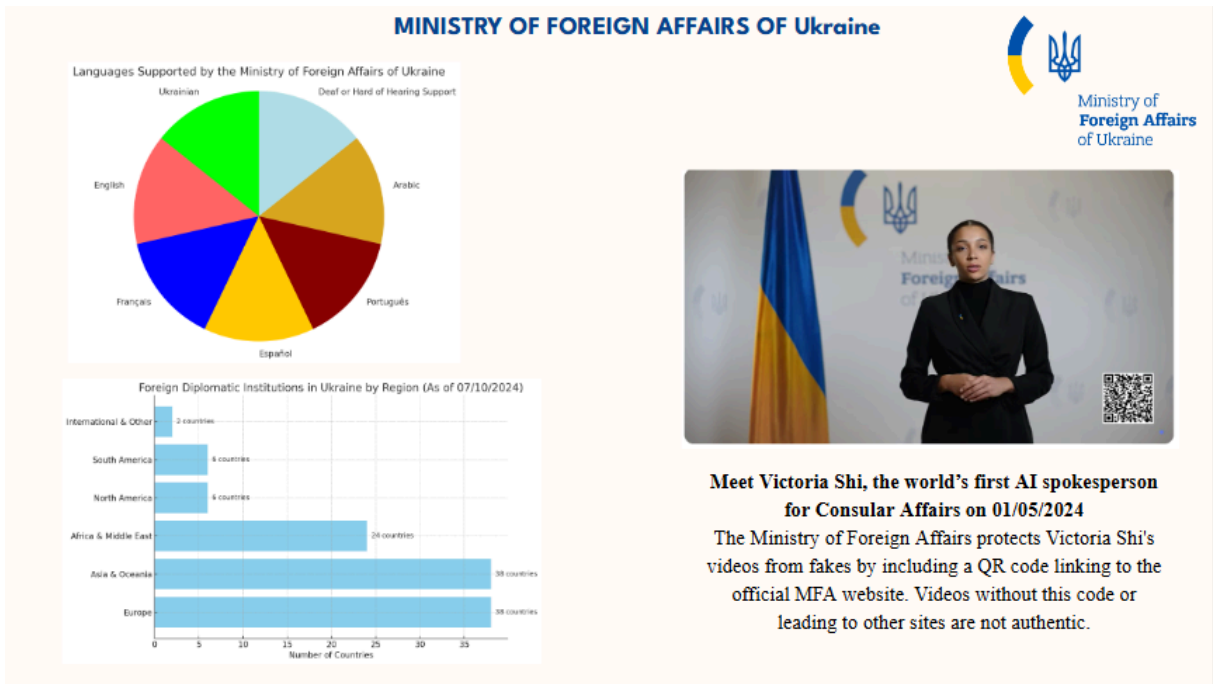


Table: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine: Language Support, Global Presence, and AI Innovation in Consular Services



Table: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine: Social Media Strategies and Examples During the war time

The integration of digital technologies into Ukraine’s public diplomacy represents a critical evolution in its approach to international relations, particularly in the face of ongoing geopolitical challenges. Leveraging digital diplomacy as a strategic tool, Ukraine has positioned itself as a resilient actor on the global stage, utilizing innovative communication methods to shape narratives, counter misinformation, and promote its national identity (Fenster, 2022).

Key Advancements and Strategies Ukraine’s Public Diplomacy Strategy for 2021–2025 emphasizes digital diplomacy as a cornerstone for protecting national interests and aligning with European Union policies. Projects such as the "Ukraine in Pictures" campaign, war.ukraine.ua, and initiatives targeting African, Asian, and Latin American audiences demonstrate the country’s commitment to engaging global audiences and strengthening diplomatic ties. Social media platforms, interactive websites, and virtual campaigns have facilitated direct communication with international publics, ensuring that Ukraine’s voice is heard amidst complex global narratives.

Ukraine's use of AI, as evidenced by the launch of Victoria Shi, the world's first AI spokesperson for consular affairs, underscores its forward-thinking approach in adopting emerging technologies. Similarly, the MFA's collaboration with platforms like Facebook, Netflix, and Google highlights the increasing role of public-private partnerships in enhancing Ukraine's global image and combating misinformation.

By promoting its cultural diversity, historical narratives, and technological progress, Ukraine has successfully crafted a positive international image that aligns with its economic and political goals. Projects focusing on national resilience, such as "Future Ukraine," highlight not only the challenges Ukraine faces but also its determination to rebuild and thrive.

Efforts such as the "#StandWithUkraine" campaign, Olympic and Paralympic participation, and the advocacy of Ukraine's unique heritage through culinary diplomacy and regional collaborations demonstrate the power of digital platforms in uniting diverse audiences around common causes.

While digital diplomacy offers Ukraine numerous advantages, including greater global engagement and effective narrative-building, it also poses significant challenges. Cybersecurity risks remain a pressing concern, particularly given the hybrid nature of the Russia-Ukraine war (Zadorozhna, 2023). Strengthening digital infrastructure and safeguarding sensitive diplomatic communications will be essential in maintaining the momentum of Ukraine's digital diplomacy initiatives.

Ukraine's strategic adoption of digital diplomacy demonstrates its adaptability in an increasingly interconnected world. By leveraging digital platforms to counter misinformation, engage international audiences, and promote its cultural and political identity, Ukraine has not only enhanced its global standing but also strengthened its resilience against external threats. As the nation continues to navigate complex geopolitical landscapes, the sustained integration of digital diplomacy will be pivotal in shaping its future international relations and securing a prominent place in the global community.

Comparative Analysis of Digital Narratives: Ukraine and Russia in Public Diplomacy and Information Warfare

Preliminary findings: Comparison examples from social media

Ukrainian Narrative Examples:

- Tweet by Dmytro Kuleba:** "Putin has just launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Peaceful Ukrainian cities are under strikes. This is a war of aggression. Ukraine will defend itself and will win. The world can and must stop Putin. The time to act is now." (Feb 24, 2022)
- Photo:** EU leaders of France, Germany and Italy visited the Ukrainian city of Irpin to survey the damage brought by Russia's invasion. (AP: Ludovic Marin)
- Text:** "European fans of frogs, liverwurst and spaghetti love visiting Kiev. With zero use. Promised EU membership and old howitzers to Ukraine, lushed up on gorilka and went home by train, like 100 years ago. All is well. Yet, it won't bring Ukraine closer to peace. The clock's ticking." (July 2022)

Russian Narrative Examples:

- Graphic:** "Russia killed 91 media representatives in Ukraine" (March 2022 - October 2022)
- Infographic:** "TWO STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP UKRAINE NOW STAND AGAINST RUSSIAN AGGRESSION"
 1. SPREAD ONLY VERIFIED INFORMATION
 2. SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS THAT STRENGTHEN UKRAINE'S DEFENSE CAPABILITIES
- Statement:** "MAKE RUSSIA SMALL AGAIN"
- Statement:** "The egregious violations of the rights of Russians, along with threats to Russia's security - and to all of Europe for that matter - that come from the Kiev regime and those who are trying to pull it into NATO, are the primary causes of the ongoing Ukraine crisis." (Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister)

Table :Preliminary Findings: Comparative Social Media Narratives of Ukraine and Russia

Ukraine's Approach

Framing Russia as the Aggressor: Ukraine's posts emphasize the invasion's impact on civilian life, presenting Russia as the aggressor in the conflict. Statements from Ukrainian officials, such as Dmytro Kuleba's tweet, highlight the urgency and moral imperative to resist Russian aggression, portraying Ukraine as a victim of an unjust war.

Personalized Storytelling: Ukraine leverages emotional appeals by focusing on human stories and the loss experienced during the war. For example, posts referencing media representatives killed during the conflict aim to garner international sympathy and support.

Calls to Action: Campaigns such as "Two Steps You Can Take to Help Ukraine" seek to mobilize international audiences, encouraging active participation through advocacy and resource mobilization.

Russia's Approach

Strategic Narratives: Russian content underscores broader geopolitical themes, such as the need to reshape international relations and oppose perceived Western hegemony. Vladimir Putin's statement reflects Russia's vision for a new global order and its attempt to position itself as a counterbalance to the West.

Discrediting Opponents: Russian social media posts, such as those from Dmitry Medvedev, employ sarcastic and provocative language to criticize European leaders and institutions, aiming to delegitimize their support for Ukraine.

Promoting a Positive Image: Russia uses diplomatic events, such as Sergey Lavrov's speeches, to project itself as a leader fostering partnerships with nations in the Global South. *This aligns with Russia's broader narrative of building an alternative multipolar world order.*

Key components

Tone and Content: Ukrainian messaging emphasizes victimhood, resilience, and calls for solidarity, while Russian messaging focuses on strategic narratives, defiance, and countering Western influence.

Target Audience: Ukraine targets global audiences sympathetic to democratic values and human rights, aiming to rally support against aggression. Conversely, Russia targets audiences critical of Western policies, seeking to strengthen alliances with non-Western countries.

Use of Emotion: Ukraine's messaging heavily relies on emotional appeals to humanize the conflict and elicit global empathy. Russia's content, while occasionally using emotional rhetoric, leans more on ideological and geopolitical arguments.

The findings underscore how Ukraine and Russia strategically employ social media to further their foreign policy objectives, illustrating the dual role of digital platforms in modern diplomacy and information warfare. Ukraine's approach prioritizes international solidarity and support by showcasing the resilience of its citizens and highlighting the

atrocities of war, fostering empathy and mobilizing global action. In contrast, Russia aims to reshape global narratives, promote its geopolitical agenda, and undermine opposition through targeted propaganda and strategic ambiguity.

Both countries strive to shape international perceptions in ways that align with their national goals, yet their approaches reveal fundamental differences in geopolitical positions and resources. Ukraine relies on transparency, emotional storytelling, and partnerships with democratic allies, leveraging its integration into European and global systems. Russia, meanwhile, employs a multifaceted strategy that includes state-sponsored narratives, disinformation campaigns, and cyber operations to assert influence, challenge Western dominance, and project itself as a resurgent global power. These divergent strategies underscore the complexity of digital diplomacy and its growing significance in international relations.

As global communication continues to evolve, both nations face the challenge of adapting their strategies to an interconnected world where information can be weaponized, and public opinion swayed at unprecedented speed. The struggle for influence in this digital arena highlights the importance of media literacy and critical thinking among citizens. By empowering individuals to discern credible information from deceptive narratives, nations can build more informed and resilient societies capable of resisting manipulation and misinformation.

In this rapidly changing landscape of digital diplomacy, narratives play an increasingly pivotal role, not only reflecting the realities of conflict but also actively shaping them. Both Ukraine and Russia engage in information campaigns where the strategic use of narratives becomes a battleground for dominating public discourse and swaying international opinion (Freedman & Williams, 2021). Social media's chaotic nature complicates the effectiveness of these narratives, as it amplifies misinformation while providing platforms for grassroots movements that challenge official accounts. Ukraine's emphasis on transparency and citizen-driven storytelling has gained significant traction, effectively countering Russian disinformation efforts (Koptiev, 2023). This dynamic interplay between state-sponsored

messaging and user-generated content demonstrates the necessity for real-time adaptability in diplomatic strategies.

Countries are increasingly investing in digital literacy initiatives to equip citizens with the tools needed to critically evaluate information and engage meaningfully in public discourse (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2017). This proactive approach not only empowers individuals to distinguish fact from fiction but also strengthens democratic processes and ensures accountability. Enhancing digital literacy is essential in an era where misinformation spreads rapidly, shaping public opinion and influencing policy decisions on a global scale (Luqiu, 2019). Ultimately, fostering an informed and discerning citizenry is key to navigating the complexities of digital diplomacy and safeguarding the integrity of international communication.

6 CONCLUSION

This study has provided an in-depth analysis of the digital public diplomacy strategies of Russia and Ukraine, with a focus on their use of digital platforms during the period of geopolitical conflict from 2022 to 2024. The findings underscore the centrality of digital diplomacy in shaping international narratives, countering disinformation, and engaging global audiences in real time. Through a mixed-method approach incorporating historical-discourse analysis, network analysis, and semio-discursive methods, the research highlights how these nations strategically utilize platforms such as X, Facebook, and other digital tools to advance their foreign policy objectives and engage in information warfare.

Traditional diplomacy, characterized by confidential negotiations and state-centric communication, contrasts sharply with digital public diplomacy's transparency, interactivity, and capacity to shape public perceptions directly. Drawing upon Zhao Alexandre Huang's historical-discursive framework, this study demonstrates how cognitive frames and historical narratives are instrumentalized by both Russia and Ukraine to legitimize and institutionalize their public diplomacy strategies. These narratives align with broader foreign policy goals, consolidating influence and fostering national resilience in the digital age.

Building on Ilan Manor's framework, the study emphasizes the transformative impact of digitalization on diplomatic practices. Digital diplomacy allows Ministries of Foreign Affairs to engage with non-state actors and civil society in real time, fostering dynamic and multi-directional communication. For Ukraine, this involves transparency, emotional storytelling, and citizen-led campaigns to garner international solidarity and counter Russian disinformation. Conversely, Russia combines state-sponsored narratives, disinformation campaigns, and cyber activities to assert its geopolitical influence, disrupt adversary narratives, and project the image of a resurgent power.

Information warfare emerges as a defining feature of digital diplomacy in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Russia's approach integrates strategic ambiguity, propaganda, and active measures to weaken societal resilience in target nations, undermine democratic institutions, and amplify geopolitical divisions. This strategy leverages cyber activities, such as data theft and network disruption, alongside carefully curated narratives that question democratic values and project Russia's geopolitical strength.

Ukraine, on the other hand, employs a counter-narrative approach, focusing on transparency and grassroots engagement to highlight the realities of the war, foster empathy, and mobilize global action. Platforms like war.ukraine.ua serve as central tools in Ukraine's information campaigns, providing real-time updates and engaging international audiences with human-centered stories. These efforts reflect a dual strategy of countering Russian disinformation and amplifying Ukraine's cultural and political integration with Europe.

The study highlights the dual role of digital platforms in modern diplomacy: as tools for diplomatic engagement and as instruments of strategic information warfare. These platforms offer opportunities for states to engage in real-time crisis management, strategic outreach, and audience-specific messaging. However, the risks of misinformation and manipulation underline the critical need for media literacy and digital literacy initiatives. Nations must equip their citizens with the skills to discern credible sources, evaluate narratives critically, and engage meaningfully in public discourse.

While digital diplomacy offers significant advantages, it also presents challenges such as cybersecurity threats and the ethical implications of disinformation campaigns. Both Ukraine and Russia must navigate these complexities while adapting their strategies to evolving communication technologies. The study underscores the importance of investing in

robust cybersecurity frameworks and promoting ethical practices in digital diplomacy to ensure sustainable and effective engagement.

This study highlights the transformative potential of digital diplomacy in modern statecraft, emphasizing its role in shaping narratives, managing crises, and influencing public opinion. The integration of digital tools into public diplomacy frameworks represents both an opportunity and a challenge, requiring ongoing adaptation to navigate the complexities of the digital geopolitical environment effectively. By strategically harnessing the power of digital platforms, nations can amplify their diplomatic outreach, safeguard democratic values, and reinforce international stability. However, the evolving landscape of information warfare demands vigilance, innovation, and cooperation to mitigate the risks associated with the digitalization of diplomacy. The findings of this study serve as a call for nations to adopt proactive measures, including enhanced media literacy and strategic engagement, to navigate the rapidly shifting terrain of global communication and diplomacy.

WHAT TO WATCH

Dovha Doba/The Hardest Hour

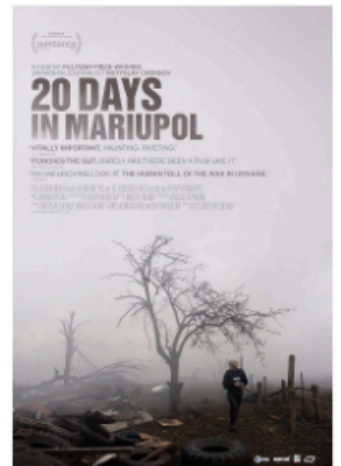
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCXJFKHbgOs&rc=1>

A documentary film by director Alan Badoev and channel «1+1 Ukraine», created from 200 hours of footage: the survival, resistance, and life of Ukrainians during the war. Every minute of the film was shot by Ukrainians on their mobile phones. Some heroes survived, some were killed... But their last actions and voices remain. The world must hear and feel the voices of Ukrainians. The Hardest Hour is happening right now. Support Ukraine. Support freedom and independence.



Us, Our Pets and the War is a 2024 documentary film directed by Anton Ptushkin and co-produced by the Ukrainian company Vse Sam and the Canadian company Yap Films.[1] The documentary tells the story of the relationship between people and their animals against the backdrop of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N17SyR68ZBg>



The Oscar-winning Ukrainian film

"20 Days in Mariupol": A documentary film by Pulitzer Prize-winning Associated Press journalist Mstislav Chernov, won the Oscar for best feature-length documentary film - the first award win for Ukraine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L3DvHs0GbsY>

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