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Public Diplomacy in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Experiences for Ukraine



Mykola Trofymenko and Anastasiia Trofymenko

Abstract The article analyzes the experience of Central and Eastern Europe countries during development of public diplomacy model in Ukraine. The authors have stipulated that under current conditions public diplomacy provides favorable perception of the country by the world community as well as encourages its support on the international arena on the part of other countries facilitating national security. In this regard, in the midst of “Ukrainian crisis,” the Ukrainian public diplomacy gained traction. Under its execution, Ukraine makes use of European post-communist countries’ experience due to common policy implementation readiness. In addition, following their suit, the Ukrainian public diplomacy model encompasses establishment of national institution to cope with certain issues, namely: language promotion, history, culture of a country, development of a national brand in order to attract tourists as well as foreign investments, fending off negative information influence on the part of the Russian Federation, etc.

Keywords Public diplomacy · Cultural diplomacy · Nation branding · Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) · Ukrainian institute

Introduction

In order to withstand modern challenges, any countries have been arduously employing public diplomacy, which is a combination of values, propaganda, and marketing technologies. By means of public diplomacy, governments are expecting to have influence on public opinion of other countries, to build a favorable image, and to gain affection in the world community.

The aim of this chapter is to explore public diplomacy tools in countries of Central and Eastern Europe and to determine how their experience has been applied in institutionalizing public diplomacy in Ukraine. In a broader sense, this chapter

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focuses on the public diplomacy transformation of European post-communist countries, which during the political transition sought to get rid of the negative image of the country in the eyes of international community. To increase their attractiveness for foreign investment and tourism, these countries have created public diplomacy institutes and cultural centers, developed new national brands, and intensified the cultural component of regional organizations. This chapter seeks to explore the emergence of public diplomacy in Ukraine based on experiences of these countries that share with Ukraine communist past, democratization of society, Europeanization, and negative Russian influence.

The structure of the chapter is made up of four parts. The first part represents conceptual dimension of the study, provides definition of public diplomacy, and establishes its purpose, content, and meaning for the state. This part defines the concepts of cultural diplomacy and nation branding, and shows how they relate to public diplomacy. The second part is devoted to the analysis of national public diplomacy models of the countries of CEE; it identifies their challenges and key components. Attention in this part is also drawn to national brands in the countries of the region. The third part analyzes the development of public diplomacy tools of Ukraine based on the experience of the countries of CEE, as well as explores a new Ukrainian national brand.

Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Definitions

The term “public diplomacy” had been coined in its present-day meaning in 1965 by Edmund Gullion, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and Founder of the Edward R. Murrow Center for Public Diplomacy (Cull 2009). According to Gullio, public diplomacy deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses many dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy, such as positively reshaping of public opinion in other countries, facilitation of interaction of private groups of interests in one country with another, reporting on foreign affairs, communication between diplomats and foreign correspondents, and intercultural exchanges. Public diplomacy incorporates cultural components: literature, cinema, mass media, arts, science, music, as well as the study of foreign languages. Public diplomacy links states with the public in other countries.

Public diplomacy is designed to create a positive image of a country and uses rhetoric and actions to build up the reputation (http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=791#top). Public diplomacy helps to reduce negative influences caused by historical controversies, internal conflicts and disputes with foreign countries, toxic domestic politics, etc. In fact, public policy implementation encourages country’s positive perception by the world community and facilitates foreign and domestic policy support, which is of paramount importance for providing national security. Similar

to any other diplomatic activity, cultural diplomacy is influenced by politicians engaged in foreign policy. Likewise, it is accountable to relevant government agencies and can serve as a tool for backing up political goals.

Public diplomacy is also closely related to nation branding as a particular field of place branding. There are different and sometimes conflicting views on the relationship between national branding and public diplomacy. British researcher Gyorgy Szondi has identified five main approaches to interaction of these concepts. According to the first approach, these concepts are not interconnected and have no common ground, as they have different goals, strategy tools, and actors. The remaining approaches define the two concepts as interconnected, but differently determine these connections. Quite common is to treat public diplomacy as part of nation branding; less common is to approach nation branding as a part of public diplomacy. Another approach considers these concepts as distinct but having the same purpose to create a country's positive image. Lastly, nation branding and public diplomacy can be equated to each other, since they both promote a country with the ultimate goal of creating positive images (Szondi 2009).

Public Diplomacies of Central and Eastern European Countries

Throughout the Cold War, countries of Central and Eastern Europe that used to be under the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union were objects of western countries' public diplomacies. BBC, Voice of America, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty were instrumental in fostering the collapse of communism in the region. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, traditional public diplomacy was replaced with economic assistance, knowledge, and technology transfer to facilitate political and economic transformations around the world.

Almost all countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s turned to public diplomacy tools to get rid of the grim image in the West as former Communist nations in the so-called Eastern Europe. Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary set to present themselves as Central Europe, Latvia, and Lithuania claimed to be Baltic, while Estonia preferred to brand itself as a Nordic country (Szondi 2007).

The institutionalization of public diplomacy in the countries of the region took course in diverse ways, including investment in research and communication policy, along with development of strategy and tactics for promoting political and economic interests abroad. For instance, in Poland, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Adam Mickiewicz Institute are involved in the process of Polish public diplomacy implementation. Poland was the first country in the region to establish the Public Diplomacy Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in the early 2000s pushed forward several programs and campaigns of public diplomacy (http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/ministry/organisation/organisational_units/

[department_of_public_and_cultural_diplomacy](#)). The department deals with advancing Polish interests abroad and developing strategies that serve this purpose; it encourages contacts with different social groups in foreign countries, with an emphasis on creating a positive image of Poland abroad (<https://iam.pl/en>). In 1998, the Latvian government founded the Latvian Institute to disseminate information about this country's history, culture, and society (<http://www.latvia.eu/latvian-institute>). The main mission of the Czech Centers is to develop a positive image of the Czech Republic abroad, as well as promote the interests of the Czech Republic and implement public diplomacy in accordance with the foreign policy priorities (<http://www.czechcentres.cz/en/>). In 1998, the Hungarian government created the Country Image Center to coordinate the image making and develop country's reputation abroad (Szondi 2009, p. 295). The Center was strongly criticized by the opposition as a governmental propaganda machine both inside the country and abroad, and was closed down in 2002.

Think tanks play an important role in developing the model of public diplomacy and its implementation. Think tanks contribute to public policy by providing analysis and advice on political initiatives and strategies, organizing events with foreign audiences, hosting conferences, publishing reports, etc. A good example is the Center for Social and Economic Research (CASE) (Poland), which in 2018 topped the list of major think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe, according to a report by Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania (McGann 2019). The CASE mission "Our Europe" aims at promoting the understanding of the value (but also the limits) of an economically and institutionally integrated Europe and providing high-quality evidence and advice in support of this argument (<http://www.case-research.eu/en>).

In Estonia starting from 2001, the "Positively Transforming" logo was developed for national brand, driven by an opportunity to introduce Estonia during the Eurovision Song Contest as a European country ready for positive change. In 2010, this logo was updated to "Positively Surprising" to demonstrate that Estonia has now left the transition phase behind and develops as a small country positively surprising the world (Mändmets 2010).

In 2004, Poland turned to a well-known UK branding specialist, Wally Oils and his company Saffron, to develop its brand along the lines of the idea of "Creative Tension." This brand was designed to show that "Poland is part of the West and also understands the East; Polish people are passionate and idealistic and also practical and resourceful; the Polish character is ambitious and also down to earth. These tensions create a restlessness unsatisfied with the status quo and a boisterousness that is always stimulating and often astonishing" (Olins 2006). The idea of "Creative Tension" was later redefined and laid the foundation for the new brand of the country, called "POLSKA brand." For the first time, the word "POLSKA" instead of "Poland" was used during the Polish Season in the UK titled "Polska! Year." From that time on, the word "POLSKA" has been used for the country at international events of different levels. In 2013, the Council for the Promotion of Poland published a document called *Rules for Communicating the POLSKA Brand*, which defines the rules for using the brand when communicating with the foreign

community. This document specified four points describing the identity of the POLSKA brand: Poland is intense (as people of action who take great interest in the world, Poles are continuously pressing ahead); Poland is committed (Poles never have enough time for everything, and they are not afraid to take risks if they can gain more); Poland will not leave you indifferent (their hospitality cannot be overestimated); Poland knows how to swim against the tide (Poles challenge the status quo, and they are good at modifying things) (Rules for Communicating the POLSKA Brand 2013).

Latvia stepped up to the field of branding in 2001, when the working group on *Basic Principles of External Communications 2002–2005* was created and then submitted a report to the government. In the summer of 2002, the Latvian Tourism Development Agency came up with the logo and motto “The Land that Sings,” which was used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs once in a while, but did not find enough support from the government (Moilanen and Rainisto 2009, p. 69). In 2003, senior students and their Professor, Wally Olins, were hired to prepare a report on how to brand the nation. Based on their research, they proposed five possible brands: (1) Latvia as a part of Europe with best access to Russia; (2) the keystone of the Baltics; (3) a natural place; (4) an authentic peasant nation; and (5) a “new dawn.” Despite the attempts to theoretically motivate the Latvian brand, the implementation strategy has not yet been developed (Frasher et al. 2003) due to the lack of coordination among the involved institutions, limited funding, and lack of political will (Moilanen and Rainisto 2009, p. 69).

In Lithuania, the Brand Commission since 2005 developed country’s branding strategy. In 2007, the brand “Lithuania is a brave country” was created yet then terminated in 2009. Later on, Lithuania commissioned Saffron to draft report “Selling Lithuania Smartly” with the key features of this country as “thoughtful and reliable” and “lively and romantic.” Saffron recommended moving from Baltic to northeastern European identity; however, this brand failed to work in a full scale. In 2008, a possibility of changing the English name of the country into the authentic Lietuva was discussed (Adomaitis 2008).

Czech Republic commenced developing the country’s brand only in 2002, when the government initiated *The Strategy of Presentation of the Czech Republic* with messages such as “It’s Czech and you didn’t even know it,” and “Czech brands in world.” The purpose of the Strategy was to identify recognizable individuals, events, and products that could contribute to attracting investment and tourists mainly from EU member states, USA, Canada, Russia, China, and Japan. Along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Czech Centers, the agency named CzechTourism promotes the image of the country. In the spring of 2004, prior to the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU, CzechTourism launched a campaign enticing tourists to the Czech Republic, advertising the country on CNN, BBC, Eurosport, National Geographic, and Discovery channel (Cabada and Waisová 2012, p. 36). As in Latvia, in the Czech Republic in 2016 a new name Czechia was offered (Temperton 2016).

Since 1993, Slovakia has made several attempts to create a country brand and innovate its image. The last attempt was made in 2016, when the Ministry of

Foreign and European Affairs in cooperation with the Slovak Advertising Agency Creative Department proposed a new brand “Good Idea Slovakia” with four pillars: variability, inventiveness, vitality, and authenticity. It is aimed at showing Slovakia as a country of resourceful people with “good ideas” and offering to visit Slovakia or invest a “good idea” into it (Môcová 2017, p. 129).

In 1999, four Hungarian companies set up the Hungaricum Club to develop country’s trademark. Their goal was to facilitate the promotion of Hungary in the EU through retaining its traditional Hungarian brands. Club members collected a symbolic set called “A Taste of Hungary” with samples of their products, Herend Porcelain, Pick Salami, Tokaj Aszu, Zwack Unicum liqueur, and the Halas sewn lace (Dinnie 2008, p. 202). In 2005, the Hungarian National Tourism Organization developed a brand with the slogan “Talent for entertaining” to associate the country with hospitality of talented people, to personalize strategic tourism products, and to promote the state through its well-known Hungarians. Names and faces of 11 internationally acclaimed Hungarians appeared in the press advertisements published in 21 countries and in city lights posted at 12 airports of 9 major European cities. In 2005, in order to form a far-reaching state brand Hungarian Roundtable was established; however, this initiative was suspended in 2006 (Dinnie 2008, p. 203).

International organizations also use public diplomacy to establish lasting relationships with target audiences. A good example would be the Visegrad Group (V4), comprising Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Since its creation, the V4 has sought to get rid of the association with the communist past and positioned itself as an association of Central European states actively integrating with the EU and supporters of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. After reaching its main goal (EU accession in 2004), the organization has been transformed into a joint representational platform of economic, diplomatic, political, and cultural interests of the involved countries. The realization of public diplomacy functions was entrusted to the International Visegrad Fund established in 2000 to support common projects in the fields of culture, science and research, education, youth exchange, promotion of tourism, individual mobility programs (scholarships and residencies), and cross-border cooperation with Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries (<https://www.visegradfund.org/about-us/the-fund>, https://s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/uploads.mangoweb.org/shared-prod/visegradfund.org/uploads/2018/12/IVF_statute.pdf).

The activities of public diplomacy institutes are complemented with cultural diplomacy. In this context, the Eurovision Song Contest is extremely popular in the region. Despite the fact that the countries of CEE have been participating in Eurovision since 1991, they regularly win this competition (2002—Estonia, 2003—Latvia, 2005—Ukraine, 2008—Serbia, 2017—Ukraine) and thus host the next competition, using this event to promote their national brands and popularize their tourist destinations, history, culture, language, etc.