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**“UKRAINIAN NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION EFFORTS BEFORE AND DURING
UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN WAR”**

Master thesis

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Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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Abstract

This thesis examines Ukrainian narrative construction before and after the start of the Ukrainian-Russian war. This aspect is examined through the lens of digital diplomacy in the context of inter-state armed conflict. In the current situation the focus would be on institutional digital diplomacy. To offer a detailed overview of these aspects, the author focuses on a single case of one institution conducting digital diplomacy. Therefore, this phenomenon would be used to contextualize Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs efforts in the digital sphere. In the current thesis, the author would focus on Ukrainian efforts in reaching out to European and other western powers support. These efforts are analyzed through narrative analysis to highlight the steps taken by Ukraine to counter Russian narratives and mobilize support among foreign allies.

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1. Introduction

At the moment of writing this thesis, the Ukrainian-Russian war has lasted for more than 3 years. During these three years, there have been several significant developments in warfare. Whether it is the revolution of drones or the return of tank battles to Europe. Apart from the land and air battlefield, there have been significant developments in other fields. One of them is diplomacy. Before moving on with diplomacy, it is necessary to establish the importance of the Ukrainian-Russian war.

Firstly, this war has been described as the most consequential armed conflict since the Second World War. And in the context of Europe, this war has been the largest inter-state armed conflict since the wars in former Yugoslavia. This war has captured attention for several reasons. Among them are unprovoked attacks on a sovereign state and the level of cruelty against civilians. Added to the latter, this war has again made possible the forceful border changes in Europe. And even after three years of fighting, this war has remained among the priorities in the international agenda.

Regarding the above-mentioned Ukrainian–Russian war, one should ask, why is it important to study diplomatic conduct? In many cases, diplomatic conduct during conflicts has remained the same. Both sides negotiate on terms of peace, and third parties are willing to mediate between them during peace negotiations. Then, looking into the course of the war, there have been several innovative diplomatic actions. One of them is diplomacy conducted in the digital sphere i.e. digital diplomacy.

As mentioned above, this war has led to several innovations in warfare. More importantly, this war has exposed new ways for mobilizing support. In this case, the current Ukrainian-Russian war has been innovative in its conduct for the cognitive battleground. Because of an ever-connected world, control over the cognitive field has become as important as controlling either airspace or seas in a conflict. Due to this control, either side could achieve their goals by demotivating their opponents. In this case, two parties are engaged in fighting for control of the general narrative about the ongoing war.

Added to that, technological innovations have made it possible to conduct this war in real-time. Therefore, maintaining control of the narrative has come to several aspects. One example of this is countering opponents' claims as operatively as possible. Control over the cognitive field should be regarded as a guarantee for success on other battlefields of the war. This is meant to retain a favorable position among other actors.

Before and after the full-scale invasion, Ukraine has taken steps to counter Russian false narratives. Although the author agrees that there are regions in which the Ukrainian government has focused less. As times have passed, the Russian counteractions have managed to infiltrate and disrupt the Ukrainian narrative. In the states outside the European landmass, this has been more evident because of their neutral stances towards the ongoing war. Unfortunately, Russian countermeasures have also managed to infiltrate and gain ground in the European states. Therefore, the reasons behind Ukraine's successful outreach remain under question. To reach towards resolving this predicament should be looked at through the prism of digital diplomacy during different stages of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

The purpose of writing the following thesis is to study digital diplomacy efforts taken by the Ukrainian government during different stages of the Ukraine-Russia war. Before moving forward, the author recognizes that a military conflict between these two states has been actively going on since 2014. Therefore, the thesis would partly focus on the approaches taken during the hybrid war period of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. Because of the length of this period, the author recognizes the limitations of the possibility of studying eight years. To overcome this, the author has opted for studying the last six months of the hybrid war stage of digital diplomacy. Secondly, the author would focus on studying the approaches taken after the escalation to full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. To achieve this, the author would focus on the first six months following the start of the full-scale invasion.

Depending on the stages of the conflict in different time-frames, then for the further development of the thesis, the author proposes the following research question:

- How did Ukrainian digital diplomacy efforts shift from a hybrid war era narrative building to a full-scale invasion era narrative building?

Because of the method, which will be used in writing the following thesis, the author refrains from establishing a concrete hypothesis. So, to continue with the writing of the thesis, the author sets a research expectation for the following thesis. This would serve as a guide for framing the research results in the coming writing. Therefore, the author proposes the following research expectation:

- During different stages of the Ukrainian–Russian war, the Ukrainian government has applied different sets of narratives. During the hybrid conflict period, the set of narratives would include war-related narratives complemented by non-war-related narratives about Ukraine. After the start of full-scale armed conflict, the sets of

narratives would shift completely towards armed conflict-related narratives. These narratives would depend on the stage of war, and these shifts are connected with the escalation of the ongoing armed conflict.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework.

The following chapter will focus on the theoretical framework of the thesis. In this, the author would focus on describing the cases of digital diplomacy and interstate armed conflict. This would rely on reviewing literature written before. Secondly, the author would describe how digital diplomacy and interstate conflict would intertwine. Thirdly, the author would focus on the caveats of using digital diplomacy and argue for using the latter as the proposed framing.

2.1. Historical retrospective of diplomacy

Before reaching out to define diplomacy, then one should start with the historical development of diplomacy. In the following subchapter, the author gives a brief overview of the major developments and trends in past diplomatic activities.

Starting from the historical aspect, then diplomacy, at least in European states, has existed in some shape or form for 3000 years BC. The first signs of it were from Ancient times center of the world: The Mediterranean basin and the Near East. This was also the case among ancient Greek city-states, and from there, the term diplomacy has grown. Because it rose from the Greek word diploma (Bjola & Kornprobst. 2018, 13). During ancient times, diplomacy got its roots in exchanging and communicating through representatives. Usually, this meant that one party sent out their mission to the second party to conduct negotiations with one another.

Starting from the modern age, there has been a significant development in the field of diplomacy. As the states grew even more centralized, these states started sending out permanent missions to other states. Mostly, this meant sending out only the ambassador, but then that person remained in a foreign state for years to come. Also, the strengthened state meant that the representative was not loyal to a certain sovereign, but became connected with the state that sent him out. The ambassador became the main source of information in his resident state. This also meant that the ambassador received honorable treatment in his residing state and was granted immunities, which gradually became coded into the law (Bjola, Kornprobst, 2018, 32).

In conclusion, practicing diplomacy has been the case for organized larger communities for at least a few millennia. Some of the practices – such as the privileged position of the ambassador – have remained to this day and have continuously improved. Some practices, for example, secret negotiations and agreements, have become more redundant, but can still be in use on some levels.

2.2. Defining diplomacy and its different subcategories

Starting with defining diplomacy, one should start by recognizing the challenges ahead. And there is a problem right from the start. Traditionally, diplomacy has remained outside or at least on the outskirts of the realm of international relations. The reason, which has been argued, is the fact that diplomacy being a practice, might not fall under theorization as such. But as the following subchapter shows, then this can be achieved.

First of all, it needs to be pointed out that the discipline of international relations has scarcely researched diplomacy. This has been done in the context of, as has been pointed out in the SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy, other disciplines. This has included foreign policy and state communication (Constantinou et al. 2016. 16-20). Also, it has been pointed out that diplomacy is either a medium or an instrument to conduct stately affairs. Thirdly, this has been described as a toolbox of practical actions. All things considered, diplomacy has remained in the background but has been given more attention in critical schools of international relations.

From this arises the question of defining diplomacy. What does it include? Well, firstly, there is the aspect of communication. How and who is communicating with whom and why? Traditional diplomacy has centered on interstate relations. This means that there is communication between agents, who own the right amount of agency to conduct these relations. Traditionally, these agents have been sovereign states, which have been bestowed recognition by other agents, or as will be in the following actors. Because a state is made up of individuals, certain human actors are conducting relations in the name of the state. Then these people also have a certain amount of agency to represent their state and conduct diplomacy according to their amount of agency. This shows that these operatives—diplomats have a hierarchical ranking in which their tasks are divided up among themselves. Their agency is also derived from the mandate that they have received from the agent whom they serve – i.e., the state.

Following the establishment, who are the agents, and where did their agency originate, one would then rightfully ask, what are these agents exactly doing? As it was mentioned above, a lot of their actions include communicating with other actors. These actors also hold a certain amount of agency to communicate with each other. In practice, this means representing one's state's interests in different forms of communication. The most often form of this is negotiations held at different levels and on various subjects. When it comes to the levels of negotiations, these could be conducted on a tête-à-tête principle, meaning two people are discussing a subject in an official setting. Negotiations could be conducted on a wider scale, involving more people

with different levels of agency. This could be conducted in the form of an interstate conference or summits. These forms would include representatives starting from heads of state down to experts and diplomats, who conduct the detailed work in designated working groups.

If there is a state, then why should it even conduct diplomacy? Rarely have there been attempts to organize stately affairs in an autarkic way. If a state conducts its affairs, then there has to be some interest behind them. And when a state conducts its affairs on the international stage, it pursues its interests in the topic at hand. The state then needs to conduct relations with other actors and strive towards meeting its interests. Therefore, it needs to engage in diplomacy and have in place people who conduct it – diplomats. Those people would conduct their tasks either in the state where they are aligned or abroad. Whilst working in a foreign state, these people are also granted some privileges, which distinguish them from local citizens. They would also need a workplace to enforce the mandate – i.e. embassy – which is also exempted from scrutiny of the host state. But as the world has become more interconnected, could there be other actors conducting diplomacy?

Several non-state actors have become agents in the field of diplomacy. For example, different multinational corporations own enough economic power to match smaller and medium-sized state actors. Secondly, there are international organizations that can be agents in diplomacy. Thirdly, there are also non-governmental organizations, which operate on an international level. It should be mentioned that all three of these examples lack an important aspect – state sovereignty. Unlike these examples, states enjoy a privileged role in diplomacy, and although the aforementioned actors could influence states' decisions, the results are still connected to the state itself.

So, in this case, the preferred definition of diplomacy would be that it is a medium and a toolbox for agents to enforce the agency of the state. This is carried out by mandated individuals who represent their state's interest to other stately actors. This coincides with the definitions, which were already offered beforehand. But for the following thesis's central argument, defining diplomacy itself is not enough. So, for that, the author would continue to pursue further definition of diplomacy by looking into sub-disciplines of diplomacy.

2.2.1. Different diplomatic disciplines

According to the SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy and the Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy, there are numerous tools and instruments, issue areas, and modes of practice that have diplomacy in their name. Therefore, writing even a short introductory paragraph would be an overreach. As the focus point of the thesis is on the digital sphere, most of these different diplomacy subcategories would not be necessary. Therefore, the author will focus on describing three related diplomacy forms: public, hybrid, and digital diplomacy.

Starting from public diplomacy then according to Ellen Huijgh this is a diplomatic practice of rulers communicating with people in a foreign state (Constantinou et al. 437). The term itself has been regarded as a rather new term because it first emerged in the mid-19th century. Yet, at the same time, its elements were already in use during ancient times.

Like traditional diplomacy, this practice has also gone through progress, which has made it more open to different group participation. Traditional, as it is referred to, included more state-oriented actions to mobilize foreign audiences behind their set goals. For this, the states would use their set normative framework to conduct operations by giving out less information but reaching towards maximized attention for their goals. These examples were, for example, during the Cold War, when the United States of America was focused on getting its message across using broadcast radio stations like Voice of America. But as the technological revolution became more and more influential, these practices also needed to adapt. This brought in new technologies, which made it possible to reach diverse groups. This in itself led to the reorganization of the work with the public. Because communication technologies have also improved, public input has also become an integral part of shaping public diplomacy. This has meant that different audiences would bring up different aspects of foreign policy areas, which they saw as vital themselves. Traditionally, the audience has held a passive role, and the state has been the proactive actor.

An important point, it is necessary to point out here, is Joseph Nye's concept of soft power. It is described as how much a state can achieve without using the military, but by persuading other stately actors by its example. If a state wields a large amount of soft power, then it could influence other actors without using military power against them. Because of that notion, the concept of soft power has been used quite often in analyzing the successes or failures of public diplomacy.

As it has been established, then public diplomacy is a part of the diplomacy toolkit. But as it was shown, then the main objective of this practice is to interact with different audiences abroad. Then following the digital technologies will rise, it is vital as well to take a look at how applying these technologies have transformed diplomacy itself and whether this process can be described as a hybrid diplomacy.

The concept of hybrid diplomacy is a term coined by Corneliu Bjola and Ilan Manor (Bjola, Manor. 2021). This describes how diplomacy has adopted certain digital technologies into its everyday operations and the consequences of these actions. The concept itself was coined during the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of this decade, which was accompanied by several long-lasting lockdowns and made the adoption of digital technologies more or less vital for conducting different work-related activities, including in diplomacy.

In their article, Bjola and Manor (Bjola, Manor. 2021. 471-491) argue that there is a new phase of engagement, where physical and virtual communication would become more or less equal parts of conducting diplomacy. In this article, both authors point towards a trend of digitalization. This has started the adoption of new mediums of communication, to keep in contact with diasporas around the world and attract new investments to one's country. In general, the argument is that diplomacy is bound to change and would need to focus more on the wider public than it used to. This coincides with Hujigh notion of public diplomacy evolution, which emphasizes growing public input in reaction to the diplomatic activities. But as the pandemic lockdowns ended and the virus itself became less dangerous, our lives returned to pre-pandemic normality, where some aspects – virtual diplomacy, for example were set aside as an alternative way of conducting diplomacy. Still, some things have remained, and that is communicating via digital platforms. This term or diplomatic practice is a part of several tools that belong to digital diplomacy

2.2.2. What is digital diplomacy?

As mentioned above, different diplomatic practices have emerged. All of them have one thing in common, and it is the use of digital. Therefore, it would be wise to stress a concrete term of digital diplomacy. In this case of that term, some aspects have to be pointed out from the start. Firstly, the development of the field is quite new. Therefore, the number of available literature is little. Due to the fact of continued development of the field, the available literature could become redundant. Before proceeding into the discussion of digital diplomacy, the author will present a quote describing the concept by Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes (Bjola, Holmes. 2015. 8-15):

„The past decade has seen diplomats' growing use of digital technologies in a process often referred to as 'digital diplomacy'. Since 2008, diplomatic services have experimented with establishing virtual embassies, creating social media channels to interact with foreign populations, launching smartphone applications, establishing new digital task forces, assembling big data units, revamping communication procedures in multilateral organizations, and writing their algorithms. "(Bjola, Holmes. 2015. 9)

So, what does this mean in action? Starting from the top: diplomats using digital technologies. As is the case, all areas of life have started to adopt digital tools in their operations. In retrospect, the first digital diplomacy act was performed thirty years ago. This was an email exchange between United States President Bill Clinton and Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt (Bjola, Holmes. 2015. 170). In this series of emails, they exchanged invitations for an official state visit. And as the development continues, so are new tools of operation are being added to the diplomatic toolbox. And for this adaptation ministries of foreign affairs have built up task forces. As described above, this means reaching out to different foreign audiences with different channels.

This also includes using new technologies in making the ministerial work more efficient – i.e. big data analytics. This has included introducing different digital applications for citizens and foreigners, such as digital visas for entering a country. And when using data analysis, then this would also include using all the ministerial documents to reach towards better foreign policy decisions.

The above-mentioned aspects were also described by Nicholas Westcott in 2008. In his article (Westcott. 2008. 16-19), he pointed out four dimensions that the digital shift would influence. Firstly, he points towards the aspect of service delivery. In this example, the digital sphere would influence access to publicly available services such as consular services. Under this category would fall the diplomats themselves, who would become more interconnected with one another. Secondly, he points towards ideas which coincide with Joseph Nye`s concept of soft power. In this digital sphere is another less controllable battleground for different ideas, and embracing it proves helpful for distributing the right narratives. Thirdly, he points to networks, which have moved to digital platforms, and the necessity to establish a presence to retain a position in the discussion. And finally, he points towards the aspect of quickly handing information about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs activities.

One example of the digital shift, what Alec J. Ross set out to do in 2008 (Sandre. 2015. 3-7). Under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, he was in charge of reforming the United States State Department by adopting different digital technologies to improve its working process. Secondly, at that time, the state department moved into establishing its presence on social media platforms. This was done to improve access to foreign policy actors for the public. Added to that, these platforms were used to send out messages to the public. But this raises whether this embrace of new technologies is detrimental to diplomacy or whether it is another part of the toolbox.

One could say that, according to Bjola and Holmes, digital diplomacy is supplementary to traditional diplomatic practices. This is also supported by the definition offered by the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which states that digital diplomacy is foreign policy conducted on digital platforms (Adesina. 2017. 4). This shows that diplomacy would benefit from adapting to new technologies. This would ensure that state messages could be heard around the globe. But there are also critics, who argue that using digital tools is not as effective as is alleged (Sandre. 2015 28-24). One cause of this is the multitude of information that is available on the internet. And usually, things that stand out are less filled with substance than eye-catching phrases and hyperbole. So this would require that diplomacy would adapt in balancing substantial information with dividing it out in an eye-catching manner.

From this arises the aspect of applying social media platforms in conducting diplomacy. These channels of communication grew in importance during the last decade. This has also made them an important way to convey one's message to the public. Therefore, different ministries of foreign affairs and international organizations have embraced social media platforms. These platforms' importance lies in the chance of reaching wider audiences than through traditional channels of communication. Secondly, it has made communication faster. That has applied to both malignant actors and those countering them. In more traditional outlets, malignant actors could not hide themselves and would be held accountable. On social media platforms, they could take the initiative. This led to a surge in trying to stand up to these narratives, through communicating countering claims against them.

As an example of social media platforms usage, there has also emerged the term of twiplomacy (Chhabra. 2020. 1-10). This term is strictly derived from using platform X (formerly known as Twitter) in conducting diplomacy. In this example, there were examples of how this platform was used. For example, there was the example of Donald Trump, who, until getting thrown

out, was an avid user of the platform. In his example, there are both informing the public and amplifying conflicts with other nations. Secondly, these platforms are used as crisis management tools. As these platforms are useful for quickly informing, actors can enact their plans and make them operational faster. Thirdly arises the aspect of image enchantment, or as it could be described, nation branding. Nation branding or image enchantment is described as a concentrated set of actions to present one's state. In this sense, states focus on their strengths through marketing practices. In this, a state could focus on either the economic potential of a state, showing its cultural supremacy, or portray itself as politically viable.

Although, as Ilan Manor and Elad Segev (Manor, Segev. 2015 308-324) pointed out, there are significant differences among the platforms. In their article, they discussed differences in using X and Facebook. The latter is more suitable for reaching out to a wider range of audiences. When it comes to X, this is a more demanding platform. Because the build-up of the platform prefers more opinion- and information-centered exchanges. In their article, the above-mentioned authors focused on the usage of social media in diplomacy. The findings showed that in 2015, there was a significant lack of engagement with the official accounts. This was explained by the aspect that the observed actors were not able to enhance the usage of social media correctly.

From this also appears the difference that the digital shift has caused in diplomacy. In the past, diplomacy was centered around professional agents. These people were operating in the name of a certain actor – the state. In this case, diplomatic engagement is conducted between these actors via agents. Mostly this remains the case until this day, and internal audiences are in this a passive actor. But thanks to digital tools, the communication between the public and professionals has become a dialogue. In this case, diplomacy has to take into account more input. This would include praise for the right decisions. More importantly, this includes adjusting policymaking when it receives criticism. And using digital mediums has intensified the dialogue between diplomats and the public in its variety. This would include citizens in need of consular assistance. Adding to that, this could be NGOs reaching out with their suggestions for future diplomacy goals.

As the literature has shown, then describing digital diplomacy is filled with different aspects. In it, there is the central aspect of digital adoption. Whether it would be using data analysis to improve work processes. Or it could be embracing social media platforms for engaging with

partners abroad. But for the following thesis, there is another important aspect that needs to be defined. This means defining different aspects of interstate armed conflict.

2.3. Defining inter-state armed conflict

For the case of studying digital diplomacy in interstate armed conflict, this thesis must define what kind of conflict it is. The following subchapter would focus on defining the different stages of war and setting out to explain the general aspects of different stages in question: hybrid warfare and full-scale invasion.

Interstate armed conflict, unlike war, this can be clearly defined. Even though this should also be followed up with academic studies regarding this phenomenon. Drawing from Claus von Clausewitz then armed conflict is defined as: "the continuation of politics by other means, involving organized violence between two or more parties to impose their will on the adversary. (Von Clausewitz. 1976. 75-87)"

As it has been debated for long decades, then the aspect of a full-scale interstate conflict was put under doubt. One example of this has been James Lee Ray in his article "Does interstate war have a future?" (Ray. 2002. 1-28). There he argued that in some regions, among them Europe there is a possibility that interstate armed conflicts would remain in the past.

The same can be said of the article by Jyri Raitasalo and Joonas Sipila, who in 2004 published an article about redefining the meaning of war after the end of the Cold War. Before the 1990s, the concept of war or interstate armed conflict remained within the framework of Clausewitzian thought, where war was defined as a continuation of political discourse with other means and meant applying force to compel the opposition to the attacker's will (Raitasalo, Sipila. 2004. 53-56). After the Cold War, the definitions started to include non-state actors in the conceptualization of armed conflicts and left states more or less aside.

At the same time, the conflict definitions themselves have remained the same throughout the changing times. In his article, Paul R. Hensel points out the similar aspects that define interstate conflict, as was done by Ray, Raitasalo, and Sipila in their respective articles. The focus remains on the territorial change, which two or more countries compete for. Also, there should be other issues, which could lead to a coming conflict (Hensel. 1996. 44-46).

In every conflict there are different stages, which differ from one another by the intensity of the conflict (Andrews, Tjoswold. 1983. 223-228). This would include starting from escalating tensions between the states involved. Then, from the escalations, there would eventually be an

armed conflict. Finally, this would lead to a truce and, finally, a peace agreement. In the current thesis, the author uses two different stages of conflict. These would be applied to highlight different influences that the stages of interstate conflict have on digital diplomacy.

Regarding the hybrid conflict, this involves using a wide range of methods. This could include diplomatic pressure and cyber or informational warfare to destabilize another state, as was described by Hans-Georg Ehrhart, whilst discussing aspects of postmodern warfare (Ehrhart. 2017. 268-269). The goal of this kind of warfare is to destabilize one's adversary without direct intervention, as mentioned above. For this, there is a Russian toolkit, described for the United States Special Forces Command, which could be used in practice (Chivvis. 2017. 3-4):

- Firstly, it would use information operations. This would include using different media channels to enforce the aggressor's views. Among these would be constructing a favorable discussion among the public. This would be using either allied operatives in third states. Or it could also rely on fake engagement using trolls to act as if they were real users.
- Secondly, there are cyberspace operations for collecting vital information. This could either be used for espionage or leaked to the public. The latter would be used to cause instability among the other side or their allies.
- Thirdly, there is the use of proxy fighters or embedding aggressor combatants among these fighters. These fighters could be used to conduct armed aggression against another state. In contrast with a full-scale armed conflict, these fighters would give the aggressor room to deny.
- Fourthly, there are economic levers, which could be used in conflict. As states economies have become more interdependent with one another, then a sudden economic disturbance could also influence decisions of states countering a hybrid operation.
- Finally, there is the political influence. This would include mobilizing sympathetic audiences and actors. With that, an aggressor could achieve support among third states with presenting their case.

But what makes the difference between hybrid conflict and full-scale conflict? It has been argued that in defining hybrid armed conflict, the definition itself includes aspects that can be attributed to full-scale armed conflict. On the other hand, the hybrid armed conflict has been widened to include several other provocational steps taken (Bankov. 2024. 10-14). One could say that an attack against another actor, although the attacking actor denies it, is not different.

But from traditional warfare, the hybrid warfare is different from the other side, continuing the denial of participating in that war. Therefore, there is a declaration of war, which does not explicitly say war, but in its whole purpose means just that. This should be added with the fact of how the conflict is conducted. This is connected to whether participating fighters can be identified. In the case of a hybrid armed conflict, combatants are not identifiable. This would ensure the participants a chance of plausible denial. In the case of a full-scale interstate armed conflict, the difference would be that all participants recognize their own and the antagonistic fighters as representing their respective states.

From here arises the question, whether the conduct during a conflict can be described as diplomacy anymore. One could ask whether diplomatic actions have also become part of the conflict and diplomacy has been overtaken by informational warfare.

2.4. Theoretical framework for the thesis

For the following thesis, the author sets out to define digital diplomacy in a conflict situation. In the following paragraph, the author discusses how interstate conflict and digital diplomacy would be connected for the following thesis. Secondly, the author sets out to choose a definition of digital diplomacy for the following thesis.

First of all, different aspects of digital diplomacy need to be evaluated. This is caused by the fact that this field is filled with the widening scope of the digital realm. One could use all the aspects under the digital, but then the focus would need to change. For example, this would entail studying the digitalization of working processes in a Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, it should be evaluated which parts of the digital realm should be included here. One of the researched aspects would be studying the presence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on social media. Adding to that, there is also the aspect of virtual embassies. This is also an example of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' presence in the digital realm. But unlike presence in the social media platforms, this would be an example of state representation on an official level. Apart from giving information, these platforms can also offer services. For example, this would include offering consultations for investments or consular advice for citizens.

Next to that would be studying the change in working processes. For example, whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs applies to its work process data analysis (Westcott. 2008.). This could also be researched, discussing which programs and methods are used in conducting data analysis. Moving on from this, the coming applications of artificial intelligence should also be researched. This would include looking into how these aspects are used to optimize work

processes in the ministry. Although in this lies a problem. For the coming thesis, some of these aspects of digital diplomacy are not applicable.

The first problematic aspect is the fact that previously offered definitions are too wide. As it was mentioned above, the realm of digital is widening. Digital started from just computerizing the ministry (Sandre. 2015 21-24; Bjola, Holmes. 2015. 170-172). In this case, even sending an email was considered revolutionary. As times have moved on, digital has influenced all aspects of diplomacy. To reach the necessary definition, some offered aspects should be set aside. One example of this would be the digitalization of work processes. In the current thesis, knowledge of whether a Ministry of Foreign Affairs applies in its work on Word or Excel would not prove useful. One can presume that these programs are applied in most states.

Moving on from the latter, using data analysis to reach better work results. This aspect could also be important, but not necessarily vital. Even though using data analysis has become a part of an inseparable part of the work process. In the case of examining digital diplomacy in interstate conflict, internal working processes should be left aside. The reason for that lies in the fact that internal processes are not important in this case. Describing work processes would not deliver the answers about the diplomatic mobilization of the general public and the elites. This would offer the answers towards how the ministry would operate. On the other hand, it would be infertile to give answers to how the outside world interprets actions taken. Moreover, these aspects would serve better for an analysis of various public institutions themselves, rather than diplomacy in action.

Thirdly, the aspect of constructing and launching different applications and other digital tools in diplomacy (Manor, Segev. 2015. 322). One can argue that these aspects would prove to be useful as part of the definition. First of all, these applications are meant to be used for outside audiences. These gadgets are used to present the state in the way how state wants to appear. The aspect of appearance is also variable because of the different segments. In here lies a problem with these digital institutions and gadgets: these are too specific. This entails that these digital applications and institutions are more of a niche product, which entails previous knowledge about the state in question. Quite often, this includes a minority of well-informed people who are more connected with the state in question. This would include either originating from the state in question or, for example, having experience. Taking into account the rare usage of these gadgets in action, this aspect should also be left aside. The reasoning behind this is the following. During the time of an interstate conflict, it is vital to reach a wide audience.

One can argue that these forms are useful in getting nearer. But being specific instruments, these should be left out. In conclusion, even though these applications are worthy of study, for the current thesis goals, they are redundant.

Therefore, the following definition should retain the aspect of using social media platforms for communicating with foreign populations (Bjoja, Holmes. 2015. 16-17). Firstly, it is necessary to see how the interstate conflict in its different stages would influence the presence and narratives used in this situation. During the conflict, there is a necessity to mobilize or pacify foreign audiences. For that, using digital platforms is a relatively cost-effective way to conduct diplomatic efforts. Firstly, these platforms offer free access. This means that without a large financial expense, a state has a chance to make its case.

Secondly, these platforms give access to a wide range of audiences. This includes decision-makers in different states and other actors with significant influence (Chhabra. 2020. 6-8). Adding to that these platforms offer access to wider audiences. These different segments would prove necessary to mobilize public opinion. This mobilization is vital to pressure decision makers through citizenry. And through that pressure is possible to making way for their narratives mainstream.

Thirdly, there is the aspect of quickly reacting to events unfolding. During inter-state conflicts participating states are inclined to pursue their agenda. Therefore, each side is racing with the other to reach outside audiences. In this case, these platforms offer the chance to counter other sides information with their facts. This would be vital to offer the right information in the case when the other side uses false information to construct their narratives. Moving on from digital diplomacy to establishing the connection with interstate conflict.

States are usually in some level of conflict with other states. If taking a realist perspective, then states are competing in an anarchical system. Commonly, the conflicts remain disputes over some areas of concern. These conflicts would usually entail reaching a peaceful solution. For this, the states usually turn towards bilateral diplomacy. In the case of full-scale inter-state armed conflict, the difference is the fact that the intensity of conflict has significantly grown (Andrews, Tjosvold, 1983. 223-228). Therefore, the intensity of conflict dictates the different approaches in diplomacy. Depending on the levels of support needed, diplomacy has to either intensify its efforts on the international stage.

If the conflict continues to be hybrid, then usually its intensity is lower (Chivvis. 2017. 3-4, Erhart, 2017. 268-269). From that, it is necessary to prove on a diplomatic level that the other

side is participating in the conflict. This comes in a situation when the other side is denying its participation. Therefore, it is necessary to portray the other side in its real form. This is also necessary to be supported with evidence of their participation. Whether it is active participation or supporting different proxy groups. These kinds of conflicts would need different mobilization (Bjola, Holmes. 2015. 20-22). Among the foreign audiences, there would be a notable skeptic. Therefore, it is necessary to mobilize support for the case of proving the other side's role. And as these conflicts could be less intensive, then there is less need for large-scale military support.

If the interstate armed conflict intensifies, then diplomatic efforts would need to intensify. A full-scale invasion would leave out the former goal of proving the other side's participation. In this case, it would be more necessary to prove their case against the antagonists. During full-scale interstate armed conflict, all the participants are fighting for bystanders' opinions. In this case, it is necessary to mobilize foreign audiences for support. It would include just keeping their position dominant among different foreign audiences. Among these would be the narratives about presenting the other side as aggressors. Adding to that, the state would use diplomacy to mobilize material support for their cause (Adesina. 2017 4-7). This would include financial, military, or humanitarian support. Or there is a necessity to leave them passive towards the developing events. This is necessary to show the conflict as an unimportant part of the international stage and minimize it. Therefore, it would include using tools, which are closer to informational warfare (Zeitsoff. 2017. 1970-1984) in causing chaos and uncertainty among foreign audiences.

As the armed conflicts are intensive, it is important to react. Therefore, classical diplomacy is important on a strategic level in securing support among decision makers (Constantinou et al. 2016 207-224, Cooper et al. 2013). But mobilizing support and presenting one case would prove more useful than operatively organizing and presenting one's case. In here also different stages of conflict also play a role. When the conflict is in a hybrid phase and is less intensive, then it would prove unnecessary to quick mobilization of different audiences. At this time is important to inform wider audiences, but the important part is the above-mentioned proving task. In the stage of full-scale conflict, the intensity of conflict would entail a crowing intensity in mobilizing foreign audiences. Therefore, it would be important to mobilize audiences through all instruments at their disposal. In this case, digital diplomacy would prove to be an operative channel to conduct this task.

For the following thesis, the author would continue with using Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes' definition of digital diplomacy:

"The use of the internet and new information communication technologies (ICTs) to help achieve diplomatic objectives" (Bjola, Holmes. 2015. 35

3. Methodology and methods.

In the following chapter, the author will continue with the methodological development of this thesis. First of all, the focus would be on introducing a suitable research design. This is followed by the method applied for the research. For the coming thesis the author has opted to use narrative analysis to study Ukrainian digital diplomacy. This method of analysis would be applied because of its applicability with the established theoretical framework from the last chapter.

To follow up on the theoretical framework established in the last chapter, the author recognizes the coming expectations for the method and research design. Taking into account that, the focus is to study the reasons behind using digital diplomacy in different stages of an armed conflict. This would entail an in-depth study of one directly involved parties in this conflict. The set framework entails that approaches in digital diplomacy would shift after the armed conflict escalates. Therefore, this study would need to apply methods that would best suit studying the changes in conducting digital diplomacy during a hybrid conflict after it escalates into full-scale military conflict. This would have been done in the coming subchapters, where the author explains in detail the applied method.

Before continuing with the presentation of the methods and research design, the author gives a brief introduction to the coming chapter. The first subchapter would give an overview of the research design applied for this thesis. This would be followed by subchapter describing method of analysis – narrative analysis. Finally, this chapter would be concluded by introducing the case of Ukrainian digital diplomacy.

3.1. Research design

For the following thesis, the author offers the following research design. Because of the goal to study in depth Ukrainian digital diplomacy, the study would be a single case study. Using this form would prove to be fruitful in establishing a concrete understanding of Ukrainian digital diplomacy successes among their allies. This would be done for the following set of reasons. Firstly, this approach would be able to offer a far-reaching set of observations of the studied phenomenon (Landman. 2008. 87-89). Secondly, this approach would be useful in studying a case in a certain context. Therefore, offering a contextual description of a certain case. And thirdly, this approach would be useful in establishing outlying classifications surrounding digital diplomacy in the context of armed conflict escalation. In the case of studying Ukrainian digital diplomacy, a single case study can give a far-reaching overview of the changing dynamics of digital diplomacy in the context of escalating military conflict.

Although it should be mentioned, that like every research design, single case studies have their own drawbacks. Among them is the aspect generalization of conclusion. As it was mentioned above, then this design offers in-depth view of the studied case. Because the lack of comparison, then wider generalizations would prove to less applicable on other cases.

Firstly, timeframes, which will be studied, start from September 2021 and last until September 2022. This period would be divided into four sub-periods. The first two periods would cover September until November 2021 and December 2021 to February 2022. The following subchapters will analyze the periods March-June 2022 and July-September 2022. In these timeframes, the analysis would focus on the changes in narratives used to conduct digital diplomacy. For analyzing these periods and narratives presented, the author would rely on posts from X (formerly known as Twitter).

The following design is suitable for this thesis for the following reasons. First of all, the chosen timeframes would illustrate the difference in digital diplomacy conducted. The first two timeframes concentrate on hybrid conflict. During these timeframes, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia remained at the hybrid level. This followed up by the coming two timeframes, which will concentrate on the first six months of the full-scale armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

Secondly, this design proves to be for determining changes in narratives. Narrative analysis would present and explain the changes in this phenomenon. This would be connected with the aspect that during the less intense period of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, efforts in the digital diplomacy front were more versatile. Meaning that Ukraine was conducting regular diplomatic conduct added with more attention towards threats from the Russian side. With the start of the full-scale invasion, there remains the aspect of narrative shift. This was used to rally support from potential foreign allies.

Finally, the author regards this design would be data-intensive. This could entail problems in time consumption for the analysis, and leading on from that, the quality of the study itself. Even though this is the case for this thesis, the author considers that the set number of accounts is sufficient to be analyzed without giving up on the quality of the study. Meaning that the design allows the set data target to remain within boundaries, where it would still be collected and analyzed within a sensible amount of time.

Regarding data collection, then the author has opted to collect on a wide-reaching specter. Meaning that for the coming thesis, the author would collect original tweets and retweets done

on the studied accounts. In this collection the author would not differentiate whether a tweet or a retweet includes any added material as a separate category.

Following data collection, the author would continue the analysis by coding the collected data. This would be done by applying a deductive approach. Due to this approach, the categories are determined prior to coding. The analysis would be done as follows. First of all, the collected data would be put into chronological order in tables. These tables would be set following an aforementioned frame. After the tables are completed, data points are analyzed and coded accordingly. With the combined codes, the generalized code categories are established for the coming narrative analysis.

3.2. Narrative analysis

To pursue causal links, the author would analyze Ukrainian digital diplomacy narratives. The analysis would focus on Ukrainian narratives during different stages of the Ukrainian-Russian war. Narratives embedded in these tweets are analyzed by using narrative analysis in the analytical chapter of the thesis. In this case, the author considers narratives as the messages that Ukraine has been spreading in the digital realm. Adding to this, these messages have been deemed by the Ukrainian side to be of the utmost importance. These messages would be considered as parts, which would make up into general line of nation branding in the state of armed conflict. This would entail coding the collected data and then dividing these codes into code categories. This is necessary to determine the narratives presented by the cases studied.

Narrative analysis as a method is suited for analyzing and constructing an understanding of the social realm. Narrative analysis is used as a way to analyze textual material, which presents the favored image of a certain object (Fairclough. 2012. 51-65). In doing so, the collected tweets would be used in deriving general narratives presented by Ukrainian digital channels. By using this data, the author examines how Ukraine has set out to present itself to the wider public and decision-makers abroad.

In this method, there lies a problem of application. Narrative analysis is most commonly used to study individual experiences and understandings (Gee. 1999. 111-113). Therefore, raises the question could a state as an actor could be a source for narrative creation. Regarding the ways of presenting one's state on the international stage, these also include elements of storytelling. The stated goal for a state would be to present itself in the best way possible. Whilst doing that, the state would strive towards constructing a favorable image of itself. This means that a state engages in narrative construction.

When it comes to using narrative analysis, this method has been used widely in the former post-soviet region. Although it has been mostly used to study cultural phenomena in the post-Soviet space (Wertsch. 1998). Among the examples of it have been the cases in Armenia, where narrative analysis was applied to study the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Krzysztań. 2021). The second example is about historical narratives in the Central Asian republics and these states' experiences in constructing their historical narratives (Dababaev. 2021). In the case of Ukraine, this method has been applied to study the personal narratives of emerging leaders (Susak. 2005). In this article, Susak studied the development of emerging leaders in Ukraine and their core narratives. For this, he conducted in-depth interviews with persons in executive leadership at the national and regional levels.

In the following thesis, narrative analysis will be approached inductively. This approach would be applied as follows. Firstly, the data will be analyzed by giving the studied data points a code. Moving on, the similar codes would be put together to form a code category. When categorizing data, two approaches will be applied. One part of the categories would contain data points, which specifically mention certain subjects. For example, if there is a tweet mentioning environmental concerns, then it would be placed under the category of environment. The second part of the categories would consist of data points mentioning the subject in a discussion manner. In this case, the studied data point would not have a concrete mention of the code category. Instead, it will focus on the general position offered in the tweet.

3.3. Case study: Ukrainian digital diplomacy.

The following subchapter will give a short description of Ukrainian digital diplomacy. This would focus on examining Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For studying this object, the author would apply seven accounts of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These accounts would be the source for narratives, that the Ukrainian side built during the Ukrainian – Russian war. Secondly, the chapter would focus on discussing the case studies relevance.

Before starting with the further discussion about the case at hand, it is necessary to establish the criteria for suitability. One thing that this case should include is the notion of timeliness. This means that the selected case or cases can still be considered to be up-to-date and important.

The second aspect would be the aspect that differentiates from other similar cases. There are ongoing armed conflicts, where sides have also been engaged in mobilizing support from foreign audiences. Some of them have been successful, and others have gone unnoticed. In the current framework, it is vital to have a case where the studied state has moved to mobilize

support from across the spectrum. That includes both elites making decisions and the general public, who are influencing by giving their input to the broader discussion. To reach this level of mobilization, the studied case should be extraordinarily able to mobilize support. And therefore, it remains to be determined what steps were taken by the case to reach this level of support.

Thirdly, the important aspect is the fact that this support remained continuous and reached new levels of engagement by the respective supporters abroad. This would mean that successful mobilization has had a long-lasting positive effect on the selected case. Last but not least, the studied case should have an element of change in digital diplomacy conduct. This would mean that the case should have taken a different approach in the digital sphere before the escalation of the conflict, and afterwards would have shifted into a different presence in the digital sphere.

Regarding the question of relevance, why study digital diplomacy conducted by the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. First of all, this leads back to the research question of the following thesis. Starting from the beginning, the full-scale armed conflict in Ukraine caught the world's attention. This was followed by majority support for Ukrainians among the general public and decision makers. Although this should be mentioned beforehand that the level of support in this case is different. Some states have taken different steps against the Russian Federation. Among these steps are supplying weapons, enforcing sanctions. On the classical diplomatic front, it would include expressing condemnation and support for the victims of the aggression. The variance of support means that the focus of this thesis is on the most ardent supporters of Ukraine.

Diplomacy is generally conducted by ministries of foreign affairs. And following the definition of digital diplomacy (Bjola, Holmes. 2015. 35), the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be the focus of research. Conducting diplomacy and having a professional foreign service could be traced back to the first Ukrainian states. In the case of Ukraine, the MFA was established before its independence from the Soviet Union. In 1944, the Ukrainian SSR and with Belarusian SSR were allowed to establish separate bilateral relations. From this, the Ukrainian MFA was established once again. Because of that, Ukraine became a founding member of the United Nations and held memberships in several international organizations. And after declaring themselves independent, the reach of the ministry has continued to grow.

Although it should be mentioned that the Ukrainian foreign policy priorities have differed from the current priorities. Because of its border with Russia, this line of engagement was considered vital, then it has been given priority in the past (Potekhin. 1998. 37-56). This was the case before the Orange Revolution in 2005; after that, it became apparent that Ukraine should start diversifying its foreign communications (Armstrong. 2004. 31-39). After the Revolution of Dignity, the Russian side, as a trustworthy partner, has led to a shift towards the European Union and other Western states. Added to that, the current war has opened up new priority states in the so-called “Global South” (Razumkov Center. 2025. 1-16).

The ministry's tasks and goals are in common with other states' MFA's. Generally, meaning that their goal is to represent their state on the international level with dignified professionalism. As their strategic priorities, the MFA states seven points. Regarding the following thesis, the seventh is the most necessary:

“strengthening the international credibility of Ukraine, improving the country’s profile and attractiveness on the world stage and overcoming distorted and outdated stereotypes through the means of public and cultural diplomacy” (Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Although it has been argued that the most effective representative of Ukraine has been their president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This was both in running up to the escalation and after the start of the full-scale invasion. In addition to President Zelenskyy, there are other influential figures whose role in Ukrainian digital diplomacy should not be underestimated. For example, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are also Minister Dmytro Kuleba's thoughts and attempts to reach out on a personal level. However, the focus point for the following thesis is to study digital diplomacy conducted on the institutional level. Therefore, this study will focus on the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' conduct of digital diplomacy in its channels. In this, the ministry could opt to use individuals in their efforts, but this is regarded as only one part of the general ministerial diplomacy.

In the current thesis, the goal is to study the change of Ukrainian narratives before and after the full-scale invasion of 2022. The selection of this event is connected with the notion that Ukraine has defined the full-scale invasion, unlike the hybrid war, which has been going on since 2014, as an attempt to eliminate their statehood by Russia. This is supported by the change in the rhetoric of the aggressors – Russians. For this, it is necessary to observe the period of annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and the start of the hybrid war in Donbass. The official rhetoric was doubting the Ukrainian government's legitimacy. This echoed through the

speeches of Vladimir Putin, but there was an important difference. The question of Ukrainian statehood and its legitimacy was not set in doubt (Putin. 2014). Although during these years Russia has employed several tactics added to conventional warfare, for example, cyber-attacks against critical infrastructure (Siboni, Magen. 2016. 1-3, Lehto. 65-71. 2023) and informational warfare (Ajir. Vaillant. 77-79. 2018) to divide the Ukrainian society.

Over the years, the latter changed to a complete denial of Ukrainian sovereignty and diminishing the Ukrainian nation as a mere part of the Russian nation (Putin. 2021). These were followed up by declaring Ukraine a non-state entity from which the “collective west” fights against Russia (Putin. 2022). This same rhetoric has continued in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' policy agenda in 2023, where Ukraine was referred to as a direction, where the “collective west” is closing in on Russia (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 2023).

Even though the full-scale armed conflict erupted on 24th February 2022, there remains a puzzling situation in mobilizing support. Before full-scale armed conflict, Ukraine was already in a hybrid armed conflict with Russia. During the first stages of that armed conflict, Ukraine held the attention of the public. After the most intense stage ended, this armed conflict was left without permanent attention. Therefore, it was interesting to observe the Ukrainians' resolve to mobilize different levels of society abroad. The successes on that front were different regarding regional differences. Especially showing is the fact that Ukraine managed to mobilize and has kept the support among its western allies. Even though there have been calls for revising the conflict and a certain amount of ambiguity, the general support has remained for the Ukrainians.

For completing the set research goal, the author has opted to use data from posts from X (formerly known as Twitter). This platform will be used for the following reasons. First of all, this platform has been used by a lot of decision-makers. Therefore, studying X would prove to be helpful in establishing the efforts taken to persuade decision makers abroad. Following that, on this platform, there are also persons whose opinions help to shape the attitudes of the citizenry. Although the author recognizes that there are other platforms, where a state, in this case, Ukraine, can approach the citizenry directly. Regarding this, the author would refrain from other social networks for the following reason. The set research target requires a single platform in which the Ukrainian MFA could reach out to both the decision makers and the general public. And because of its build-up, X could be used to give out verified information. In the case of the Ukrainian-Russian war, this aspect should not be underestimated. As there

have been examples of Russia applying disinformation to its military arsenal, countering it with the utmost speed has been important for the Ukrainians.

Secondly, because traditionally X (formerly known as Twitter) has been used by decision makers, this aspect of the study is concretely covered. The aspect of informing the citizenry requires further explanation. Throughout X accounts, the Ukrainian MFA could reach out to the more informed part of the citizenry, who would be able to reach out to the respected audiences. This helps to inform the wider foreign audiences through their local respected opinion leaders and other people of influence, who are not in a position themselves to be the decision makers in the current case. Therefore, the author would focus on studying digital diplomacy approaches on a single platform.

Firstly, the author focuses on the main ministerial account of the Ukrainian MFA. This would give the most wide-ranging overview of the digital diplomacy efforts done in the timeframes selected. Secondly, this would be followed up by extracting data from six other Ukrainian MFA institutions.

Several aspects support using the accounts of representative offices in the selected international organizations. Starting with the aspect that in a military conflict, it is vital to reach out to a wide range of decision makers and the general public. These three international organizations hold are wide-reaching platform, where the Ukrainian MFA was mobilizing support for their cause in the ongoing conflict with Russia. To follow up on the latter, this thesis must shed light on organizations with different focus points for their member states. Whether it is providing peace or military security, and whether it is offering economic/financial-related support for the state.

For this thesis, the author will examine the accounts of representative offices in the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations. And in the case of these aforementioned organizations, above mentioned provisions have been fulfilled. In the case of the European Union, there is a platform from which Ukraine has managed to mobilize financial and military support from its member states and the organization itself. In the case of NATO, the cooperation has been strictly military-related and has also been a platform to advance support among so-called Western states. When it comes to including the United Nations, this can be described as an outlier compared to the other two organizations. In the current thesis framework, it is important to view an organization that offers a chance to analyze which narratives were used to mobilize

support on a global level. Therefore, studying narratives that were meant to widen the impact of the Ukrainian-Russian war on a wider level than the transatlantic region.

The following three accounts are Ukrainian embassies in states, which have been selected by the following criteria. First of all, as the focus is on Ukrainian mobilization of its western allies, these states were selected from either Europe or North America. Added to the latter, the selected states should have been supportive of Ukraine during both stages of Russian–Ukrainian conflict. Thirdly, these states should be representative of different influences. For the sake of variety, there should be a leader in this bloc of nations. This state could offer both material and non-material support. The second state should be a state that has fewer capabilities to offer material support, but has proven itself to be an ardent supporter. Among them should be a small state, which cannot offer that much material support, but has the opportunity to mobilize support by example. Taking into account the set criteria, the author has opted to use Ukrainian embassies in these three states: The United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Estonia. Regarding choosing Estonia, this falls under the third above-mentioned category – a small state with a strong moral stance. Compared to the two other chosen states, Estonia is an outlier. Apart from the moral stance, the material support comparing the United States and the United Kingdom has been smaller. By adding Estonia as a state, which would be studied, the author sets out to present differences between the larger and influential states and small states, which are establishing themselves among the greater powers.

4. Analysis of Ukrainian digital diplomacy

In the following analytical chapter, the author will pursue establishing the differences in digital diplomacy practices. The layout of the chapter would be as follows. Firstly, the author would present the collected data. This is followed by the subchapter, where narrative analysis would be conducted. And thirdly, the chapter would be concluded with concluding remarks on the most important aspects.

Firstly, the author would start by introducing the results of the data collection. In this subchapter, data collected from the aforementioned Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs X (formerly known as Twitter) accounts will be presented. This would include the main account of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is followed up by the six accounts from other subdivisions of the ministry. Among these are three representations at international organizations. For the use of the thesis, these are the offices of the European Union. This is followed by the representative office at NATO. And thirdly, there is the representative office at the United Nations. The other three accounts are from three states, which were selected among the most ardent supporters of Ukraine. And to offer a variety of states, the author opted for using three embassies from states with different levels of influence and reach in the international community. The combining factor in this is the known allied persuasion of these states. For this, the author has opted for using accounts of Ukrainian embassies in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Estonia.

Secondly, the author would continue to analyze the collected data. The following analysis focuses on narratives in Ukrainian digital diplomacy. For this, the author has opted to use narrative analysis to derive the narratives, which the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs used in their digital channels. This method would be applied to identify the aspects that the Ukrainian side has used to mobilize its supporters abroad. Regarding the timeframes and levels of conflict, narrative analysis would be applied to explain the different sets of narratives applied. With this, the author would explain narrative shifts, which took place after the escalation to a full-scale armed conflict.

4.1. Data collection results and categories

The following subchapter will give an overview of the data used for the coming analysis. Firstly, the author would start with the main account of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Commenting on these results, the resulting code categories will be introduced. These categories are divided into tables as follows. Starting with the categories, which have a concrete mention of certain phrases. That would be followed by categories, which had only a discussion

of different aspects surrounding the category. This is followed by introducing other analyzed accounts and bringing out the outlier categories different from the main account.

	Sept-Nov 2021	Dec 2021-Feb 2022	Mar-Jun 2022	Jul-Sept 2022
Allies	3	96	77	57
Minister	38	38	44	38
Democracy	3	2	3	1
Ukrainian Armed Forces	-	2	159	111
Zelenskyy	-	3	28	54
War Crimes	-	7	51	18
Food Security	-	-	30	28
Humanitarian	1	-	11	-
European Union	8	-	1	-
Zelenska	-	-	3	2
Cyber	-	1	3	-
War Refugees	-	-	15	-
Education	-	-	14	-
UN	7	-	-	-
Referendum	-	-	-	6
MFA	-	-	5	-
Healthcare	-	-	2	-
Environment	-	-	2	-
War	-	1	-	-
Peace	1	-	-	-
Nuclear threat	-	-	1	-
NATO	-	1	-	-
Crimea	1	-	-	-
Culture	1	-	-	-
Russian Aggression	12	53	330	129
Ukrainians	1	1	157	17

Ukraine	11	8	66	22
Memory Politics	4	-	9	12
International organizations	1	-	-	-
Total number of tweets	92	205	1011	495

Table 1: Main X account of Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Regarding the main X account of the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then it should be mentioned beforehand, that this was the most data intensive account. The number of analyzed tweets was 1839. Firstly, the categories with concrete mentions of the title phrase are introduced.

Starting with the category of allies, this category consists of tweets about allied states. In the first studied period, there was little mention of the allied states. In the second time period, there was a significant hike in mentioning the allied states. Mostly, it was done after the start of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Among those tweets were mostly retweets of supportive statements from states. Added to that, there were some retweets of public personalities showing their support, i.e. the pope.

In the category of ministers, there were tweets by and about the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba. Among this category, there were public statements issued by the minister. Added to that, there were excerpts of his public performances in different media outlets. From the latter, the ministerial account presented quotes, which were considered to be the most important aspects of an interview. Finally, these tweets also covered the minister`s meetings with his counterparts.

Under the category of democracy, there were tweets about Ukrainian democratic credentials. In this the general line was to present Ukraine as a functional democracy. For that Ukraine used in every timeframe to emphasize their democratic credentials. In doing so Ukraine aspired to present itself as a part of western democratic value system.

The category of Ukrainian armed forces focused on tweets about aspects surrounding Ukrainian soldiers and their counterparts. Before the full-scale invasion, tweets about the Ukrainian armed forces were not present at all. Starting from the full-scale invasion, on every

single day, the fighting soldiers were saluted for their bravery. These tweets were the most common under this category. In smaller numbers were examples of outstanding differences between them and the Russian armed forces. Among them, emphasizing the role that female volunteers have in the armed forces. There were several examples of celebrating women in combat roles. Apart from presenting people in combat roles, the focus was on animals in service. Most common examples were the dogs from K-9 units. Their tasks were to spot hidden mines, and this gave prominence to Patron, a dog who had sniffed out the greatest amount of hidden explosives. And lastly, tweets were calling for foreign volunteers to join the Ukrainian armed forces' foreign units.

Under the Zelenskyy category, tweets focus on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Among those tweets were the presidential activities in foreign policy. During the two timeframes focusing on the hybrid conflict stage, President Zelenskyy's presence was low. After the start of the full-scale invasion, his presence started to gradually grow. During the last studied time period, his presence was most noticeable in the studied time periods. During the full-scale invasion, this ministry's account was applying its messaging, presidential evening video messages to Ukrainians and foreigners as well.

The category of war crimes focused on the Russian war crimes committed in Ukraine. Among them were the regular updates on the statistics of war crimes committed. These were presented with tweets equalizing Russian soldiers with the crimes they were committing. Some of the most notorious massacres, for example, Bucha and Irpin, were brought out as examples. This was done to present Russian atrocities in their cruelty. Apart from presenting war crimes, there were also calls to establish a tribunal for the culprits. These were followed by calls for investigations against Russian officials and soldiers committing war crimes.

The category of food security was focusing on a new front in the ongoing conflict. As a category, it was present only during the full-scale invasion. This was the case because the Russians started to exploit grain exports as a weapon during the full-scale invasion. With this category, Ukraine made an effort to mobilize global support. Due to the fact that Ukraine is one of the largest grain producers in the world. This allowed showing that this conflict has a global effect, because of a possible famine. In this, Ukraine portrayed Russia as the guilty party in the shortages. This, in turn, was done to counter Russian narratives about them not being the reason behind the blockade of grain exports. Under this category, there were also celebrations of Ukrainian farmers as fighters against famine.

The humanitarian category focused on providing help and support for the civilian population. In this category Ukrainian side started as a provider. Before the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Ukraine offered support to Lithuania in the migrant crisis on the Belarusian border. After the escalation, the Ukrainian side started to highlight the humanitarian situation along the frontlines and on the home front. There, the tweets were highlighting the effects of Russian atrocities. In those tweets, the emphasis was on mentioning of deteriorating humanitarian situation. Therefore, this sets them apart from Russian attack-related tweets.

When it comes to the category of the European Union, then under this category were tweets focusing on Ukrainian and EU relations. These tweets were more present during the first time period studied. During this period, there were several tweets about furthering integration with the EU. During the full-scale invasion time periods, there was only one direct mention of the European Union. This was the signing of the application to join the Union and the start of accession talks with Ukraine. The significance of the moment was amplified with emphasis on the ongoing attacks on the capital, Kyiv, where the signing took place.

The category of Zelenska focuses on the activities of Ukrainian first lady Olena Zelenska. Her activities were presented separately from her husband's. This was because her initiatives were focusing on mobilization support for humanitarian causes. Among them was the first lady's initiative, where she, with like-minded colleagues, was focusing civilian population. For example, the focus is on returning kidnapped Ukrainian children. For coordination, a summit meeting was organized to divide up the future tasks, which was done during the last time period in 2022. Before the start of the full-scale invasion, she remained absent from the official X account of the Ukrainian MFA.

Under the cyber category, there were tweets specifically focusing on cyberspace. Among them were tweets warning about Russian cyber threats. This was followed by announcements, when an actual attack took place against the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Because cyber warfare was used in the same tweets accompanied more conventional forces, for example air raids, this category remained quite minuscule.

The category of war refugees was present during the third studied time period. In this Ukrainian MFA was giving out information to those, who were leaving the country. There were tweets offering information for foreign citizens leaving Ukraine. Added to that there were announcements of support lines for Ukrainians leaving as well. Also this included an element

of counter propaganda against Russia. This was because Russia was exploiting Ukraine, mistakenly stopping foreigners from fleeing the state.

Education category consists of tweets, which focused on the targeting of schools. These tweets were present in only the third studied time period. With those Ukrainian side wished to present Russian done damages to their education system. In those tweets emphasized emotional aspects of destroyed memories and disrupted studies of pupils. During the graduation season, the tweets focused as well on the situation, where ceremonies took place.

Under the category on UN, were tweets focusing on the United Nations. more specifically on the general assembly of the organization. Tweets concerning this category were present during the first category in autumn of 2021. There Ukraine was highlighting their participation in the GA and stating their goals for the coming session.

Category of referendum focused on the Russian referendum in the occupied Ukrainian territories. With those tweets Ukraine was denouncing Russian attempts to give their occupation a legal cover. In the run up to the referendum Ukraine actively engaged in presenting the actual feelings of the people living under occupation. This was done to counter Russian narratives about their popularity among the local population.

The category of MFA was used to code tweets explicitly mentioning the Ukrainian MFA. In those tweets, the focus was on Ukrainian support for those citizens who have fled. Other than the latter, the Ukrainian MFA was directly thanking friendly states for their moral and material support.

Under the category of healthcare, there were similarly to the education category, direct attacks against healthcare facilities. There, the focus was on how the Russian attacks are destroying hospitals. In these tweets, the emphasis was on Russia purposely attacking the healthcare institutions.

The environment category consists of tweets decrying the Russian destruction of the environment. Among those two tweets was one which explicitly focused on accusing Russia of purposeful environmental destruction i.e. ecocide.

The category, which consisted of tweets mentioning war, was minuscule. In this, there was only one direct mention of war during the studied time periods. In this tweet, there was mentioned the heroic sacrifices of Donetsk airport defenders were mentioned. With that tweet, Ukraine reminded the heroic battle and pointed out the real aggressors operating under

disguise. The same was the case for other categories, which had been presented only once. Among them were the categories of Peace, Nuclear Threat, NATO, Crimea, and Culture. These categories had tweets that explicitly mentioned these themes.

This sub-chapter will be continued by describing more descriptive code categories. These are the categories, where the explicit mentioning of the category title was not present in most cases. However, there general discussion in those tweets was connected to the category.

The largest category among those categories was the Russian Aggression. In this category, the direct mention of Russian aggression remained more general. This was present in different wordings of Russian attacks and denouncing their attacks against Ukrainian statehood and its people. During the hybrid conflict time periods, the Russian aggression-related tweets remained quite low. This was due to the low intensity of conflict with Russia. With the start of escalation towards a full-scale invasion, the Russian aggression-related tweets started to grow. Similarly, in the Ukrainian armed forces category, there was a daily pattern of posts about Russian losses on the battlefield. Among tweets, there was a huge portion about Russian attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. One event got amplified with Russian aggression, and this was the siege of Mariupol. Under those tweets, Ukraine presented Russian aggression with daily updates of the situation of the city and the people living there.

Under the category of Ukrainians, the focus was on the people of Ukraine. During the hybrid conflict time periods, the presence of Ukrainian people-related tweets was lower than during full-scale invasion time periods. Before the full-scale invasion, the focus was on a few Ukrainian celebrities, who were known in the wider world. This aspect in the Ukrainians category continued during the full-scale invasion. After the full-scale invasion, ordinary Ukrainians were given the spotlight. Most focus in the starting months was given to the suffering. This was fulfilled with the resilient nature of the entire nation. After the full-scale invasion continued, there was a campaign to introduce Ukrainians who are living near the frontlines. In this, the emphasis was on how resilience helps to deal with the war. Added to that, their messages were about how ordinary Ukrainians have managed to continue living their everyday lives.

The category of Ukraine focuses on different tweets about the Ukrainian state. With those tweets Ukrainian MFA was determined to portray Ukraine in a certain manner. One way of nation branding was to present Ukraine as a diverse and interesting place full of different opportunities. Whether it's open for investments or a tourist destination waiting to be

discovered. This was the case during the hybrid conflict era time periods. This was replaced during the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Former national branding was replaced by a state in war branding. This meant that the focus was on the Ukrainian heroic fight against Russian invaders. During the last studied time period, there was a campaign of Ukrainian heroic cities. This was done to introduce Ukrainian towns most affected by the invasion.

Fourthly, there is the category of Memory Politics. This included tweets, that had historical or memory related themes. For example, there were tweets about the memory relating to Holocaust and the Second World War. With those tweets Ukraine, emphasized their role as a state, which remembers historical lessons learned from past generations.

Finally, there was the category of international organizations, which only had one tweet about the roles of IOs in the Ukrainian situation. With this tweet Ukrainian MFA emphasizes the role of the international community in the Crimea situation.

For the following other accounts, the code categories remained similar to the main account of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This aspect coincides with the changing number of tweets posted. Although there were some posting patterns that remained in line with the main Ukrainian MFA account. Therefore, the author would comment further on the differences in codes and point out categories explicitly present in the following accounts.

	Sept-Nov 2021	Dec 2021-Feb 2022	Mar-Jun 2022	Jul-Sept 2022
Zelenskyy	3	9	109	33
European Union	4	6	18	7
EU Integration	7	4	19	1
Minister	5	3	15	5
Allies	-	6	18	7
Food Security	-	1	10	14
War Crimes	-	1	12	4
Zelenska	-	1	4	8
Ukrainian forces	1	3	4	-
Ukrainian mission	-	-	32	15

Referendum	-	-	-	10
Humanitarian	-	-	2	-
Russian Aggression	6	8	129	72
Ukraine	37	30	53	33
Ukrainians	12	3	13	10
Memory Politics	3	6	8	3
Total number of tweets	78	82	446	219

Table 2: Ukrainian representative office in the European Union

In the account of the Ukrainian EU representative office, there were 825 tweets analyzed. Similarly, to the Ukrainian MFA main account, there were similar patterns and code categories. Among them was the example of a pattern, where the representative office's account gave frequent updates on Russian aggression. Although the frequency was lower than the ministerial account. The same aspect is the presence of historical tweets, which went under the category of memory politics. Finally, there was the presence of Ukraine and Ukrainian-related tweets as well.

There was also a significant difference in approaches from the main ministerial account. Among the tweets, the presence of President Zelenskyy and the first lady Zelenska was larger than in the main account. Secondly, tweets about the European Union and EU integration were also outliers. This difference can be explained because of the representative office's mission to the EU, which needed to be highlighted in their digital channels. Added to the latter, there was a focus on Ukrainian missions' diplomatic and charitable activities.

	Sept-Nov 2021	Dec 2021-Feb 2022	Mar-Jun 2022	Jul-Sept 2022
Minister	3	2	12	2
Ukrainian forces	3	2	9	3
NATO	2	3	3	2
Zelenskyy	.	2	71	4
War crimes	-	2	28	7

Allies	-	3	13	2
Food Security	-	-	3	12
Ambassador	1	-	3	-
Referendum	-	-	-	12
Humanitarian	-	-	4	-
Zelenska	-	-	-	3
Russian Aggression	4	14	162	53
Ukraine	5	9	29	19
Ukrainians	2	1	13	2
Bilateral relations	6	4	2	1
Memory politics	5	-	3	2
Total number of tweets	31	42	355	124

Table 3: Ukrainian representative office in NATO

In the Ukrainian NATO representative office, there were 552 tweets, which were analyzed. In this account, similarly to the EU representative office and ministerial main account, some repeating categories and posting patterns have emerged. Among them are the daily updates on Russian Aggression. This was done in the same manner as the EU representative office. These updates were frequent, but more scarce than the main ministerial account. The reason for more application of these tweets from the ministerial account could be described as examples of Ukrainian credentials as a trustworthy ally.

However, several categories were exclusively focusing on the NATO representative office. Because of its mission, the focus on NATO-related tweets is the most imminent among these categories. Apart from those tweets, there was the category of Bilateral Relations. This was focusing on the Ukraine-NATO relations in detail. Among those tweets were negotiation-related tweets and emphasizing the future Ukrainian integration into the alliance. Similarly, the EU representative office account, the presence of President Zelenskyy was applied sooner than on the ministerial main account.

	Sept-Nov 2021	Dec 2021-Feb 2022	Mar-Jun 2022	Jul-Sept 2022
UN	6	23	38	4
Ambassador	9	21	116	-
War crimes	-	-	21	3
Food Security	-	-	13	1
Zelenskyy	-	1	3	-
Ukrainian forces	-	1	2	-
Minister	-	-	2	-
Referendum	-	-	-	1
Russian Aggression	11	17	82	4
Ukraine	37	23	48	4
Memory politics	10	-	-	4
Ukrainians	-	-	3	-
Total number of tweets	73	86	241	21

Table 4: Ukrainian representative office in the United Nations.

From this account the number of tweets, which were analyzed, was 421. Similarly, to the main ministerial account there was the presence of Russian Aggression related tweets. Among them were the updates on Russian daily losses in the battlefield. Also, there was the presence of Food Security related tweets, which were used on the global stage to present the full-scale invasion having global consequences on food supply chains.

In this account, there were also a few categories different from the ministerial main account. Among them is the category of ambassador. This focused on the Ukrainian ambassador to the United Nations. This category reached to highest point during the discussions about the full-scale invasion in the Security Council and in the General Assembly. During the sessions, main quotes from the ambassador were brought out. Apart from this category, there was the account about the United Nations. Under this account, there were tweets specifically mentioning Ukrainian participation in different United Nations events. One example of them was the Female Empowerment Week at the United Nations. With those tweets, Ukraine used to

emphasize its belonging to the Western and global community. This was followed by them pointing out that they shared the values brought during those events

	Sept-Nov 2021	Dec 2021-Feb 2022	Mar-Jun 2022	Jul-Sept 2022
Ambassador	2	28	15	7
Embassy	1	4	10	4
Allies	-	5	4	4
Zelenskyy	-	2	4	1
Ukrainian forces	-	1	3	2
Zelenska	-	-	2	-
Humanitarian	-	-	2	-
Climate	1	-	-	-
War crimes	-	-	-	1
Ukraine	8	18	17	8
Russian Aggression	-	37	39	8
British	-	46	35	2
Ukrainians	2	3	6	-
Memory politics	-	2	-	-
Total number of tweets	14	146	137	37

Table 5: Ukrainian Embassy in the United Kingdom

From the Ukrainian UK embassy, there were 334 tweets analyzed. Among them were similar categories to the main ministerial account. Among them were once more tweets about Russian Aggression, Ukraine, and Ukrainians. In the first category, there were some tweets, which were standing out from the general aggression-related tweets. These were clever counter answers to the false narratives spread by the Russian embassy in the UK. Other than that, there were also similar tweets covering the number of Russian war crimes under the War Crimes category.

When it comes to the differences from other analyzed accounts, there are the following. In this, there was a huge presence of British politics and other British-related tweets. This was done to bring out the close relations between Ukraine and their gratitude for support. This led to a

smaller number of tweets mentioning Allies. In these tweets, other friendly states were receiving gratitude for their support of Ukraine. Similarly, to the United Nations account, there was a small number of tweets mentioning either President Zelenskyy or First Lady Olena Zelenska. Also, similarly to the United Nations account, tweets focused on the Ukrainian ambassadors' activities and public performances. Similarly, to the European Union representative office, there were tweets about the embassy's activities in conducting different diplomatic and charitable activities.

	Sept-Nov 2021	Dec 2021-Feb 2022	Mar-Jun 2022	Jul-Sept 2022
Ukrainian forces	1	10	21	6
Minister	3	3	18	4
Zelenskyy	-	9	27	9
Ambassador	-	12	8	3
Allies	-	1	7	4
Embassy	-	4	4	4
Food Security	-	-	10	10
War crimes	-	-	8	1
Zelenska	-	-	1	8
Referendum	-	-	-	5
Humanitarian	-	-	2	-
Military assistance	1	-	-	-
Ukraine	6	4	30	6
Memory politics	1	1	4	3
Bilateral relations	4	-	5	3
Russian Aggression	-	-	122	8
Ukrainians	-	-	13	2
Total number of tweets	16	44	280	76

Table 6: Ukrainian embassy in the United States of America.

From the account of the Ukrainian United States embassy, there were 416 tweets analyzed. In this account, the emphasis was on the common values of Ukrainians and Americans. Similarly, to the other analyzed accounts, there were examples of tweets promoting Ukraine and ministerial statements. The latter were about the performances in the United States media outlets and other outreaches to the United States public. Unlike the Ukrainian UK embassy, first lady Olena Zelenska`s activities were given more attention.

In this account, there were a few categories, which were different from the other studied accounts. In the first period, there was a separate category of military assistance. This featured a tweet about the role of US military aid. Added to this was gratitude for the Javelins sent to the Ukrainian army. This, added with bilateral relations, showed the emphasis on military activities. These tweets set the United States embassy apart from, for example, the UK`s and the United Nations' accounts. In this aspect, the account was similar to the NATO representative office of Ukraine.

	Sept-Nov 2021	Dec 2021-Feb 2022	Mar-Jun 2022	Jul-Sept 2022
War crimes	-	1	3	-
Zelenskyy	-	-	1	2
Allies	-	-	1	1
Food security	-	-	-	12
Referendum	-	-	-	12
Ukrainian forces	-	-	2	-
Minister	1	-	-	-
Ukraine	21	12	16	13
Russian Aggression	-	1	9	4
Memory Politics	2	2	2	-
Ukrainians	-	-	1	2
Total number of tweets	24	16	35	42

Table 7: Ukrainian embassy in Estonia.

When it comes to the Ukrainian Embassy account, there were 117 tweets analyzed. In this account, the posts were the most similar to the main ministerial account. There are only a few tweets that were different from the main account of the MFA. This was the case, for example, about the categories of Ukraine and Russian Aggression. During the first studied time periods, the activity remained lower than the other studied accounts. From this can be deduced that the Ukrainian embassy did not need to mobilize more support because of Estonia's positive position towards Ukraine. As the full-scale invasion continued, the number of posts grew over time and reached its maximum in the fourth time period studied.

Regarding the possible narratives embedded in these categories, there are some possible narratives. For example, in the category of Russian Aggression, there was evidence about narratives about Russian war guilt. Secondly, the narrative was about Russians being the aggressors how they applied different tactics against Ukraine. This was presented in the smaller categories about for example, Education and Environment. For example, Minister and Ambassador, there was a presence of a possible classical diplomatic encounters narrative. These narratives continued during the full-scale invasion, where diplomats took a different role. The Ukraine category presents the possible Ukraine as a modern state or a state in war narratives. Among the Ukrainians category, there are possible examples of Ukrainian resilience and perseverance of the people during the ongoing invasion. Also, there could be examples of historical parallels, where narratives are built around similarities with the Second World War. This can be deduced from the Ukrainians and Memory Politics categories. These narratives are further elaborated in the next subchapter.

4.2. Narrative analysis of Ukrainian digital diplomacy.

In the following subchapter, the author will analyze the collected data. Because digital diplomacy in this context would focus on applying digital tools for diplomatic goals. In doing so, the author sets out to establish the changes in digital diplomacy narratives between the hybrid conflict and full-scale conflict. This relies on the premise that during these stages of conflict, Ukraine had different goals set for its diplomacy. Therefore, the narratives would change because of the escalation of the armed conflict.

4.2.1. Hybrid-conflict timeframe narratives.

Starting with the time periods during the hybrid conflict, from September 2021 to February 2022 then digital diplomacy applied different sets of narratives. This exemplifies that Ukrainian goals for diplomacy used digital tools for several goals, which were either related to the hybrid

war. Or the goals were unrelated to the ongoing armed conflict and were focused on economic development and branding Ukraine as more than a state at war.

Regarding the actions, then, the focus was on establishing Ukraine as any other European nation. Therefore, the focus was on usual diplomatic engagement. For example, this included celebratory congratulations to states with which Ukraine has diplomatic relations. The same applies to commemorating past tragic events, such as the Babyn Yar massacre and the Holocaust as a whole. In this, the overall narrative emphasized overarching past human tragedies, rather than tying these with the ongoing hybrid conflict. To give a further explanation, then the author has decided to present an example from the gathered data. In order to illustrate this narrative, an example from Memory Politics category would applied here. One of those examples is the following:

“OTD 80 years ago, Nazis executed almost 34 000 Ukrainian Jews in a ravine Babyn Yar. The lives of more than 100 000 Ukrainians, Jews, Roma & people of other nationalities were taken, this why Kyiv is one of the epicenters of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe #BabynYar”
(X. 2021. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

This was followed by branding the Ukrainian state as an innovative and desirable tourist destination. Under the innovation banner, Ukraine was branded as a state where future investments are welcomed. This was supported by bringing out positive aspects of infrastructure and the workforce's high level of experience and educational preparedness. The engagement with policymakers and national leaders was mostly done by the foreign minister himself. His engagements with foreign dignitaries and journalists. The same applied to the ministerial engagements as well. One of those examples was the posts about participating in the United Nations General Assembly. The same was about communicating with the European Union and discussing the possibilities of the further accession process. The bottom line was that the overall tone during these periods was minimizing the Russian factor and enhancing Ukrainian strengths. Because of variety available about that would come from another account than the main ministerial account. Instead of the author will use an example from Ukrainian Representative Office in the United Nations. For that, there is a tweet from the 76th United Nations General Assembly:

“Welcome the decision of the #UN General Assembly to retain the item “The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine” in the agenda. Grateful to all who supported

inclusion of the item to the draft agenda of 76th session.” (X. 2021. Ukrainian Representative Office in the United Nations)

When it comes to reaching out to the foreign general public, the focus was on branding Ukraine as a multidimensional tourist destination. Regarding the tourism aspect, the branding was even more intensive than the above-mentioned calls for investments. This relied on the category of Ukraine, where this narrative was presented. Under this, the ministry and other institutions examined were actively promotional. This included pointing out the best tourist sites, for example, extreme tourism admirers were invited to visit Chernobyl. Added to that, there was an aggressive push for traditional Ukrainian food to attract tourists to visit. In this period, the focus was to cross over the ongoing hybrid conflict. For this the author would provide an example from Ambassadors category. Therefore, the example of this comes from the account of the Ukrainian embassy in London:

“Don’t know where to start planning your #trip to #Ukraine? UA Here are some #tips & #tricks: 1. Go for #spa & #wellness, 2. Feel the vibe of #festivals, 3. Taste #food & #wine. Want to know more? Check out our #SummerInUkraine guide here: <https://ukraine.ua/visit/>. #VisitUkraineNOW” (X. 2021. Ukrainian Embassy in the United Kingdom)

The lack of Ukrainian people was the second aspect in reaching the general public in the timeframes running up to the escalation of the armed conflict. Most of these narratives are related to the category of Ukrainians. Although the civilian miseries were present in the research, these were in the context of the Russian aggression, under which civilian casualties and attacks were attributed. From this, it can be deduced that the human stories narrative was not considered to be necessary at that time period. This is proven by the minuscule numbers of tweets mentioning the Ukrainian people in the aforementioned time periods. The same absence also applies to the presidential couple. The explanation behind this lies in the aspect that President Zelenskyy was also publicly engaged in everyday duties without magnifying his statements. Therefore, to show how this aspect was present, then the author would apply, the category of Zelenskyy. Although the president was also present in these timeframes, for example, in the following tweet:

“Ukrainian President @ZelenskyyUa speaking at the conference of ambassadors of Ukraine: “We must change the style and philosophy of our foreign policy. Today, it needs: speed, creativity, ambition and efficiency.” <https://cutt.ly/oUiuvAX>” (X. 2021. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

This did not mean that the hybrid conflict with Russia was ignored. It was still existing in the content of the ministerial accounts. This was presented in the categories of Russian Aggression, but it was not the general narrative that the Ukrainian side wanted to portray. Rather, it was a secondary narrative that existed, but was not too important. In essence, Ukraine seemingly did not want to be defined by this open conflict in eastern Ukraine. The hybrid conflict was mostly restricted to pointing out that Crimea still was de jure part of Ukraine. This was derived from the category of Crimea. The same narrative was extended to Donbass territories controlled by the separatists. The same aspect was used in the case of human rights violations committed in temporarily occupied territories. This also applies to War Crimes category-related tweets, which were also in a small quantity and portrayed a single event from Donetsk. Mainly, there was a lack of mentions of the Ukrainian armed forces. With that, the narrative was to ease tensions around the hybrid conflict. This was also supported by the tweets calling to refrain from escalation and being determined to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict at hand. Because of that the author would apply an example from the main ministerial account. And for further explanation the author would use an example from Russian Aggression category. An example of this is the following tweet:

“Ukraine condemns the conduct by the RF of the census on the territory of the temporarily occupied Crimea. Russian actions are directed against the state sovereignty & territorial integrity of Ukraine, constitute continued efforts to legitimize the annexation of Crimea” (X. 2021. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The same pattern emerges in the accounts of the representative offices and embassies examined. Their postings also focus on building a narrative of a mostly peaceful country. This meant that the ongoing hybrid conflict received less attention than all the other possible themes at that time. In some cases, the focus was on the military support, but even in those cases, the focus was on being grateful for the support. Therefore, the general narrative remained that Ukraine was not looking for further escalation, but reaching out for a peaceful resolution. For this the author has opted to use an example from outside of the main ministerial account. The example of this valuing of allies was present in the account of the Ukrainian representative office at NATO:

“#StrongerTogether. Partnership between NATO and Ukraine includes strong scientific cooperation. NATO SPS Programme provides the Ukrainian scientific community with a

platform to work side-by-side with NATO Allies & partner countries on security-related issues. @NATOinUkraine” (X. 2021. Mission of Ukraine to NATO)

Therefore, the embassies were focused on covering day-to-day diplomatic activities. This meant covering ambassadors' or mission heads' meetings with local policymakers or engagement with the local Ukrainian diasporas. This was followed by posting some of the promotional materials, which were used by the main ministerial account. Added to the latter, there were efforts to continue building up the narrative about Ukrainian success in waiting. The same aspects apply to reaching out to the local general public. For them, the focus was also on more so-called “softer” topics. Among those were, for example, tourist destination promotion. On the ambassadorial level, the narrative remained as business as usual and promoting an open and future-oriented Ukraine and welcoming Ukrainians. In order to reach out to foreign general public, then the author will apply a tweet from a foreign embassy or representative office`s account. The example of everyday diplomacy is from the embassy in London:

“#Ambassador @VPrystaiko :@DominicRaab thank you for your support, and your contribution to our historic achievement UA-GB #Strategic_partnership, defending #Ukraine and standing together against #Russian menace. Accept my #congratulations on your appointment.” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Embassy in the United Kingdom)

Starting with the Russian military build-up on the borders of Ukraine, the situation started to shift. Among the narratives, everyday diplomatic activities and promotional activities started to make room for conflict-related posts. In this case, the narrative remained non-confrontational. The position was to point out that the Russians are the ones who are behind the escalation of tensions. During this period, the narrative of reaching a peaceful solution remained. Similarly, to the previous period, this was not unconditional. Their narrative was to portray themselves as the suffering side, who would not make any further steps back. Unless the same applied to the Russians. Mostly, the narrative also remained awaiting and refrained from panicking. This was done to prepare calmly for any coming scenario. With that overall narrative was added with the confident belief that Ukraine is capable of overcoming the current situation. Therefore, the narrative supported keeping the society intact and avoiding the collapse of societal institutions and the economy. This coincided with explanations offered by the Ukrainians themselves after the start of the full-scale invasion by Russia. The preparedness narrative reached its maximum by mid-February, when the negotiations with Russia had reached a dead end. The show an example of this narrative, the author would an example from

the Russian Aggression category and form the period in question. At this period, there is an example of how Ukraine was countering false information of a possible preventive attack in the Donbass region:

“Allegations that the Ukrainian government intends to launch an offensive operation in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions are divorced from reality. We remain firmly committed to politico-diplomatic settlement. <https://cutt.ly/IPbAH6t>” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

After this, the situation among the narratives became more concerned, but the general tone remained cautious. Because of the perilous situation, the national unity narrative started to grow as well. This was followed by calls to mobilize for support among foreign states. This lasted from January to February, when calls for expressing national unity were prominent. In that situation the Ukrainian side managed to establish narrative about a nation as one as the more dominant one.

4.2.2. Full-scale invasion and the changes in narratives

The significant change started in the second time period and specifically on the 24th of February. This being the day when the full-scale invasion started, brought in changes in posting activity. Firstly, it was shown by sheer growth in the posts made compared to the hybrid conflict period. This trend continued through the other two coming time periods. Secondly, with a growing number of posts, it was observed that there was a growth in activity. This means that postings were done daily, and this followed a certain pattern. There were three core elements. Foremost, thanking the Ukrainian soldiers for their continued resistance. Second, giving the number of Russian casualties. And as the year progressed, the daily presidential statements were also added to this pattern. Apart from these three postings, there were other events that were used to create the core narratives of Ukraine after the start of full-scale conflict with Russia.

State in the war narrative. Because of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine was forced to change its national narrative. As it was mentioned above, the Russian-Ukrainian hybrid conflict had remained mostly absent. But as the tensions on the borders had grown, the conflict narrative started to return. From there, the former campaign to attract investors and tourists to the country had to be dropped. This was replaced with the general line of a state in war with its neighboring state. In this, the main line was that this situation was not their choice. But rather than giving up, they should stand up to the aggressors and liberate all the occupied areas. Within this

narrative, the latter hybrid conflict period was also reintroduced. Although not a general part of the wartime state narrative. This was brought in as a pacifying fact to show that this was just an escalation of an existing conflict. That aspect can be described as influential for both decision makers and the general public in allied and other foreign states. In accordance with this narrative, the public perception was designed to show that resistance continues on all levels of society. This became apparent from the categories of Ukrainians and Ukraine as well. This was shown from top to bottom and was amplified with the written posts. An example of that would be applied from main ministerial account. This is exemplified by the following tweet:

“98 y.o. Olha Tverdokhlibova, WWII veteran faced a war for the 2nd time in her life. She was ready to defend her Motherland again, but despite all the merits and experience was denied, though, because of age. We are sure, she will celebrate another victory soon in Kyiv! #Ukraine” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Russia as an aggressor. More than focusing on Ukraine being a state that is at war, the focus was on amplifying the Russian role. This narrative was mostly connected to the Russian Aggression category. From the first encounters, the Ukrainian narrative was to focus on Russian wrongdoings. It started with condemning the invasion as a violation of international law. This was followed by amplifying every attack of the Russian forces, which was not against Ukrainian military forces. There were numerous examples of Russian missile attacks against Ukrainian civilian infrastructure. Among those were examples of apartment buildings, hospitals, and transportation hubs bombings. Secondly, there were examples of Russian soldiers attacking the civilian population. Either these were the civilians fleeing or sheltering from attacks, or people getting attacked far off from the frontline. This was extremely important in the context, where the Russians themselves were publicly denying Ukrainian sovereignty and the existence of the Ukrainian nation as a separate entity. This Russian line was proven and entangled with actual events. These were the war crimes committed, for example, in Bucha and Irpin. These with other committed war crimes, were present in the War Crimes category. Because of these attacks, the Ukrainian narrative was filled with the notion of Russia being a terrorist state. This being that their focus was not only to fight the Ukrainian armed forces, but rather to brutalize the entire nation. Among these was the example of the siege of Mariupol. Among these examples were the continued brutal attacks against the civilian population. Added to that was the Russian tactic to cordon off Mariupol from the world. In this situation, Russia's disregard of international law, international organizations, and basic human decency was amplified. This was the case for blocking all evacuation roads to Ukrainian-controlled territory.

And followed up by disregarding their promises given to the United Nations. Apart from the symmetrical tactics, there were also different parts of Russian asymmetrical aggression. Among them were the above-mentioned terrorist tactics. These were followed by the attacks in cyberspace and the continued information war against Ukrainians, and covering up their brutality. To illustrate this narrative, the author will use an example from Russian Aggression category. And because this narrative was used in all accounts, then it would be brought out from the main ministerial account. One example of many comes from the siege of Mariupol:

“Today Russia dropped a powerful bomb on the building of the drama theatre in Mariupol served as shelter for hundreds of people who had lost their homes because of RUarmed forces shelling the city. We call on the int’l community to intensify pressure on RU. <https://cutt.ly/2Sy2mOO>” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Ukrainians as victims, but they stand up for freedom. When it comes to the Ukrainian people, they were increasingly portrayed as resilient victims who stand up to their tormentors. This was present in the category of Ukrainians, which was common to all seven analyzed accounts. Regarding this, the Ukrainian side tried to reach out to both the foreign decision makers and the general public. There were examples of people sheltering from the Russian attacks. Among those posts were grieving family members commemorating fallen soldiers or slaughtered civilians. Also, there were examples of children who had lost their homes and family members, but had themselves managed to survive. But at the same time, these people were keeping up their spirits amid the war. Among them were inspiring stories of people showing civilian disobedience in occupied areas. Also, there were examples of men and women willing to go to war and leave behind their children. As the war progressed, there were examples of people continuing to live their lives in the maximum normality. This was amplified to stoke a similarity with the memories of the Second World War. Among the parallels, one was brought up repeatedly in posts comparing Ukrainians sheltering in Kyiv metro with the British sheltering in London metro stations. In this narrative, it was important to show that even though there was a war going on, there were higher things. An example of this was the couples who decided to get married in the middle of the war. Secondly, there were examples of extreme care for animals. Mainly, it was shown how much the Ukrainians cared for their pets and livestock. Adding to that were the examples of zookeepers trying to defend their animals even though they could be hit by missiles. In order to follow up the author would apply an example from

the ministerial account. And because of the narrative the author would use a tweet from the Ukrainians account. An example of this tougher upper lip is the following post:

“A girl in Irpin is rescuing disabled dogs from a Pet shelter. A woman was carrying her dog over the border for 17 km. #StopRussianAgression #closeUAskyNOW” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Ukrainian armed forces as resilient and passionate. One of the central pieces of Ukrainian narratives came from the category of the Ukrainian armed forces. Also, Ukrainian fighters' bravery was brought up in the category of Zelenskyy, where the president praised the soldiers for their willingness to fight. These soldiers were portrayed as the forefront fighters. Their fight was not only the fight for Ukrainian statehood, but also a fight for the entire Western world. Soldiers' courageous fighting was one of the three daily elements of the main ministerial account. From the start of the invasion, daily posts celebrated the soldiers. To show their difference from the invading Russian forces, there were some elements that were amplified. One of them was to show the female soldiers in the army. Because the military service remains voluntary for women, their courageous sacrifice was but into the center stage. Secondly, there was a focus on the military dogs. One who gained international recognition was the mine-sweeping dog Patron. Apart from him, several other dogs were serving the Ukrainian war effort. After the successes on the front lines, the Ukrainian armed forces' celebrations were elevated to another level. Now, when there were successes on the battlefield, the resilient fighters on the frontline were added to the level of victorious fighters. The same attitude was then added on the commanding level, who were able to amplify the passionate resilience as more than just keeping the Russians at bay. Because this category was wide and finding a good example proved to be difficult. All things considered this example was applied from the Ukrainian Armed Forces category. And because these example were presented in all of the researched accounts, then author apply an example from the main ministerial account. An example of this is a post describing the service dog Patron:

“Patron is a service dog in #Chernihiv. He has discovered over 150 explosive devices in #Ukraine since full scale #Russian invasion began. Patron works closely with deminers to make #Ukrainian cities safe again. Thank you so much for your service! 📷 by patron_dsns (Instagram)” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Allies as the vital lifeline. In this narrative, Ukrainians were amplifying the support that they were getting on the international level. That narrative relied on the categories of Allies, British,

and Bilateral Relations from embassy accounts. This was focused on mobilizing both the general public and decision makers abroad. For reaching these goals, the Ukrainians were willing to extend their gratitude to the supportive states and organizations. The same gratitude was extended to the individual supporters as well as those who came out to demonstrate their solidarity with Ukrainians. Apart from that was the necessity to do even more. This was the most repetitive message conveyed to the public. Therefore, the Ukrainian officials made an effort to be in the middle of attention. Mainly, this was the case for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The main goal was to build up and enchant a coalition for Ukrainian victory. For this, the Ukrainian side made an effort to plead for sanctioning Russia, further military aid, and a limited way to intervene, for example, to establish a no-fly zone in the Ukrainian airspace. For the general public, there was also the invitation for foreign volunteers to come and participate in the fight against Russia. Within this narrative, Ukraine was willing to continue furthering its accession to the European Union and NATO. For this author would apply an example from the main ministerial account. For this the author would apply a tweet from which has concrete mentioning of allies. An example of this is the post thanking allies for the support offered during the first 100 days of this war:

“Allies from around the world, thank you for your solidarity throughout 100 days of #Ukraine's heroic resistance against Russia's full-scale war. For believing in Ukraine's victory. For all your help. Thank you. Don't stop acting – only together will we win. 🇺🇦 @BandaAgency” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Ukraine as a bastion. In this narrative, the focus was on the shared values with Ukraine's closest allies. The most repeated was the emphasis on freedom. This was not only about independence and sovereignty from another state. This was the wide range of applied freedoms in the Ukrainian society. An example of this is emphasizing media freedom in contrast with the Russian state-controlled media space. This was done to show the similarity to Western societies. Similarly, meaning that Ukraine was a part of the Western value space. Because Russia was defining Ukraine, its choice to live independently of its influence. From this, derive the differences in values. For example, this was brought up in the category of Democracy. Russia, in this fight, was portrayed as countering freedom-loving Ukrainians. They were against establishing a similar state next to their own, which was countering their traditionalist understanding of the world. So this made the Ukrainians the first line responders to this challenge. In this narrative, the border between Europeans and uncivilized Russia is on the eastern border of Ukraine. Therefore, Ukrainians offered the Western countries a choice. Either

give us the necessary material support for this fight. Or the alternative is that shortly, the fight will be on their territory and will be fought by themselves against the Russians. For this the author would apply an example from the main ministerial account, where the general narrative was most present. This was connected to the aspect that Russians themselves were in an existential fight against Western values. An example of this is the following post:

“Ukraine is fighting on the side of light. #Ukraine is defending the whole Europe from #Russian aggression now. The world is with us: strong and united. Together we will stop the aggression. #StandWithUkraine #SropRussianWar” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Situation abroad. Because of the Russian-Ukrainian war's global impact, it was necessary to mobilize support from a wider range of states. For this, the Ukrainian side decided to emphasize the more practical issues. Among them, which concerns the entire planet, was food insecurity. Because Ukraine is one of the largest agricultural producers, an attack on it would influence many states outside of Europe. To counter the Russian narrative that Ukrainians would be to blame for the coming hunger, Ukraine established a counter campaign. In their narratives, the best results were to support Ukraine in maintaining food supply. This would mean pressuring the Russians and rejecting their stolen grain, which comes from occupied territories. Apart from food security, the emphasis was on environmental damage, which could lead to far-reaching consequences. Among them was the risk of nuclear disaster, because of possible attacks on nuclear power plants. These two aspects were brought up in the categories of Environment and Nuclear Threat. Secondly, these calls were followed up with historic parallels. This was to portray the Russian side as an aggressor and counter Russian denazification narratives. Instead, the Russians were portrayed as those who were countering the post-WWII world order. Similarly, parallels of colonialism were also presented. Because Russia was portraying itself as a defender of the colonized states, Ukraine took advantage of showing Russian imperialism similar to that of Western powers. Because of the outreach to wider foreign audiences, the author would apply an example from the Ukrainian United Nations representative office's account. One example of amplifying the Ukrainian role in the supply chain is the following:

“.On average, 50M tons of agricultural products were exported from #Ukraine annually. Today there are no alternative suppliers, it will not be possible to replace such volumes of agricultural products from Ukraine within the next 3-5 years. Read more:

http://war.ukraine.ua/food-security” (X. 2022. Ukrainian Embassy in the United States of America)

When it comes to the foreign representations and embassies, the focus on the wartime narratives followed the line of the main ministerial account. There were several examples where the examined institutions took a different path to apply the general narrative. In the example of NATO representation and the United States embassy, the focus is on more military-related aspects. The first institution was there because of its defensive nature. The second was related to the local special features. This was the common feature among these institutions. They were tailoring the general narrative to adjust to local or organizational context. These were followed by the differences among the offices/embassies' own postings. These focuses were on achieving the support of a certain public, and therefore, the application needed to address local aspects. The same institutions were instrumental in supporting the local Ukrainian communities. Similarly, they were intermediaries for the local public support offers. For this the author would apply an example outside of the main ministerial account. This example should carry a strong example of concrete narratives. An example of this diplomatic activity comes from the Ukrainian representative office in the United Nations, where Ambassador Serhiy Kyslytsya was giving a speech in the Security Council:

“@SergiyKyslytsya: [I find interpretation I've heard satisfactory. And I thank UN Interpreters. What I find not satisfactory at all is how the RU diplomat in his statement at the beginning of a meeting used the Russian language to impose once again a different concept of reality” (X. 2022. Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the UN)

This concludes the narrative analysis, which was done to present different narratives in conflict stages. In the hybrid and full-scale conflict stages, there was a different emphasis. This showed that during different stages of conflict, Ukraine applied different approaches in the digital sphere. During the hybrid conflict situation, the focus was on minimizing the war narrative. This was fulfilled with everyday diplomatic actions and by portraying Ukraine as open for development. In the full-scale invasion time periods, diplomacy demanded different tasks from digital tools. This was shown with the entirely different sets of narratives applied in the digital sphere. In the coming sub-chapter further conclusions on digital diplomacy would be presented.

4.3. Conclusions on Ukrainian digital diplomacy

In the following sub-paragraph, the author would draw conclusions on the conducted narrative analysis. In doing so, the focus would be on wider scope of the possible conclusions. Regarding

the analysis results, then it is possible to draw the following conclusions on Ukrainian digital diplomacy.

Firstly, the aspect of applying different sets of narratives. In this case, different stages of conflict played a role in Ukrainian digital diplomacy. During the hybrid conflict time periods, the application of digital channels remained less concentrated on the ongoing conflict. The Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war-related narratives were present. On the other hand, these narratives were complemented with different narratives on Ukrainian national branding. These efforts were focused on presenting Ukraine as an open state for business and tourism. Among the latter, there was a continued presentation of Ukrainian ministerial activities.

However, after the start of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the narratives shifted. During these two studied time periods, the narratives related to anything other than the armed conflict with Russia were left aside. These were replaced by narratives about denouncing and countering Russian narratives about the rationale behind this invasion. This was fulfilled with examples of Russian atrocities against the Ukrainian people. Added to the latter, narratives were portraying Ukraine as the protagonist in this war. Therefore, Ukraine was positioning itself as the last frontier defending Western civilization. For further mobilization, Ukrainian narratives were also focused global impacts of this conflict with Russia. This was presented through the prism of possible manmade hunger and possible nuclear disaster.

Secondly, the shift in narratives was gradual. By the time the tensions started to escalate, the Ukrainian side maintained composure. Rather than starting to point out to possibility of the coming invasion, their side maintained a careful position. This was exemplified by the continued calls and publicly expressed belief in the negotiation processes. On the other hand, their side was in step with the growing tensions. During these times, the former narratives on investments and attracting tourism were replaced with the Ukrainian state and people-related narratives. An example of it was presenting the Ukrainian nation and state as a united entity. Although this pace helped to maintain stability there were also drawbacks. This led to a possible miscalculation of the possible threat from Russia. Therefore, some countermeasures were not sufficient enough to counter Russian false narratives surrounding this conflict.

After the recognition of the so-called separatist republics, actions started to prepare for a possible serious outcome. This was followed by the first steps to counter the Russian disinformation campaign of a possible Ukrainian aggression. After the start of the full-scale invasion on 24th February, Ukraine used the momentum. In this case, their side used their

digital infrastructure to distribute their side narratives to capture and maintain attention on this war. Although it should be pointed out that in the following months, Ukrainian activity started to drop. This was seen in summer months, where the activity seemed to drop from the spring months.

Thirdly, evaluating the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' actions. For this, the author reflects on both the ministerial account and selected embassy or representation office accounts. In the main account of the ministry, the Ukrainian side was the most active. There, the main narratives were presented for the public's view. There, the shift of narratives was most visible in this account. This was the case in growing numbers of tweets posted after the start of the full-scale invasion by Russia. Added to that, a posting pattern emerged, which followed through to September of 2022.

When it comes to the studied embassies and representative offices, there was the same pattern with the ministerial main account. During the hybrid war time periods, their respective activities remained lower than during full-scale invasion time periods. In the first two studied time periods, the focus was on promoting narratives about Ukrainian economic possibilities. The ongoing hybrid conflict with Russia remained secondary or was absent entirely. This was the case, for example, in Ukrainian embassies in the United Kingdom and their representative offices in the European Union. As the tensions between Russia and Ukraine escalated towards a full-scale invasion, narratives related to the war became the dominant narratives. Lastly, all the studied embassies and representative offices hold the general line with the main account of the ministry. At the same time, there was a selection of narratives that received more amplification. Therefore, the studied embassies and representative offices chose to amplify or withhold certain narratives if this did not suit their respective state or international organization.

Fourthly, a possible application for other states in a similar situation. When it comes to generalizing the findings, there are a few aspects that should be kept in mind. First of all, when the conflict remains less active, then the actions in the digital sphere should remain on the necessary level of alertness. The aspect of the ongoing conflict should fulfill with other narratives surrounding the state in question.

Because of the interconnectivity of the world, then a state has to make a choice. They could focus on appealing to a broad support, which could not materialize in practical support. Or

states should focus on finding support from likeminded countries and appeal to their material and immaterial support.

Following that, the state on the balance of possible escalation should practice caution. Relying on Ukrainian example, this stance helped to maintain stability in a cautious situation. Therefore, a state should be reacting to the coming danger proportionally and not overreacting to every possible malicious step taken by their opponents. There also lies the risk of missing out the right time of reaction to a counter measure taken by the opposing party in the conflict.

At the start of the escalation, a state under attack should mobilize all its resources in the digital sphere. This helps to mobilize support and put the focus on their service. For that the state under attack should apply precision. This relies on balancing the right amount of worried rhetoric without showing panic in the critical situation. In this case, the important thing is to apply the momentum into their service and counter their opponent. Because of the wide reach of the opponent, a smaller state's actions should remain swift and flexible. The same flexibility should also be left for foreign representations. Because of the different characteristics in different states and their people, the states' narratives should take into account these different aspects. The same applies to the international organizations, whose support the attacked state requests.

In the theoretical plan this study has given a better understanding of digital diplomacy in the midst of an armed conflict. In the past most of the focus has been on the studies about conflicts and applying informational warfare in there. Because of the nature, which MFA's usually operate, then this aspect was revisited. In this thesis it was shown that the MFA's usually operate as a channel of diplomacy and not as a vessel in service of military. Secondly, it was shown that the change in diplomatic activity remains gradual. This is done in order to maintain the integrity of state. In the midst of a hybrid armed conflict, it was shown that the role of the conflict should be balanced with other aspects as well. When the conflict escalates, then other narratives, which are not related to the conflict, should be dropped for the time being. Instead the focus should be on establishing a narrative of a strong state and nation in the midst of war.

Regarding expanding the method applied for research. This should also be applied for studying personalities who were induced in the ministerial communication. In the case of Ukraine, there was a huge role applied to concrete personalities. Therefore, the possible role personalities should also be put under the test from narrative analysis. This is supported by using narrative analysis in studying human experiences. Also there remains the aspect of further study on allied

small states. Because of the Estonian example showed that the focus on possible allies was low, then further explanation should be applied in coming studies.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the author would use the last paragraph to look back on the development of this thesis. This is followed by a small discussion about how the set goals were achieved. And last but not least, the author would offer his view on possible future areas of research.

First of all, the research question and the set research expectation opened up a discussion about changing narratives in Ukrainian digital diplomacy. Relying on the definition, the focus was on studying the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' actions in the digital sphere. Mainly on how it conducted digital diplomacy on X. Research expectation stated that there should have been a different approach to narratives about Ukraine. The change in narratives came in relation to the stages of the ongoing armed conflict with the Russian Federation.

Through the lens of narrative analysis, there was a clear difference in the sets of narratives used by the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the hybrid war stage of the ongoing conflict, there were other narratives apart from the ongoing conflict presented in Ukrainian digital diplomacy. Other than the Russian aggression-related narratives, there was also a presence of establishing Ukraine as a possible attractive tourism destination and a good place to invest. Added to the latter, there was the presence of promoting Ukrainian culture and its best people abroad. The gradual changes in narratives applied started with the growing tensions on the border in late 2021. After the start of the full-scale invasion, the set of narratives changed completely to emphasize Ukraine's role in the war. Whether it was emphasizing their role in the value-based argumentation and denouncing Russia as an aggressor to the global order of world affairs. Or positioning Ukrainian people as victims of aggression, who are willing to stand up to the intruders, among others.

When it comes to the future prospects of research, there are several areas that should be explored. Foremost, the theme of Ukraine in the midst of the full-scale invasion conducting digital diplomacy. This would follow the course of the current thesis to the latest developments in this ongoing war with Russia. Or on the same level, future research could also focus on the past situation in the Ukrainian digital diplomacy fronts and actions taken. On this note, there is also another area where institutional digital diplomacy should be studied. This is the so-called "Global South," and what aspects played a role in these states' ambivalent positions in the armed conflict in question.

Secondly, among those prospective areas of research should be the aspect of personalities. It has been one thing to study institutions working on digital diplomacy fronts. But when it comes

to the current Russian–Ukrainian war, the role of personalities cannot be underestimated. Specifically, the role taken up by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He and other prominent figures on the Ukrainian side have played a personal role in representing Ukraine in the digital sphere and gathering support from respective allies.

Last but not least, other states engaged in armed conflicts. This setting offers a variety of areas, which should be studied. For example, there could be a comparative study about the states whose positions have failed to reach the wider international stage. There could also be studies on how allied states stand for their respective allies engulfed in an armed conflict. To sum the thesis up, there is not that much that needs to be written. Apart from the fact that the thesis served a purpose to shed light on possibilities to mobilize support during dire times. Even though currently it seems that the Russian-Ukrainian war is drawing to a conclusion, it should be remembered the lessons it has offered. Or as Mark Twain said: “History does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme”.

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