

## CELEBRITY DIPLOMACY IN UKRAINE'S NATIONAL BRANDING AFTER THE FULL-SCALE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

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**Abstract.** The article examines celebrity diplomacy in the context of improving Ukraine's international image after the start of a full-scale war with Russia. The research methodology consists of a complex of interconnected modern general scientific and special methods and approaches, which are presented by the use of analysis of the policy problem, synthesis of research results, the case method for outlining practical measures for the formation of the national brand of Ukraine and media monitoring to study the activities of celebrities as participants in public diplomacy. It was established that celebrity diplomacy helped to develop the image of Ukraine in the world and to keep the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian war relevant on the international agenda.

**Keywords:** celebrity diplomacy, national branding, public diplomacy, image of Ukraine, Ukraine.

**Introduction.** National branding is a mean of promoting the state through the presentation of its advantages. In recent years, Ukrainian public diplomacy has embarked on the path of active development, which is accompanied by the search for effective tools for the formation of the state brand of Ukraine. The purpose of the work is to study the significance of celebrity diplomacy for the national branding of Ukraine in the conditions of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. The research supporting this article was fully sponsored by Central European University Foundation of Budapest (CEUBPF). The theses explained herein represent the ideas of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of CEUBPF.

**Results of the research.** The concept of «national brand» was introduced into scientific circulation by the British branding expert, the inventor of the state brand rating, S. Anholt, who defined it as a systematic process of coordinating the country's actions, behavior, investments, innovations, and communications around a clear strategy of strengthened competitive identity [1]. Analyzing the factors that influence the popularity of the state, the scientist formed a ranking of the attractiveness of countries. According to his methodology, the key components of state branding are: export; management; culture and heritage; tourism; investment and immigration; people. According to the researcher, the practice of effective state branding results from the answers in each of the 6 points to the question: «What are the essence of individuality and unique characteristics of a nation / state?»

Today, public diplomacy is one of the most effective tools of implementing the state's foreign policy. The experience of the world community indicates a tendency to strengthen the role of national branding in the conditions of globalization, to use it to increase the productivity of the development of intercultural dialogue. The Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue defines the term as «a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies. It fosters equality, human dignity and a sense of common purpose. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse world views and practices, to increase co-operation and participation (or the freedom to make choices), to allow personal growth and transformation, and to promote tolerance and respect for the other» [2].

The basis of modern public diplomacy is the concept of Joseph Nye, who contrasted neorealism «hard power» with a completely different set of factors, which he called «soft power». According to the researcher, power is the ability to influence others to obtain the desired results [3]. In international politics, the factors that create «soft power» largely arise from the values that an organization or country expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets with its actions and the means it uses to regulate relations. In Public diplomacy strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine public diplomacy is defined as «an integral part of the state's strategic communications» and «a system of measures by which the state communicates with the public of other states and influences the formation of public opinion of the population of other countries in order to promote its national inte-

rests and realize foreign policy goals» [4]. Ukrainian public diplomacy is considered as a sphere which includes cultural and sport diplomacy. In the document it is mentioned that the tools of public diplomacy enable attraction of representatives from fields that are outside the sphere of influence of official authorities (non-governmental organizations, businesses, think tanks, educational institutions, youth, leaders of public opinion and individual citizens). When it comes to leaders of public opinion, it is quite logical to mention the activities of celebrities.

Celebrity diplomacy is a phenomena of our globalized world. Over the last decade, celebrities have increasingly used their star power to help draw the world's attention to international issues such as ecological problems, poverty and pandemic diseases. Celebrity diplomats «push hard against the constraints of the fixed way of doing things», mixing «enthusiasm with outrage» in often «colloquial and sometimes markedly undiplomatic language» [5]. Most effective tools of celebrities aimed to express their opinions and influence public are cooperation with NGOs and presence in media. Obvious advantage is that celebrity diplomacy sends political messages transnationally and directly to the general public in comparison to traditional diplomacy which exchanges at the governments' level. One of the most prominent examples of celebrity diplomacy is a meeting of President Biden with the world-renowned K-pop music group BTS at the White House, where they talked about the importance of tackling anti-Asian racism and showing respect for the Asian communities. Probably this event is a gesture of President Biden showing friendliness, care and solidarity to Asian groups and communities beyond the US border [6].

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, many famous representatives of Ukrainian culture left abroad to escape the horrors of war and brought their efforts to establish projects supporting Ukraine. There were different special visits to Ukraine made by well-known foreigners. Also, showrunners and artists created the conditions for creative cooperation as well as holding a number of charity concerts of Ukrainian performers around the world. Therefore celebrity diplomacy has acquired a new meaning for Ukraine in the context of the war.

There is a huge amount of examples that show unique cases of unexpected support of Ukraine by famous people. A significant part of such non-state international actors are celebrities who were forced to temporarily leave Ukraine in search of safer living conditions without air strikes and the threat of missile attacks. For instance, a famous ukrainian choreographer and dancer Olena Shoptenko, who won the 2006 TV show «Dancing with the Stars» with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, came to Vienna, Austria and created a dance flash mob to support Ukraine. It took place in July 2022 on the Stephansplatz in Vienna [7]. It is important that not only professional dancers of Ukrainian origin took part in the flash mob, but also Ukrainian women and children to whom Austria provided temporary shelter after the war. Such appeals to help Ukraine, comprehensively support it and not to forget the consequences of the humanitarian crisis through creativity are an example of an effective combination of cultural diplomacy and celebrity diplomacy.

An example of a successful combination of celebrity diplomacy and sports diplomacy was demonstrated by a brilliant footballer Oleksandr Zinchenko, who, following his protests against Russia's invasion of his war-torn nation of Ukraine, was given an award. At the UnitedHealth Group's European Diversity Awards, the Arsenal player took home the Media Diversity Champion of the Year award. Zinchenko has been outspoken in defense of his country since Russian President Vladimir Putin gave the order to invade Ukraine in February, saying earlier that he 'could not sit back' while his nation is being attacked [8]. With this act, Oleksandr Zinchenko showed the relationship between sports and politics in the context of international relations. The football player showed solidarity with his homeland and reminded the world of the need to talk about the war in Ukraine, regardless of the main activities of famous personalities.

Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie, who has been a UNHCR special envoy for refugees since 2011, made a surprise visit to Ukraine. She came to speak to displaced people who have found refuge in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv [9]. This act of a world-class star demonstrates an appropriate level of concern for the humanitarian crisis caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war. Civilians left homeless far from home need shelter, work and further prospects for self-development, because they were deprived of all this by the Russian invasion.

A well-known rock band Pink Floyd, together with Andriy Khlyvnyuk, the lead singer of the Boombox band, released a sensational song «Hey, Hey, Rise Up» – the music accompaniment to the

emotional version of the «Oh, the Red Viburnum in the Meadow», a Ukrainian song that Khlyvnyuk sang a-cappella in Sophia Square in Kyiv during the first days of the invasion [10]. This rendition of the well-known song took on a new dramatic meaning and came to represent the Ukrainians' tenacity and resistance. With the exception of the Ukrainian singer, «Hey, Hey, Rise Up» features a classic Pink Floyd sound and a breathtaking David Gilmour guitar solo. The music video combines stunning footage of musicians and performers with images of the Ukrainian resistance.

By committing actual funds to assist Ukrainian refugees and those remaining on the ground attempting to repel the Russian assault, public people are setting an example. Famous model Gigi Hadid promised to give her earnings from the current autumn 2022 runway shows «to aid those suffering from the war in Ukraine, as well as continuing to support those experiencing the same in Palestine» [11]. She added, «Our eyes and hearts must be open to all human injustice. May we all see each other as brothers and sisters, beyond politics, beyond race, beyond religion». The actor couple of Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher raised over \$35 million for Ukraine. President Volodymyr Zelensky thanked the couple on Twitter for their humanitarian efforts [11]. Therefore, effective support of Ukraine in the public space is possible not only with the help of creativity, appeals and drawing the attention of the world community to problems through official visits. Practical financial philanthropic activity is necessary for the reconstruction of the destroyed, assistance to war victims, etc. Both creative and financial support are covered in detail in the international media. It is important that the public has access to up-to-date information about the behavior and actions of famous people who have a direct or indirect influence on politics.

The author of this article researched publications on the official websites of popular secular magazines: the Ukrainian representative offices of the international publications Vogue UA, Elle UA and the American publications Vogue USA and Elle USA. The subject of observation is the activity of celebrities in the field of public diplomacy with an impact on the international image of Ukraine. The observation period is February 24 – October 24, 2022.

Monitoring tasks:

1. Compare the involvement of Ukrainian and foreign celebrities in activities that had a positive impact on the international image of Ukraine.
2. To single out the most common field of activity of celebrities who have carried out public diplomacy.
3. Determine the main areas of activity of celebrities in the context of public diplomacy.
4. Compare the monitoring results of foreign and Ukrainian representative offices of both popular secular publications.

Categories of materials included in review and analysis:

- interviews;
- reports;
- news and messages.

Methodology of research and decomposition of texts:

1. Determination of the information array of the study, that is, selected publications for the specified period, relating to the activities of Ukrainian celebrities with an impact on the international image of Ukraine.
2. Acquaintance with text materials.
3. Analysis of materials according to selected criteria.

Criteria for determining materials:

- Ukrainian / foreign celebrity,
- field of activity,
- popularization of Ukraine through professional activities (creative content, performances, competitions, etc.),
- charity or volunteering,
- verbal appeals to support Ukraine,
- focus on self-promotion.

In the researched publications of the secular press, the involvement of Ukrainian and foreign famous people in activities that had a positive impact on the international image of Ukraine was

highlighted. It was found that Ukrainian Vogue mostly talks about domestic celebrities, the American edition of the same magazine informs almost equally about both types of celebrities by primary place of popularity, domestic and foreign Elle magazines mainly about foreign ones. The most common field of activity of celebrities who have carried out public diplomacy: in Ukrainian publications – music, in foreign publications – creative industries. The main activities of celebrities in the context of public diplomacy, highlighted in foreign media, are charity or volunteering and verbal appeals to support Ukraine, in Ukrainian publications, popularization of Ukraine through professional activities (creative content, performances, competitions, etc.). Only one potential case of self-promotion was noted, and it was about the same event covered in American Vogue and Ukrainian Elle.

**Conclusion.** From all the aforementioned, one can conclude: celebrity diplomacy is a great way to implement national branding of Ukraine in the conditions of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. Those celebrities, who can be called as new non-governmental diplomats, act in a variety of cultural or sport fields. Through their activities, showing support for Ukraine, they popularize this state in the world, contributing to the improvement of its international image. Celebrity diplomacy can be considered as an effective element of Ukraine's public diplomacy. The uniqueness of celebrity diplomacy is that its main feature is the presence of an audience loyal to a non-state international actor, so this type of public interaction can be combined with cultural or sports diplomacy. During the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, many Ukrainian and internationally popular stars of show business and sports supported Ukraine. They did this through creative projects, charity events, verbal and non-verbal appeals. This activity helped to familiarize the world with Ukraine and keep the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian war relevant on the international agenda.

*Анотація.* У статті досліджено дипломатію знаменитостей у контексті покращення міжнародного іміджу України після початку повномасштабної війни з Росією. Методологія дослідження складається з комплексу взаємопов'язаних сучасних загальнонаукових і спеціальних методів і підходів, які представлені застосуванням аналізу проблеми політики, синтезу результатів дослідження, методу кейсів для окреслення практичних заходів формування національного бренду України та моніторингу ЗМІ для вивчення діяльності селебриті як учасників публічної дипломатії. Встановлено, що дипломатія знаменитостей допомогла розвинути імідж України у світі та зберегти актуальність теми російсько-української війни в міжнародному порядку денному.

*Ключові слова:* дипломатія знаменитостей, національний брендинг, публічна дипломатія, імідж України, Україна.

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