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Public diplomacy of the Republic of Finland and features of its implementation in Ukraine

Dyplomacja publiczna Republiki Finlandii i cechy jej realizacji na Ukrainie

Abstract

The article is focused on public diplomacy viewed as the instrument of “soft power” of the state and the ability to persuade and create reputation as well as cultural and institutional attractiveness. Moreover, the paper emphasizes the importance of the correct formation of priorities and values of the state, and skillful national branding.

The authors pay a particular attention to the foreign policy of the Republic of Finland in the context of public diplomacy service. Hence, developmental phases of the Finnish public diplomacy were given. In addition, a special attention was paid to the functional features of public authorities with reference to public diplomacy viewed as an important factor in international relations and the national interest protection of Finland. Therefore, the spheres of public diplomacy such as the cultural, educational-scientific, public, or digital diplomacy of Finland are under analysis, too. Additionally, the means and methods of public diplomacy, including those practiced

in Ukraine were under particular attention. Thus, a special emphasis was put on the national brandmark and international position of the State.

Based on the conducted empirical research which confirms the necessity of further cooperation between Ukraine and Finland, aimed at implementation of public diplomacy tools, there were given recommendations concerning the execution of the means and methods of “soft power”.

Key words: *public diplomacy, strategic communications, international relations, national interests, state brand, Republic of Finland.*

Abstrakt

Dyplomacja publiczna jest traktowana jako instrument „miękkiej siły” państwa i możliwości kreowania jego reputacji, atrakcyjności instytucjonalnej. Podkreśla się wagę prawidłowego kształtowania priorytetów, wartości państwa, umiejętnego brandingu narodowego (państwowego).

Szczególną uwagę zwraca się na politykę zagraniczną Republiki Finlandii w kontekście jej wykorzystania dyplomacji publicznej. Podano etapy rozwoju dyplomacji publicznej tego nordyckiego państwa. Zwrócono uwagę na funkcjonalne cechy władz publicznych dotyczące wprowadzenia dyplomacji publicznej jako ważnego czynnika w stosunkach międzynarodowych i ochrony interesów narodowych tego państwa Unii Europejskiej. Analizowane są kierunki dyplomacji publicznej: kulturalna, edukacyjno-naukowa, obywatelska, cyfrowa dyplomacja Finlandii. Skupiono się na środkach i metodach dyplomacji publicznej, w tym na Ukrainie. Nacisk kładziony jest na umiejętne reprezentowanie narodowej marki i jej miejsce w międzynarodowych rankingach.

Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań empirycznych, które potwierdzają celowość dalszej współpracy Ukrainy i Finlandii w kierunku wdrażania narzędzi dyplomacji publicznej, sformułowano rekomendacje dotyczące możliwości wdrożenia środków i metod tej „miękkiej siły”.

Słowa kluczowe: *dyplomacja publiczna, komunikacja strategiczna, stosunki międzynarodowe, interesy narodowe, marka państwowa, Republika Finlandia.*

Introduction

Public diplomacy is an important component of strategic communications in the modern world and an instrument of “soft influence” of the state on the international arena. It is a way of dealing with national security through persuasion, instead of coercion or violence. And this form of information

and communication interaction is gaining more and more importance every year. After all, governments are trying to decide the fate of the world based on the opinion of people. Therefore, it is no coincidence that public diplomacy is sometimes called people's diplomacy, which is implemented in the field of international relations funded by the government and aimed at direct communication with foreign audiences to establish dialogue and support the strategic goals of a country.

In the twenty-first century, security of a country is increasingly being shaped from the perspective of its people. The Republic of Finland, which has been a member of the EU since 1995, is a positive example of implementing different public diplomacy tools. At the same time, this country in Northern Europe adheres to a policy of neutrality due to its geographical location and a considerable length of borders with Russia. However, Finland does not reject the possibility of joining the North Atlantic Alliance and actively builds its policy on pragmatism. In the world of global interdependence, Finland seeks to promote international stability, peace, democracy, human rights, and equality. Meanwhile, the world's leading nations, concerned about the welfare and security of their citizens, use such mechanisms and tools of "soft power" as the promotion of culture, history, science and innovative technologies, language education, sports, tourism and economy. All these instruments create a positive image and landmark of the state on the international arena and establish strong international ties. (Hybl, 2011)

Material and Methods

A number of researchers have studied public diplomacy (S. Anholt, E. Gullion, S. Crocker, N. Kull, D. Nye, H. Touch, A. Henrinson, and others). In particular, the American political scientist, the developer of the theory of neoliberalism – J. Nye identified three main components: culture, political ideology, foreign policy. (Nye, 2004) That is, he emphasized the ability to persuade, having an impeccable reputation, as well as cultural and institutional attractiveness. Thus, public diplomacy includes the following areas of interaction: cultural diplomacy – a type of public diplomacy, characterized by the exchange of ideas, information, works of art and other components of culture used to establish international relations and strengthen mutual understanding; among them – media and virtual diplomacy, characterized by the use of new media, such as social networks, microblogs, or e-mail, Internet resources, media; public diplomacy – all such "activities carried out by individuals and legal entities, civil society institutions, a wide range of

civil society organizations, movements, communities, activists, etc.”. (Сухорольська, 2015, р. 10-11) The direction of public diplomacy includes educational and scientific diplomacy, etc. (Гавриленко, 2016)

Professor N. Kull, who was impressed by S. Anholt’s speech in 2010, wrote: “There is only one superpower left on the planet – public opinion and this fact means that public diplomacy should be central to the practice of international relations”. (*Public Diplomacy Explained*, 2017) According to scientists, people no longer need capital or media ownership to share their ideas and knowledge or shape the news agenda. In the age of digital technology, they have more and more opportunities and tools to disseminate information. And one of the consequences of this trend is that traditional diplomacy has lost its position as the main successful communicator (Payne, Efe, Bruya, 2011), as a result of the extensive use of digital technology tools. And “the main source of this development was the communication revolution, which provided ordinary citizens with the opportunity to participate in public mass diplomacy”. (Payne, Efe, Bruya, 2011) However, no one excludes the importance of traditional diplomacy. Thus, it is emphasized that today ordinary citizens are taking an increasing part in international politics. It is namely the subjectivity of the individual in international relations that is talked about by the supporters of the modernist trend which has gained popularity since the second half of the twentieth century (M. Kaplan, D. Rosenau, R. Rosecrans, R. Snyder, X. Brooke, B. Sepin and others). According to some scientists (J. Nye, R. Kohen, J. Rosenau, J. Singer, K. Voltz, L. Uhryn, O. Zernetska, etc.), “the structural changes in the last decade of the twentieth century strengthened the interdependence of peoples and societies, caused profound transformations in international relations” (Угрин, 2012, р. 157). These changes became a “way of participation of individuals and organizations in politics, in which they could interact directly with foreign governments or societies outside their own government...” (Угрин, 2012, р. 157-159). In this regard, J. Rosenau wrote that it is the awareness of people and their analytical skills that can shape their own opinions and attitudes to events, as well as summarize and perceive information that increasingly influences the formation of international politics. (Розенау, 1996)

Accordingly, public diplomacy is an effective mechanism of foreign policy and national security of the world’s leading states and an important tool for promoting geopolitical and national interests on the international arena (Макаренко, 2017), including the Republic of Finland, with which Ukraine has maintained friendly relations since 1992. This Nordic country was one of the first countries in the world to recognize Ukraine’s independence in 1991,

which practically served as a confirmation of previous cooperation between our peoples. A number of studies by both Finnish and Ukrainian researchers (G. Hummerus, K. Maynander, T. Myhailuk, N. Shunina and others) are devoted to the Ukrainian-Finnish relations. Several, translated into Ukrainian, publications have appeared on the history of this northern EU country (G. Gummeruss, H. Mentuvaari, K. Meinander, J. Toros, O. Ussili) and, also, on features of its innovative development. (*Finland – the country of innovation*, 2017) However, there is not enough comprehensive research on the functioning of public diplomacy as a complex of information and communication interaction and its influence on other countries, including Ukraine.

Therefore, the goal of our study is to analyze the public diplomacy of the Republic of Finland, highlight its areas, means of implementation, as well as best practices used in Ukraine. To structure the system of public diplomacy, highlight its components and features of implementation, structural and functional research method, sociological survey and SWOT-analysis were used.

Presentation of the main material of the study

Public diplomacy plays an important role in the implementation of foreign policy, promotion of geopolitical and national interests on the international stage. The Republic of Finland “pursues its foreign policy goals by enhancing cooperation with the European Union, building special relations with Sweden and the Nordic Community, developing partnerships with NATO, supporting bilateral and partnership relations with other countries (USA, Russia, China, India, South-Eastern Asia and Latin America)” (*Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy*, 2020). “In response to Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea, Finland is pursuing a joint non-recognition policy with the EU and imposing sanctions on Russia”. (*Government Report on Finnish...*, 2020, p. 33) However, it “cooperates and engages in dialogue with Russia on bilateral issues, the international situation and security... Direct contacts between citizens are maintained through cooperation in areas such as road traffic, tourism and culture, and are important parts of relations”. (*Government Report on...*, 2020, p. 32) Nordic cooperation and security are central to the Republic of Finland. In particular, as Ukrainian researcher T. Myhailuk notes: “Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden, Finland and Norway, are successfully formulating and implementing a purposeful state information policy based on information and communication strategy, which is an integral part of foreign and domestic policy and largely determines the strategic goals and priorities of information development aimed at

strengthening the geopolitical and economic role of these states in the twenty-first century”. (Михайлюк, 2010, р. 1) In other words, the ultimate priority for the Republic of Finland is to protect national security, or what can be more succinctly called “to preserve the Finnish way of life”.

In general, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland is responsible for the implementation of foreign policy in the Republic of Finland. It began studying the issue of building ties and shaping the Country’s image in the 1960s (Melgin, 2014) and started to disseminate various types of information about the Country, its history and cultural identity. However, comprehensive work on the implementation of public diplomacy in the Republic of Finland began in 2008, when the Authorities set up a special Commission, to create a brand for the Country, which invited the founder of the national brand concept, the International Index of Good Country, – Simon Anholt. The purpose of the branding was “to strengthen the Country’s foreign policy influence, increase investment interest in Finland and raise tourist flows”. (*Powers of public authorities in the field of positioning...*, 2021) The Country’s brand, according to Finnish experts, is an important element that underpins success and prosperity. (*Branding Finland*, 2008) At the same time, the recognizable “Visit Finland” logo appeared, which is still used today, but with the changed slogan “This is Finland”. (March, 2019)

The British marketer and historian – S. Anholt noted that society perceives the policy of a particular government usually through the prism of certain stereotypes about the state. Therefore, it is important for the state to form a successful national (state) brand, which, if necessary, will be able to block even the flow of negative information. Accordingly, public diplomacy is designed to promote the brand of the state, “based on the idea of a long-term sale of a positive image”, using the tools of tourism, culture, citizens, as well as by promoting national reputation. The analysis of government websites of the Republic of Finland shows that the government actively supports the development of creative industries, promotion of cultural values, traditions, etc. outside the Country, as well as actively develops the tourism industry (especially before the COVID-19 pandemic) and builds a positive brand of Suomi Country (Finland). The effectiveness of this work is obvious: Finland holds the first place in several world rankings, including the international rankings of national brands (Nation Brand Index (Anholt GFK)) (Nation Brands Index, 2020) and Country Brand Index (Future Brand) (Future Brand Country Index, 2020), the Digital Adoption Index. In 2021, for the fourth time. Moreover, Finland topped the ranking of the happiest countries in the World Happiness Report. (Helliwell, Layard,

2021) The Finnish education system is recognized as one of the best, ranking first in the educational ranking PISA. (*Як проходила найуспішніша...*)

It should be noted that the implementation of the national brand of the Republic of Finland is the responsibility of a number of ministries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Culture, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture), as well as municipalities and government agencies (Finn facts, Fin pro, Investin Finland, Finnish Tourist Board, Agency for Technology and Innovation). According to the vision of government officials, “Finland is an open and multicultural country. The competitiveness of the Republic of Finland is built on experience, sustainable development and openness to innovations based on experiments and digital technologies”. (Sung, Kim, 2010) In particular, the Ministry of Education of Finland and the Ministry of Science and Culture, which until 2021 functioned as one central executive body, have developed the preconditions for cultural exports and are currently supporting international cultural projects, developing cultural tourism and cultural institutions abroad. The Center for International Mobility coordinates scholarship and exchange programs, carries responsibility for the national implementation of almost all educational, cultural and youth programs, promotes the study of the Finnish language and culture abroad, and increases the level of education of immigrants.

The Finnish Ministry of Economy is responsible for the State’s business environment, functioning on the labor market, and – employment opportunities abroad. This central executive body of Finland influences the Country’s branding through agencies that help support innovation as well as stimulate exports. The Finn Facts information service, which is part of the Ministry, is designed to disseminate information about the industry and trade of Finnish companies, and to organize tours for the international media. And, the Finnish Tourist Board is an agency that promotes tourism in Finland. The Finnish Tourist Board is called upon to promote the image of the State together with companies in this sector.

The Ministry of Agriculture and the relevant municipalities are responsible for creating open databases on the regional features of the State, as well as identifying the best places to pick mushrooms or berries, which should help foreign seasonal workers learn about the Country’s regions, accommodation and food. Other government agencies also have certain competencies. In particular, Fin Pro acts as a global consulting network for international operations, explores global markets, and promotes the Finnish Republic’s brand in the field of finance. Invest in Finland helps foreign companies find business opportunities in Finland, publishes information about the Coun-

try as an investment-friendly country, and develops and coordinates international procurement. In addition, this state agency collects information on foreign companies in the Republic of Finland and cooperates with organizations working in the field of internationalization and business development. It is also worth mentioning that Finland has set up a separate agency – the Agency for Technology and Innovation – which funds research projects and innovates companies, higher education institutions and research institutes. (*Powers of public authorities in positioning...*, 2021) And, such a competence of this state agency is not accidental, because the Finnish government has adopted a governmental program which says that “in 2025 Finland becomes a state of invention, care and security, where everyone can feel important”. (Melgin, 2014)

The three main components of Finland’s branding recognized in the Public Diplomacy Development Strategy adopted in 2017, were European education, untouched northern nature, and the government’s social orientation in solving problems. (*Ukraine: Embassy of Finland, Kyiv: official website*) As the President of the Republic of Finland, Tarja Halonen, said: “Finland’s strong competitiveness and high standards of living are based on a Nordic prosperous society that motivates individual effort and self-development, but also provides social support. Democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the current system of administration are a solid foundation of our society. In Finland, the state and municipalities play an important role in the health care and social policy system, as well as in the education and research system; however, the citizens themselves, as initiators and service providers in various public organizations, contribute to the functioning of the system”. (Тайшале, Лесик, 2011, p. 1) Therefore, people are an important channel of communication that influences the brand of the state. People are a measure of the population’s reputation in matters of competence, education, openness, and friendliness.

In general, Finns are perceived as quiet, calm, friendly people. According to a pilot survey conducted among students majoring in International Relations, Public Communication and Regional Studies at the Institute of Applied Mathematics and Fundamental Disciplines of Lviv National Polytechnic University, Finland and its people are associated with the happiest country of residence by 53.8% of the respondents; 46.2% of the respondents associate the Country with Lapland and Santa Claus; 38.5% – with the vodka of “Finlandia”, Vikings and eternal winter. On the scale of attractiveness with a maximum of 10 points, 14.6% of the respondents rated Finland with 10 points, 39% – with 9 points, 31.7% – with 8 points.

It is noteworthy that 90.2% of the respondents most often receive information from Internet resources, in particular, 80.5% – from social networks,

58.5% – from relatives, friends, or colleagues. At the same time, the survey showed that 87.8% of the respondents dream of visiting Finland, of which 94.9% – for leisure, 28.2% – for study; 41% – to attend cultural events; 23.1% – for work purposes; 12.8% consider this EU country to become their permanent residence. However, not all of them have proper information and not all respondents are aware of the Country's membership in important international organizations. In particular, only 53.8% know that Finland adheres to the policy of neutrality and is not a member of the NATO, although 87.2% say that this Nordic country is a member of the European Union.

In general, it can be concluded that the national brand of Finland has a positive effect on the perception of this Country by the surveyed students. It is also obvious that innovative means of information and communication properly serve the purposes of public diplomacy.

In addition to people and management, other important criteria of the national brand are investments, immigration, exports, tourism and culture. In particular, investments and immigration determine the ability to attract people to live, work or study in the country and show people's perceptions of the country's economic and social situation. Exports determine public opinion about the goods and services offered by the country, as well as the extent to which consumers seek to buy or avoid buying products of the country as the country of origin. Finland has a number of its own attractive brands: Moomin, AngryBirds, Marimekko, Nokia Corporation, Stockmann, Fazer, Hesburger, Finlandia Vodka and others (*Made in Finland: 10 most popular ethnic brands in 2019*) known outside this Northern European country. Tourism shows the level of interest in visiting the Country, including natural and man-made tourist places. Although Finland is located in the north and has a harsh climate, there are enough people who want to visit this Nordic country. Finland is popular for its nature, the residence of Santa Claus, the northern lights (or the Aurora borealis), and other things. Culture reveals the global perception of each country's historical heritage and the world's recognition of its contemporary achievements, including films, music, art, sports and literature. The cultural dimension of Finland is developing through the promotion of films, music, art, sports and literature, etc. A real success for the Finnish national brand was the "Rent a Finn" campaign, launched in 2019. It was initiated by the Business Finland Organization, which also included the official tourism project "Visit Finland". In the summer of 2020, the project continued in cyberspace. Then, on the Rent a Finn website, it was possible to schedule an online meeting with one of the local residents of the Country. (Борисов, 2021)

In this northern EU state, organizational structures have been set up to be directly involved in the implementation of cultural trends. In particular, Finland has a number of cultural organizations and private galleries that promote the State through the arts and are united in associations (Finnish Art Association, Finnish Artists Association, Finnish Sculptors Association, Finnish Writers Association, Finnish Architects Association, Finnish Architects Association, etc.). (Melgin, 2014) The capital city – Helsinki, and other cities have also played and continue to play their diplomatic role, with their own international networks promoting cultural diplomacy as a public domain. For example, in 2026, one of the Finnish cities (together with a city in Slovakia) is to become the European Capital of Culture of the EU (for the third time in Finland: in 2000, it was Helsinki, and in 2011 – Turku together with Tallinn). (*The European Capital of Culture...*)

Equally important for the implementation of public diplomacy are non-governmental organizations – Finnish cultural and academic institutions which “join forces on the basis of a common goal to increase the recognition of Finnish culture, art and science in the target countries and promote cultural exchange and cooperation, international mobility, as well as special research and teaching in the particular countries”. (*Finnish Culture and Academic Institutes*, 2021) Such Finnish academic institutions are located in Rome, Athens, Tokyo and Central Asia; Finnish cultural institutions are in Paris, London, Copenhagen, Brussels, St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Berlin, Stockholm, Madrid, Oslo, New York and Budapest. In addition, a Swedish-Finnish Cultural Center promotes cultural interaction between these countries. (*Finnish Culture and Academic Institutes*, 2021) These institutions often cooperate with various Finnish organizations through the “Team Finland” and “This is FINLAND” platforms. Collaboration is also organized by cultural institutions in the EUNIC network (European Union National Institutes for Culture), which allows culture to build trust and understanding between people in Europe and around the world. In particular, the Ukrainian-Scandinavian Center operates in Ukraine with branches in Lviv and Kyiv – the largest Scandinavian community in Ukraine. These centers unite people through their interests in the Nordic countries: from languages and literature to nature and walks of life; camps are organized where Ukrainians can get acquainted with Finnish traditions and learn more about Finland. In Kyiv, there is a secondary school of I-III degrees – Scandinavian Junior High School – which promotes studies of Scandinavian languages (to one’s choice), culture and tradition, and holds various events dedicated to the Independence Day of Finland.

With the support of Finland, the New Ukrainian School project (NUS) is being implemented in Ukraine. Within the framework of this program, there are training courses, educational exchanges for teachers and lectures, financial support of innovative teaching aids. As the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine – S. Shkarlet noted, “The Finnish experience is a model for school reform in Ukraine, which is associated with many elements of the reform of the New Ukrainian School. As of today, this is the main reform of the Ministry that we definitely need to continue”. (*Фінський досвід...*) Education is another effective means of diplomacy, which is implemented within the strategy of public diplomacy of the Republic of Finland. And, this is not accidental, because Finland is actively involved in promoting democratic processes in the developing countries and considers this task as one of the determining priorities of its foreign policy in the long run.

On certain platforms in Ukraine, one can find information about other educational programs and trainings offered to Ukrainian citizens in order to share experiences, gain new knowledge. (*Finland Unistudy...*) In particular, the website of the Institute for the Transformation of Society for the Development of Local Self-Government publicizes the materials of some significant events: the practical seminar “Practical aspects of activating the economy of Ukrainian cities in the context of the Finnish experience”; the interactive seminar and study visit to Finland “Finnish experience of local self-government – for Ukrainian cities”; the interactive seminar “The model of local government in Finland and the possibilities of its application in Ukraine”; the study visit of Ukrainian mayors to Finland. (*Інститут трансформації суспільства...*) Finnish officials say that their strong public education system is a reflection of a long history of balancing the relations with Russia and elaborating a comprehensive government strategy that allows Finland to counteract coordinated propaganda and misinformation.

Much attention in this Northern European country is paid to media literacy and strong critical thinking. Since 2016, media literacy has become a school subject, and its basics have been introduced in kindergartens. The main goal of the Finnish educational strategy is the preparation of active, responsible citizens and voters. (*Secrets of Finnish Success in Implementing...*) In particular, on March 25, 2021, a webinar on “How did Finland succeed? Secrets of Finnish Success in Media Literacy” was held, during which experts from the Finnish National Audiovisual Institute shared the features of media education institutionalization, reviewed the most successful Finnish media education initiatives for different age groups. (*Finland abroad...*)

In this context, it should be added that the Ukrainian Catholic University together with Ukrainian and international partners, including Jyväskylä University (Finland) as the EACEA grantor and the grantholder of the project, is currently accomplishing the Erasmus+ project “Academic Counteraction to Hybrid Threats” which aims to develop and implement skills of detection and counteraction to hybrid threats in the course of professional master’s programs at the partner universities. (*УКУ розпочинає...*)

There is also some insignificant cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Ukraine and Finland in the direction of organizing art exhibitions, touring creative groups, etc.

In general, the Ukrainian-Finnish relations in the field of public diplomacy are currently at the stage of their development, although the non-governmental organization of the Ukrainian diaspora “Society of Ukrainians in Finland” has been operating in the Republic of Finland since 1997, which greatly contributes to the bilateral cooperation (Ukrainians in Finland 2020). Besides, the International Ukrainian Cultural Center has been in operation since January 1998, in the Finnish city of Tampere, with the aim to promote the cultural heritage of the Ukrainian people, to familiarize the Finnish public with the tradition, history, culture and art of Ukraine.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is necessary to admit that Finland is known today as an open, resourceful, caring and comfortable country, where competitiveness is based on sustainable development, openness and cooperation with other countries, as well as on participation in international dialogue and problem-solving through various forms of cooperation.

The Republic of Finland can serve as a good example for other countries in the field of using public diplomacy as a way of strategic communication with other states, in order to form a positive national brand and address national security issues. This is also confirmed by the first places of Finland in several world rankings.

The strengths of the public diplomacy of the Republic of Finland are the following: the organization of government; a wide range of tools for the administration and support of governmental structures; the focus on strengthening relations between countries in the region and in the world; support of national interests; constant interaction between participants in the implementation of public diplomacy; and, the use of modern technologies. Therefore, public diplomacy is a governmental mechanism aimed at the implementation of

foreign policy tasks of the state, which includes information projects; educational, scientific, cultural exchanges; projects concerning the use of the Internet, etc. At the same time, appropriate tools, aids and channels are selected (events, exhibitions, conferences, publications, books, souvenirs, etc.) for effective informative and communicative interaction with each target audience. After all, the better-informed the world is about the culture, traditions, values, etc. of any country, the more protected the national interests become because the governments of democratic countries cannot make decisions that would contradict the interests and views of their citizens.

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