

**VILNIUS UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION**  
**STUDENT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION**  
**MASTER STUDY PROGRAMME**

Uladzislau Rassokhau

Public Diplomacy and Soft Power: How Belarusian Opposition Leader Sviatlana  
Tsikhanouskaya Positions Herself and Represents Belarus During the War in  
Ukraine

Master Thesis

Supervisor: Partn. Doc. Dalia Bankauskaitė

Vilnius, 2024

## ABSTRACT / SANTRAUKA

*Public Diplomacy and Soft Power: How Belarusian Opposition Leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya Positions Herself and Represents Belarus During the War in Ukraine*

Author: *Uladzislau Rassokhau*

This Master's thesis focuses on the integration of digital tools into public diplomacy, using Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's efforts to represent Belarus during the war in Ukraine as a case study. It examines how Tsikhanouskaya leverages social media platforms and rhetorical strategies to bypass state censorship, advocate for democracy, and position Belarus as a democratic ally. The research highlights the advantages, challenges, and strategies of using digital diplomacy to build soft power, mobilize global support, and reshape Belarus's international image. Employing critical discourse analysis and content analysis, the study demonstrates how digital tools and rhetoric play a crucial role in countering authoritarian narratives and promoting democratic values on the global stage.

*Viešojo diplomatija ir minkštoji galia: Kaip Baltarusijos opozicijos lyderė Sviatlana Cichanouskaja pozicionuoja save ir atstovauja Baltarusijai per karą Ukrainoje*

Autorius: *Uladzislau Rassokhau*

Šis magistro darbas nagrinėja skaitmeninių priemonių integraciją į viešąją diplomatiją, naudojant Sviatlanos Cichanouskajos pastangas atstovauti Baltarusijai karo Ukrainoje metu kaip atvejo analizę. Darbe analizuojama, kaip Cichanouskaja pasitelkia socialinių tinklų platformas ir retorines strategijas, siekdama apeiti valstybinę cenzūrą, ginti demokratiją ir pozicijuoti Baltarusiją kaip demokratinę sąjungininę.

Tyrime atskleidžiami skaitmeninės diplomatijos privalumai, iššūkiai ir strategijos, skirtos minkštosios galios kūrimui, pasaulinės paramos mobilizavimui ir Baltarusijos tarptautinio įvaizdžio keitimui. Pasitelkus kritinės diskurso analizės ir turinio analizės metodus, darbe pabrėžiama, kaip skaitmeninės priemonės ir retorika atlieka esminį vaidmenį kovojant su autoritariniais naratyvais ir skatinant demokratines vertybes pasauliniu mastu.

**Key words:** Public Diplomacy, Soft Power, Digital Diplomacy, Social Media, Rhetoric, Belarus.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. DIPLOMACY AND ITS IMPACT: FROM TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO 21ST CENTURY DYNAMICS AND EXILED LEADERSHIP .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Place of traditional public diplomacy in the foreign policy activities of a state .....	6
1.2. Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century: Current Directions .....	13
1.3 Opposition Groups and Leaders in Exile: Impact on World Politics .....	25
<b>2. DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND RHETORIC: SVIATLANA TSIKHANOUSKAYA'S STRATEGIC USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOFT POWER.....</b>	<b>38</b>
2.1. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Social Media Strategy: Leveraging Digital Platforms for Public Diplomacy .....	38
2.2. Critical discourse analysis of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric: positioning Belarus and leveraging soft power in the context of the Ukraine war .....	48
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>LIST OF REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>77</b>

## INTRODUCTION

The evolution of public diplomacy in the 21st century, fueled by advancements in digital technologies and the emergence of influential exiled leaders, has significantly transformed international relations and the exercise of soft power. This thesis examines these dynamics through the lens of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, a prominent Belarusian opposition leader, as she navigates the complex geopolitical landscape shaped by the war in Ukraine. By leveraging social media, public diplomacy, and soft power, Tsikhanouskaya positions Belarus on the global stage while advocating for democratic change and international solidarity.

**Research problem.** In the digital age, traditional public diplomacy has evolved into a multifaceted tool incorporating digital platforms and innovative rhetorical strategies. Exiled leaders like Tsikhanouskaya exemplify this paradigm shift, using modern communication tools to influence public opinion, rally international support, and challenge authoritarian regimes. Despite these developments, limited research explores how such leaders employ digital diplomacy and soft power strategies to redefine national identity and amplify their causes during crises. This thesis addresses this gap by analyzing Tsikhanouskaya's efforts to represent Belarus amidst the Ukrainian conflict.

**Novelty of the research.** This study offers a unique perspective by focusing on the intersection of public diplomacy, exiled leadership, and digital tools. Unlike prior research, which often centers on state actors, this thesis highlights the strategies of a non-state leader operating in exile. By examining Tsikhanouskaya's rhetorical approaches and her use of social media, the research sheds light on the broader implications of digital diplomacy for international relations in an era marked by global interconnectivity and rising geopolitical tensions.

**Object of the thesis.** The object of this thesis is to explore the public diplomacy strategies employed by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to represent Belarus and herself during the ongoing war in Ukraine, with a specific focus on digital platforms and soft power.

**Aim of the work.** The primary aim of this thesis is to analyze and evaluate how Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya utilizes public diplomacy and digital tools to shape Belarus's international image amidst the geopolitical challenges posed by the war in Ukraine.

**Research tasks.** To achieve this aim, the study sets out the following tasks:

1. Investigate the evolution of public diplomacy and its theoretical foundations.
2. Examine the role of digital platforms in reshaping public diplomacy in the 21st century.
3. Analyze Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric and strategic use of social media in representing Belarus.

4. Assess the effectiveness of her soft power strategies in garnering international support.

**Structure of the thesis.** This thesis is organized as follows:

1. **Introduction:** Outlines the research problem, novelty, object, aim, tasks, and significance of the study.
2. **Chapter 1:** Provides a theoretical and historical analysis of public diplomacy, highlighting its transition from traditional methods to digital practices and its application by exiled leaders.
3. **Chapter 2:** Focuses on Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's strategic use of digital tools and rhetoric to navigate public diplomacy and soft power, incorporating critical discourse and social media analysis.

**Conclusion:** Summarizes the findings and discusses their implications for international relations and public diplomacy. A list of references is also provided.

By delving into Tsikhanouskaya's approach, this thesis contributes to the broader understanding of how exiled leaders can influence global politics through innovative strategies, even in the face of authoritarian opposition.

## **1. DIPLOMACY AND ITS IMPACT: FROM TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO 21ST CENTURY DYNAMICS AND EXILED LEADERSHIP**

The term public diplomacy today refers to activities that have been engaged in by states around the world for centuries. It is important to note that the tools used to achieve state goals have changed over time. For example, in the XX century, the content and meaning of this concept became particularly important, which was associated with the division of the world into communist and capitalist camps. At that point in time, the need for the leaders of the two opposing blocs to seek any support from foreign audiences led to the use of various mechanisms to influence the foreign public.

In the modern context of international relations and communication, in addition to traditional methods of working with foreign audiences, digital diplomacy carried out in the Internet space is actively developing. The scientific and technological revolution of the second half of the 20th century created the prerequisites for the formation of the information society in which we live today. Innovations in communication technologies have provided governments and leaders around the world with the opportunity to expand the arsenal of tools for realizing the foreign policy goals of public diplomacy.

Today, digital diplomacy plays a key role in international communication. It enables states and public administrators to respond quickly to global challenges and to interact effectively with foreign as well as domestic audiences. The use of social media, online platforms and other digital tools greatly enhances the opportunities for communication and information sharing. As a result, governments can more effectively promote their interests and strengthen international ties. Thus, the evolution of public diplomacy from traditional methods to digital technologies reflects changes in the global political and information environment

### **1.1 Place of traditional public diplomacy in the foreign policy activities of a state**

A characteristic feature of modern international relations has become the study in academic circles and the use of public diplomacy mechanisms in foreign policy strategies. The leaders of various countries often take into account the value of maintaining a positive image abroad, the perception of the state and its political activities by foreign audiences, because they in turn are able to influence their own governments. Importantly, the distinctive feature of the image is that it is based on the simple belief in an image, and this gives the possibility of manipulation of opinion. The creation of a national image implies the formation of certain perceptions, associations among the foreign public through the use of, among other things, the tools of public diplomacy.

In order to consider the content of traditional public diplomacy, it is necessary to address the emergence and development of the term. Early references to the use of the term ‘public diplomacy’

can be found in the press. For example, in the American newspaper *The New York Times* in the 19th century, the term was used to describe disputes in the U.S. Congress over the secrecy of a possible annexation of the Dominican Republic. Already during the First World War, the term 'public diplomacy' was used to describe a certain kind of diplomatic activity of states. For example, it refers to W. Wilson's idealistic vision of the political system in 14 points voiced during a speech in 1918. The notion of 'public diplomacy' was close in meaning to the president's words about 'open agreements, pacts. After the Second World War there was a revival of Wilson's ideas and the reappearance of the concept of 'public diplomacy' in its former meaning. In 1946, French Prime Minister G. Spaak during the first session of the UN General Assembly also spoke about the era of public diplomacy. By the middle of the 20th century, the use of this concept began to touch upon the issues of global information flows, in whatever forms they could exist at that time, as well as propaganda, which became extremely popular in Soviet and American political circles<sup>1</sup>. It was during the Cold War era that the understanding of the term 'public diplomacy', which is closest to the present day, was formed. It was the times of ideological confrontation that forced the USSR and the United States to resort to the tools of information influence on foreign target audiences, as well as to develop the structure of mechanisms of influence in various spheres - educational, cultural, humanitarian.

The phenomenon under consideration remains a subject of debate for researchers even today. For example, in the historical context, the term "public diplomacy" can be presented in several meanings. Firstly, it implies an open policy, when there are bans on secret agreements between countries, public control over state activities is formed. Secondly, public diplomacy is a collective concept for the entire set of activities of various players aimed at creating the image of the state abroad. Thirdly, public diplomacy is the work of state and non-state actors aimed at projecting the "soft power" of the country abroad. The last point is when, with the help of public diplomacy, the state realizes its national interests in the international arena and turns out to be an addition to traditional diplomacy conducted at the level of states and state leaders. It can be added that the last three characteristics are interconnected and together describe the content of the concept under study. In addition, researchers have identified several characteristics that distinguish public diplomacy from other types of similar activities:

- The motive, which is to implement the country's foreign policy objectives;
- The target group, which is the foreign public of certain countries;

---

<sup>1</sup> Cull N.J., «Public diplomacy» before Gullion: the evolution of a phase// April 2006, USC Center on Public Diplomacy.

- The method and tools for influencing foreign audiences<sup>2</sup>.

It should be added that early definitions of the term in question usually did not explain who exactly interacts with foreign audiences, due to the fact that these issues were dealt with exclusively by states. Speaking of terminology, for many years the term was defined taking into account the existence of a two-level process - a targeted influence using communication media to form a favorable image among the foreign public, which then exerts pressure on its government to adopt a friendly policy towards the country that implements public diplomacy. Modern definitions include the content of the activity and the designation of the main players. Image, PR, reputation institution and branding are close to public diplomacy, in particular in the use of images and symbols, wide interaction with various media. The main difference lies in the goals - increasing sales in the first case, and foreign policy interests in the second, as well as in the tools and types of communications. Researchers note that public diplomacy differs from PR, advertising, political campaigns in that it includes a whole complex of activities and cannot be reduced to slogans and images<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, many people correlate the tasks pursued within the framework of public diplomacy with the implementation of the concept of building a “brand” of the state, however, this understanding is generalized.

American researcher Nicholas Cull wrote about the content of public diplomacy. In his opinion, the main components of this activity can be called the following:

- the need to listen (Listening) (this requirement is the basis for effective public diplomacy);
- advocacy;
- cultural diplomacy;
- international exchanges;
- international broadcasting.

In addition, the researcher identifies psychological warfare as a type of phenomenon that has similar features to public diplomacy<sup>4</sup>. The areas of activity presented by N. Cull well describe the approaches to ideological struggle used worldwide from the 20th century to the present day. However, many of these characteristics are influenced by changing national interests over time. In addition, the list of

---

<sup>2</sup> *Pajtinka E.*, Public diplomacy as a theoretical problem: searching for a definition// EJTS European Journal of Transformation Studies. – 2019, V. 7, No. 2 – P. 22-23, 26

<sup>3</sup> *Gilboa E.*, Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy// The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. – 2008, Volume 616, №1 – P. 57, 68

<sup>4</sup> *Cull N. J.*, Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past// N. J. Cull – Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009. – p.10.



countries interested in using the tools of public diplomacy to realize foreign policy objectives is expanding, and each country may have its own approach.

British political scientist Mark Leonard believes that one way of thinking about public diplomacy is to reduce it to three spheres of activity: political/military, economic and social/cultural, with the importance of each of them for a particular country varying depending on the context. For example, in Singapore, the economic message is important, while in Pakistan, political issues are important. There are many examples when the attitude of the foreign public to a country has played a decisive role in the realization of the state's objectives in the international arena. If we recall the situation with Kosovo, the risks of losing for the parties were stronger not on the “field” of military operations, but in the struggle for public opinion<sup>5</sup>.

The researchers add educational exchanges to the strong instruments of influence within the framework of public diplomacy. Such programs contribute to a better understanding of the foreign and domestic political activities of a certain state, its weaknesses, and strengths, as well as form an evaluative perception of media information about the country.

The American scholar J. Nye devoted a great deal of time to writing works on the study of the phenomenon of public diplomacy, as well as the relevant tools for its realization. The researcher was the one who introduced the term “soft power” into political science. This concept for states is based on 3 sources:

- culture (attraction), in particular, trade, personal contacts, exchanges, which contribute to the transmission of culture;
- political values realized by the government both at home and abroad. For example, racial segregation in the U.S. negatively affected attitudes toward the state in African countries, the 2003 Iraq War negatively affected perceptions of the Bush Administration. A positive example is Jimmy Carter's policy of promoting policies to protect human rights abroad;
- foreign policy (its legality and morality)<sup>6</sup>.

Later, Nye introduced the term “smart power” into scientific circulation, combining the tools of “soft power”, with the ability to use the cultural attractiveness of the country, and “hard power” - one

---

<sup>5</sup> Leonard M., Stead C., Smewing C., Public Diplomacy// M. Leonard, C .Stead, C .Smewing C. –London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002. – pp. 8-22

<sup>6</sup> Nye J.S., Jr., Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics// J.S. Nye Jr. – NY: Public Affairs, 2004. – pp. 10-15

element of which is the military potential of the state, and the other - the economy<sup>7</sup>. We would like to add that public diplomacy activities are the closest to soft power in terms of content.

Modern “soft power” has its roots in the policy of American “cultural imperialism” of the 20th century, when it became necessary to form a positive attitude of the public abroad to the foreign policy activities of the United States. Cultural diplomacy, as a part of public diplomacy, contributes to the realization by countries of their national interests. Here we can recall the theory of cultural hegemony of A. Gramsci, according to which “the right of the state to realize its national interests. Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, according to which the “ruling” class can dominate the population through cultural patterns accepted by it as a norm. History provides several examples of how governments have protected their society from foreign influence in order to maintain their own position. In particular, the example of the isolationist policy in Japan, where foreigners were banned from visiting the country and the Japanese were barred from leaving. Modernity is characterized by digital isolationism, for example, the “Great Firewall of China” in relation to information resources such as YouTube or Facebook<sup>8</sup>. Often countries retaliate to foreign attempts to influence their populations, which can lead to so-called information wars.

To complete the topic of the cultural factor in the foreign policy activities of states, we can consider the American cultural policy in the 20th century. It can be subdivided into stages based on the geopolitical factor. First, the 1930s were characterized by building ties with the population of Latin American countries, largely due to the neutralization of the influence of Nazism in the region. After World War II and with the beginning of the ideological confrontation between the USSR and the USA, the Western European direction became more active. In the following decade, the importance of the development of cultural ties for the participants of the Cold War only increased. For the USSR, cultural diplomacy, from the point of view of Soviet researchers, was realized in the logic of the existence of socially and economically opposite camps, as well as in connection with the importance of increasing the country's significance in the world and reaction to international events throughout the 20th century. Before the Second World War, the role of the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, which combined both a public organization and a state institution, was great in coordinating foreign relations in the fields of culture and science<sup>9</sup>. The consequence of

---

<sup>7</sup> Nye J.S. Jr., Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power.//Foreign Affairs. – 2009, Vol. 88, №. 4. –P. 160

<sup>8</sup> Varpahovskis E., Six Ways States Resist Cultural Diplomacy Hegemony// USC Center on Public Diplomacy.

<sup>9</sup> Fokin V.I., Formation of the content of the concepts "foreign cultural policy" and "cultural diplomacy" in the international activities of modern states//Bulletin of the St. Petersburg State University. Series 6. -2003. Issue 2 (No. 14) - P. 125-129

globalization has been a decrease in the influence of culture as the main factor in shaping the image of the state. These trends lead not so much to the unification of nations as to the desire to preserve one's own identity.

In the context of the development of political science and information technology, works devoted to public policy have recently become increasingly popular. New approaches, interpretations, and methodology for studying public policy appear. In studying this phenomenon, many scientists rely on such concepts as "society", "public sphere", "public space", "public"<sup>10</sup>. There is currently no universal definition of public policy. When understanding this term, several approaches can be distinguished: public policy as a specific program of government bodies; public policy as a system; public policy as a complex of political networks. When analyzing current scientific works on this topic, several approaches to understanding the term "public policy" can be identified: institutional, instrumental, and academic approaches. The institutional approach is more typical for representatives of the post-Soviet political school, while Western authors approach the understanding of the term quite practically, considering it as a certain toolkit for solving various social problems. Some of the first studies in the field of public policy were conducted in the United States in the 1970s and developed within the framework of the concept of "policy", which meant a detailed study of the behavior and decision-making methods of political actors in the political process. For a long time, the field of public policy research remained within the framework of the actions of the state apparatus and the state itself, which can be more accurately described by the term "public administration"<sup>11</sup>. The theory of political systems owes its origins largely to the American researcher David Easton, who attempted to analyze politics from the point of view of systems. According to D. Easton, the political system is influenced by the surrounding social environment. Thus, public policy can also be considered as a reaction of the political system to the demands arising from its "environment"<sup>12</sup>. At various periods, works on public policy also studied the problems of public administration and increasing its efficiency. For example, the American professor in the field of political science D. Anderson gave the following definition of public policy, which fully reflects the essence of the

---

<sup>10</sup> Gadyshev S. A. Modern approaches to defining public policy // Humanitarian vector. - 2011. - No. 3 (27). - P. 132-134.

<sup>11</sup> Nikovskaya L. I. Yakimets V. N. Problems and priorities of public policy development in modern Russia // Power. - 2013. - No. 9. - P. 4-10.

<sup>12</sup> Capano G., Howlett M. Introduction: Multidimensional World of Policy Dynamics // European and North American Experiences in Policy Change. Policy Drivers and Policy Dynamics. - London, 2009. - P. 1-12.

approach to the interpretation of this concept on the part of the American expert community: "Policy produced by government officials and authorities and affecting a significant number of people", i.e. these are certain actions of government bodies within the framework of the process of developing, adopting and implementing a state course"<sup>13</sup>.

At the same time, the European approach to the study of public policy is somewhat different from the American approach. In Europe, the vector of scientific research has shifted towards the study of integration processes through the coordination of interests in the formation, adoption, and implementation of a certain political course, while not only state subjects of the political process necessarily participate in the process<sup>14</sup>. Thus, the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas considers public policy as a place where public opinion is formed and discussed, "the process of communicative production of legitimate power", and a place where it is possible to solve socially significant problems<sup>15</sup>. Another German scientist Hannah Arendt created a model of public policy, in which power is considered through the ability to coordinate action between people to achieve their goals. At the same time, power always remains public and gives society space to discuss its ideas; without such public policy, from the point of view of H. Arendt, a normal society cannot function<sup>16</sup>. The Italian school of public policy under the leadership of Giliberto Capano is based on the American one, but at the same time clearly identifies significant differences. If in the American tradition the concept of public policy is quite clearly defined, in European studies we can note the multidimensionality of this phenomenon. Firstly, it is a process of discussion and interaction to solve various problems, secondly, the struggle of political subjects, a platform for defending and realizing their own interests, thirdly, a set of rules, values, and practices of interaction between institutions of political subjects<sup>17</sup>. Based on the works of scientists of the European school, we can conclude that to achieve public consensus and transparency in political decision-making, the state should actively involve civil society structures, as well as effectively use existing expert platforms. Public policy goes beyond the framework of state policy, acquiring the form of not only the development and

---

<sup>13</sup> Anderson J. E. Public Policymaking: An Introduction. - Boston-New York, 2003.-P. 1-34.

<sup>14</sup> Belyaeva N. Yu. Development of the concept of public policy: attention to the "driving forces" and governing entities // Polis. - 2011. - No. 3. - P. 72-87.

<sup>15</sup> Habermas J. Moral consciousness and communicative action. - St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2000. - 382 p.

<sup>16</sup> Arendt H. Vita Activa, or about the active life. - SPb.: Aletheia, 2000. - 75 p.

<sup>17</sup> Easton D. The Political System. An Inquiry into the State of Political Science. - New York: Knopf, 1953. - 87 p.

implementation of institutional decisions, but also the participation in this process of various interest groups: from the expert community to non-profit organizations. The public, according to the European approach to the concept of “public policy”, plays a decisive role and can significantly influence the state apparatus. In addition, consensus should exist not only between the state apparatus and public groups, but also between citizens themselves.

## **1.2 Public Diplomacy in the 21st Century: Current Directions**

In today's rapidly changing world, states must adapt political instruments to the requirements of the time. This also applies to the approach to the implementation of public diplomacy strategies, as the processes of globalization and the information revolution offer new and improved mechanisms for influencing foreign target audiences. Today, many states resort to the use of the Internet to organize communication with the foreign public. Several concepts can be used to describe this modern trend: digital diplomacy, Internet diplomacy, social media diplomacy (Twitter diplomacy) and Web 2.0 public diplomacy<sup>18</sup>.

Social media and non-state actors in international relations play a significant role in bringing people together to realize certain objectives. As a result, governments need to cooperate with new players on the global stage and bring their activities into the digital space. Establishing cooperation with opinion leaders in social networks and supporting relevant sentiments among Internet users become priorities in the framework of public diplomacy. Today, such activities should be implemented along with the use of such tools as, for example, international broadcasting, international exchange programs.

Modern public diplomacy has gone through three interrelated revolutions: in communications, in politics and in international relations. The first of these led to the widespread use of the Internet and international news broadcasting (CNN International, BBC World, Sky News, Al-Jazeera). The transition of many countries to democratic forms of government contributed to the organization of mass participation of the population in political processes. And the reorganization of international relations in turn transformed the goals and instruments of the state's foreign policy. Achieving a favorable image and good reputation of the country abroad became much more important than new territories and other objectives achieved by military and economic measures. In the 21st century, the term “new public diplomacy” became popular, and researchers began to note the following

---

<sup>18</sup> Tsvetkova N.A., *Web 2.0 Programs in US Public Diplomacy// USA and Canada: Economy, Politics, Culture. - 2011, No. 3 - P. 109-122.*

characteristic features: interaction of state and non-state actors, dialog communication, national branding, domestication of foreign policy<sup>19</sup>.

Today, it is also extremely important to form a good model of relations with the internal audience to create a positive external image. Various researchers point out the problem of correlation between the country's foreign policy activities and the effectiveness of public diplomacy because failure in the former automatically leads to failure in the latter. For example, we can recall the policy of George Bush Jr. in the Middle East, when the war in Iraq significantly affected anti-American sentiments in the Islamic world. In 2003, the United States and its allies launched an invasion of Iraq under the pretext of eliminating the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction allegedly possessed by Saddam Hussein's regime. The evidence for the existence of such weapons later turned out to be flawed or insufficiently substantiated. Many countries and organizations, including key allies such as France and Germany, were skeptical of the rationale for the war from the start. When weapons of mass destruction were never found, it seriously undermined the credibility of American foreign policy. In the Islamic world, the war in Iraq was perceived as aggression against a Muslim country. This increased anti-American sentiment and created additional breeding grounds for extremism and radicalism. The United States tried to promote its policy as a fight for democracy and freedom, but the military actions, destruction of infrastructure, loss of civilian life, and human rights abuses during the war created a dissonance between words and actions. Public diplomacy programs such as Radio Free Iraq failed to offset the negative perception. The war had profound consequences for Iraq, including the destruction of state institutions, the exacerbation of ethnic and sectarian tensions, and the rise of radical groups such as al-Qaeda and later ISIS.

Thus, the state's ability to shape its image only within the framework of public diplomacy programs is limited, since the image of the country in the international arena is formed due to a whole range of issues. Speaking about the influence of information technologies on the realization of foreign policy objectives, it is worth noting that the Internet and social networks lead to a change of active players in public diplomacy, in which the active role from governments to society. For example, digital media and the acceleration of information flows allow the population to indirectly participate in the political decision-making process, which is due to the possibility of exerting pressure on the authorities. In addition, the role of actors who are engaged in the implementation of their public diplomacy is increasing today. For example, the UN finances a number of its own programs to influence the world

---

<sup>19</sup> Gilboa E. *Op. cit.* P.56, 58

public, the EU conducts activities to build a positive image<sup>20</sup>. One such program is the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which aims to promote sustainable development, combat poverty, and support democracy<sup>21</sup>. Among the most notable UNDP projects is the global campaign for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative includes mass information work, for example, through social media campaigns under the hashtag #Act4SDGs, and educational projects that involve citizens, businesses, and governments in addressing issues of ecology, health, and equality. Another significant initiative is the International Day of Happiness, which emphasizes the importance of human well-being as a key element of sustainable development. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) actively draws attention to children's issues through public events and social campaigns. One striking example is the Voices of Youth project, which allows young people to share their ideas and receive information about global challenges such as education and children's rights. UNICEF also conducts large-scale information campaigns on the importance of vaccination, which is especially important for reducing child mortality in developing countries. In addition, UN Women promotes gender equality through projects such as the HeForShe campaign, which engages men and boys in equality issues. This project is supported by prominent media figures and is widely disseminated through social media, which contributes to its global reach. The European Union, in turn, actively shapes a positive image through educational, cultural and media initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic values, human rights and economic cooperation. One of the key EU programs is Erasmus+, which supports international educational exchanges<sup>22</sup>. This program provides millions of students and teachers with the opportunity to study abroad, shaping the perception of the EU as a hub of innovation and professional development. At the same time, the EU is active in social media, promoting its values through initiatives such as the #EUandMe campaign, which focuses on the benefits provided to EU citizens in their everyday lives. These campaigns are aimed at strengthening the identity of the European community and increasing trust in EU structures. Another tool of EU public diplomacy is the European Capital of Culture project. Each year, one or more cities receive this status to promote cultural diversity and attract tourists, which contributes to the formation of a positive image of the region and cultural integration. The UN and the EU have similar goals, such as promoting global stability and improving living conditions, but their approaches differ. The UN focuses on global challenges such as sustainable development, human rights and the fight against

---

<sup>20</sup> The new public diplomacy: soft power in international relations/ Ed. by Jan Melissen. – Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. – pp. 13-16, 30

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). *Home*. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org/>

<sup>22</sup> European Commission. (n.d.). *Erasmus+*. European Commission. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

inequality, actively involving the global community. The EU focuses on its members and closest partners, forming the image of an area of well-being and integration. Educational and cultural initiatives are central to the EU's activities, while the UN focuses on solving international crises and global problems.

Today we can observe the transition from the format of television and radio broadcasting to digital offer, the oversaturation of the Internet space with audio-visual materials, which led to the emergence of the concept of “citizen diplomacy”, implying the possibility of any person to influence the image of their country at the international level. The development of this phenomenon is facilitated by the popularity of social networks and the emergence of opinion leaders with whom the state needs to establish ties. In addition, today's public diplomacy strategies are characterized by the participation of players such as marketers and political consultants who act as experts. In addition, the United States of America, like many other countries, is now actively using Internet and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to implement public diplomacy activities.

According to many researchers, it is the U.S. approach to using Internet diplomacy that has been most effective in recent years. The change began with the creation of the Internet Diplomacy Task Force (2002), which has now evolved into the Office of Digital Engagement (ODI) within the U.S. Department of State. The importance of this branch of the United States government and the work of the Secretaries of State is indeed extremely significant. Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice put forward initiatives to transform the approach to the realization of foreign policy objectives and the application of modern tools offered by the Internet space. Hillary Clinton, drawing on the experience of her colleagues in the development of digital diplomacy, promoted the so-called 21st Century Statecraft strategy. The State Department's foreign policy initiatives in the digital sphere include the TechCamp project, which aims to build civil society in cooperation with information technology experts. TechCamp, launched in 2010, remains a key tool for engaging with civil society around the world. In recent years, the program has focused on countering disinformation, cybersecurity, and ensuring equal access to information resources. TechCamp programs are tailored to regional challenges, such as helping activists in authoritarian countries use digital technologies to strengthen their communities. In addition, there is the Digital Connectivity and Cybersecurity Partnership program, launched in 2018, aimed at supporting digital infrastructure and improving cybersecurity in developing countries. The State Department partners with private technology companies and international organizations to promote a safe and open internet. Particular attention is paid to training public and private entities in data protection technologies and countering cyberattacks. Created to combat propaganda and disinformation, the Global Engagement Center has become an important element of U.S. digital diplomacy. The center conducts research aimed at identifying disinformation



campaigns organized by state and non-state actors and develops strategies to neutralize them. Using modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, GEC effectively identifies false narratives and supports the creation of counter-narratives that contribute to the strengthening of the truthful information space. In addition, for several years the U.S. has held Tech@State meetings to discuss the following topics: awareness of current world issues, data visualization, and Civil Society 2.0<sup>23</sup>. The U.S. State Department's modern digital diplomacy continues to be an example of an innovative approach to solving international problems. Using technological capabilities, the U.S. seeks not only to strengthen its position in the international arena, but also to contribute to a more open, stable, and prosperous world.

Social media allow politicians at different levels as well as diplomats to communicate directly with the public, allowing them to share their messages and interact with other users on different platforms in real time. Important benefits of social media include, for example, the following:

- quick creation and editing of informative messages;
- instant response to sent messages, non-stop communication with the audience;
- ease of working with content;
- 24/7 access to the platform from anywhere in the world;
- storage and transmission of large amounts of information without the use of electronic devices.

I would like to add that not so long ago there was the term Twitter diplomacy (Twiplomacy), which, perhaps, ceased to be called so after the renaming of the social network in X, but the meaning of the concept has not changed and state leaders, among others, take part in this type of diplomacy. An example of the implementation of such a strategy are vivid statements in social networks of the 45th President of the United States D. Trump. At the same time, the former head of the White House is often criticised for not understanding the possible consequences of spreading information from his social network account around the world. Twitter has become an indispensable tool for the former president to communicate with American and foreign audiences. Short messages published by D. Trump are clear in their message, but they are often quite emotional in content, which makes followers empathise and feel involved in big policy issues. Thus, M. Simunjak and A. Caliandro, in their academic publication exploring digital diplomacy during the presidency of D. Trump, note that the

---

<sup>23</sup> Revolution @State: The Spread of Ediplomacy [Electronic resource] // The Lowy Institute for International Policy. – 2012.

45th president of the United States ‘violates all sorts of rules of the diplomatic code’<sup>24</sup>. The rhetoric of the 45th US President is characterised by aggressiveness, excessive expressiveness and directness. Researchers also draw attention to the fact that Trump's diplomatic communication techniques have not become widespread and there is no need to talk about the emergence of a new set of diplomatic rules. ‘Twiplomacy’ can hardly be considered a substitute for traditional public diplomacy. Rather, it is aimed at increasing the effectiveness and integration of diplomatic figures in the process of communication with the audience’<sup>25</sup>.

In 2018, during Donald Trump's presidency, Chinese authorities created official accounts on Twitter, a social network that remains blocked within China. Initially, their rhetoric was fairly restrained, but over time, diplomatic accounts began using the platform to attack critics and opponents. The tone was set by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian, who was nicknamed ‘wolf warrior’ due to his harsh communication style - a title that refers to a popular 2015 Chinese action film<sup>26</sup>.

One of the most notable incidents involving Zhao was an international scandal in 2020, when he published an edited image of a soldier allegedly strangling an Afghan boy with an Australian flag. The picture was accompanied by the caption, ‘Don't be afraid, we are here to bring peace!’. This angered Australian authorities, who demanded an apology from Beijing. However, new accusations of war crimes against Australia followed instead.

Social media has gradually transformed diplomatic communication, which was particularly evident during the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine. Politicians from Europe and Russia began to use platforms to make statements that would previously have been impossible within the framework of traditional diplomacy. The acceleration of online communication leads to emotional and often public responses, which only exacerbates crisis situations. Unlike traditional diplomacy, where correspondence requires time to prepare and think over responses, in social networks reactions are almost instantaneous, which increases the risk of escalation.

Digital diplomacy also involves several technical and human risks. The main risk of digital diplomacy is the leakage of confidential information. For example, the WikiLeaks incident demonstrated how

---

<sup>24</sup> Simunjak M.A. Caliandro Twiplomacy in the age of Donald Trump: Is the diplomatic code changing? The Information Society. 2019. vol. 35 (1), p. 13-25

<sup>25</sup> Sandre A. Digital Diplomacy: Conversations on Innovation in Foreign Policy. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 332 p.

<sup>26</sup> Zeng, C. (2021, July 7). China's diplomacy on Twitter: ‘Wolf warrior’ diplomacy comes of age. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/07/magazine/china-diplomacy-twitter-zhao-lijian.html>

digital channels can become a source of compromising foreign policy strategy. This not only undermines trust in diplomats but can also destabilize international relations. The second factor is the threat of hacker attacks. With the development of technology, the likelihood of attacks from both state and non-state actors increases. Hackers can gain access to confidential data, for example, on foreign policy negotiations or personal information of citizens. We add that the culture of anonymity on the Internet allows the spread of fake news and disinformation, which can lead to the creation of a false picture of events. This complicates the ability of diplomatic structures to respond to crises and make informed decisions. Loss of control over communication is an additional risk. Open digital diplomacy platforms increase the risk of incorrect use of content, since the public and foreign opponents can interpret messages differently than intended. This can damage the reputation of the country or create unnecessary tension. In addition, many digital diplomacy systems have vulnerabilities, making them easy targets for attackers. The loss of personal data can undermine the trust of citizens and partners. And fake accounts and automated systems such as bots make it difficult to verify sources of information. This creates the risk of making wrong decisions based on false data.

For example, a diplomat's account could be hacked and used for provocation, or he or she could accidentally 'like' a controversial post. For example, in 2019, the account of the US Embassy in Turkey accidentally marked a publication that called for political change in the country. This sparked outrage in Ankara and forced the US diplomatic mission to formally apologize<sup>27</sup>. Another case involved Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, who in 2016 publicly reacted to a fictitious news story attributing threats of a nuclear strike to an Israeli counterpart. The incident unnecessarily strained already difficult relations between the countries<sup>28</sup>.

Nevertheless, the popularity of social media among politicians and diplomats continues to grow. Some states are creating separate structures and departments to work on digital diplomacy. For example, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who signed up for Twitter in 2022, is actively using the platform to criticise the European Union and its policies through memes and satirical posts<sup>29</sup>. Politicians are also mastering the visual tools of social media. For example, Liz Truss, as head of the British Foreign Office, introduced 'Instagram diplomacy' by actively posting photos

---

<sup>27</sup> Loveluck, L. (2019, October 6). Turkey's top diplomat takes on critics — on Twitter. Politico. <https://www.politico.com/news/2019/10/06/turkey-diplomat-twitter-like-035865>

<sup>28</sup> Associated Press. (2023, December 13). U.S. faces multiple crises as Biden heads to Europe. AP News. <https://apnews.com/general-news-82db522360b046feb533efelc417d309>

<sup>29</sup> Orbán, V. (2022, October 17). [Text of the tweet] [Tweet]. X. [https://x.com/PM\\_ViktorOrban/status/1582395473889210368?s=20&t=H8gVZuGVC-hnMMh\\_P6mX-A](https://x.com/PM_ViktorOrban/status/1582395473889210368?s=20&t=H8gVZuGVC-hnMMh_P6mX-A)

reflecting her professional activities. In her first five months in office, she posted more than 700 pictures, creating an image of an energetic politician. Some photos, such as the shot of Trass on a tank near the Estonian-Russian border, served not only for image purposes, but also to convey political messages<sup>30</sup>.

Thus, social media, while providing new opportunities for public diplomacy, simultaneously contribute to a decrease in the level of diplomacy in the behaviour of international actors. However, the platforms themselves are not responsible for this - they are just a tool that, if used inappropriately or impulsively, increases tensions in international relations.

According to the website Twiplomacy, an organisation that analyses the development of digital diplomacy on social media, as of 2020, 163 heads of state and 132 foreign ministers had social media accounts. The 2022 Twiplomacy Global Leaders Index highlights Twitter's role in shaping global political narratives, highlighting how leaders use digital platforms to influence public discourse and international relations. This year's ranking reflects the evolving nature of digital diplomacy, with authenticity, engagement, and the intersection of geopolitical trends shaping leaders' online influence.

Key findings include the dominance of Narendra Modi and Western leaders. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi maintains the top spot, highlighting his dominance in digital diplomacy. Modi's ability to consistently engage a massive audience, given India's sizable population and his customized content, is an example of how a combination of strategy and reach drives online influence. US President Joe Biden and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan follow, demonstrating that world leaders from established powers and emerging economies alike are using Twitter effectively. The ranking also highlights the rise of leaders from Latin America and younger heads of state. Colombian President Gustavo Petro, Chile's Gabriel Boric, and El Salvador's Nayib Bukele represent Twitter's strong Spanish-language community, using authenticity and local engagement to expand their influence, while the rise of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reflects his strategic use of the platform to counter Russian narratives and mobilize international support during the ongoing conflict.

The report also notes a shift toward more authentic, humanized content, with leaders connecting on a personal level. Short, emotional messages resonate well, as evidenced by Zelensky's real-time updates and Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin's candid replies. Engagement metrics like retweets and likes now outweigh simple follower counts when determining influence, marking a shift from

---

<sup>30</sup> Walker, P. (2022, February 12). Liz Truss's 'Instagram diplomacy': Five photos a day as foreign secretary. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/feb/12/liz-truss-instagram-diplomacy-five-photos-a-day-foreign-secretary-flickr>

popularity-based metrics to interaction-based metrics. On the other hand, the absence of China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin highlights their preference for controlled domestic platforms over globally accessible social media. This divergence highlights the growing fragmentation of digital diplomacy into regionalized "splinternets," where leaders prioritize platforms that align with domestic political goals. Amid leadership changes and policy shifts on Twitter, the platform remains central to global diplomacy despite uncertainty. However, the rise of copycats and negative sentiment raises questions about the sustainability of Twitter/X's role in facilitating meaningful diplomatic discourse.

Twiplomacy's ranking methodology emphasizes factors such as engagement rates, population size, and content type over traditional markers such as GDP or economic status. This approach emphasizes that influence is tied not only to a country's wealth but also to its leader's ability to effectively mobilize and engage a global audience. Interestingly, population size was the only statistically significant influence, which explains why leaders from populous countries like India and the United States dominate<sup>31</sup>. Some scientists in their research note the increased use of digital platforms during the pandemic for negotiations and summits, resulting in a significant impact not only on the format but also on the content of these meetings<sup>32</sup>. Naturally, the number of studies on the digitalisation of education, culture, economy, and foreign policy has increased significantly. A similar situation can be observed in the field of public diplomacy. Researchers dealing with this issue note a trend towards its digitalisation<sup>33</sup>.

The emergence of digital diplomacy as a component of public diplomacy is associated with the emergence of social networks, thanks to which anyone can become a 'citizen journalist'. The result of the formation of a new digital reality is the impact not only on the users of social networks, who are the main consumers of information, but also on the main actors of the traditional system of international relations - states, and, as a consequence, on the distribution of power in international relations. Digitalisation has a serious impact on the foreign policy strategies of states for a number of reasons. Firstly, new technologies create a so-called digital society and divide the audience into

---

<sup>31</sup> Twiplomacy. (2021). World leader executive summary. Twiplomacy. <https://www.twiplomacy.com/world-leader-executive-summary>

<sup>32</sup> Bjola, C. and Jiang, L. (2015), Social media and public diplomacy: A comparative analysis of the digital diplomatic strategies of the EU, Us and Japan in China, *Digital diplomacy: Theory and practice*, London: Routledge, pp. 71-88.

<sup>33</sup> Melissen, J. (2005), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, New York: Springer

separate segments, each of which must be dealt with separately<sup>34</sup>. While some learn about world events from bloggers, others turn to traditional news sites. Gone are the days when diplomats could communicate with foreign audiences through a handful of newspapers or news programmes. Moreover, one of the defining characteristics of the digital society is that information has become the primary means of wealth accumulation. Technology giants - from Google to Amazon to Meta - have acquired the ability to collect digital data, create information and generate knowledge<sup>35</sup>.

Second, social media can create new ways of interacting with audiences that can undermine state action. As V. Bernal argues, digital technologies lead to both de-territorialisation and reterritorialisation. For example, studying the use of web forums by the Eritrean diaspora in Ethiopia, Bernal found that such forums create an online public sphere where political issues are debated, groups are mobilised for action, and government narratives are both promoted and challenged. At certain points, the Eritrean diaspora used these forums to mobilise political and financial support for their country of origin and then found themselves embroiled in war with Ethiopia. In this way, the borders of the nation-state expand into foreign territories and the web forums have a reterritorialising effect as the diasporas become de facto extensions of Eritrea. When diasporas started using web forums to denounce their countries of origin, this had a de-territorialising effect, drawing demarcation lines between diasporas and their former governments<sup>36</sup>.

In addition, social media has become a news platform for citizen journalists who report on world events from the field, and their reports are used by traditional media as eyewitness accounts. In addition, social media has forced traditional media to use visuals in their news reporting.

Going back to the definition of the term ‘digital diplomacy’, different scholars approach the study of this issue from different perspectives, focusing on different aspects, from cybersecurity to social media<sup>37</sup>. Associate Professor K. Bjola of Oxford University notes that digital diplomacy is the use of social media for diplomatic purposes, which could eventually lead to changes in the mechanism of information management, public diplomacy, strategic planning, international negotiations or even the

---

<sup>34</sup> Hayden, C. (2012), Social media at state: Power, practice, and conceptual limits for US public diplomacy, *Global Media Journal*, vol. 11, no. 21, pp. 1-21.

<sup>35</sup> Manor, I. (2019), *The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy*, Palgrave Mcmillan.

<sup>36</sup> Bernal, V. (2014), *Nation as network: Diaspora, cyberspace, and citizenship*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>37</sup> Cassidy, J. (2018), *Digital Diplomatic Crisis Communication: Reconceptualising Diplomatic Signalling in an age of Real Time Governance*, Working Paper, no. 3, Oxford Digital Diplomacy Research Group.

way crises are handled<sup>38</sup>. According to M. Holmes, associate professor at the College of William and Mary, digital diplomacy is characterised as ‘a strategy for managing change through digital tools and virtual collaboration’<sup>39</sup>. It should be noted that most digital diplomacy researchers rely on social influence theory. It provides a sound basis for understanding how people interact in social media because:

- communication on social media is centred around actors who wield more influence online;
- social media has fewer physical barriers;
- social media provides a large pool of opinions from a variety of sources.

If a person considers a group of social media users influential because of their collective opinion, the group will be meaningful to him/her and he/she will feel closer to a group that is interested in the same topic, and the number of people in such a group is often large. Thus, the social media mechanism provides support for people from different backgrounds to form dynamic relationships and facilitates individualized collective action, such as political consumerism<sup>40</sup>. Indeed, bloggers use social media to highlight events and actors in real time, influencing the global public's understanding of what is happening in the digital space. And while the tasks of diplomats are mostly carried out offline, social media posts aimed at communicating the government's position on foreign policy issues and mobilising online support for foreign policy decisions and actions are used to support offline policies<sup>41</sup>.

In the context of studying digital diplomacy, it is necessary to pay attention to the academic dispute that has arisen over the correlation between the subject and the concept of ‘public diplomacy’. Researchers I. Manor and R. Creeley define that the diplomacy of the 21st century is going through a period of ‘mediatization’ - a long-term process during which social and cultural institutions, as well as models of interaction are changing under the influence of the media<sup>42</sup>. Based on framing theory,

---

<sup>38</sup> Bjola, C. and Holmes, M. (2015), *Digital diplomacy: Theory and practice*, Routledge.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, O., Hall-Phillips, A., Chung, T.-L. (Doreen) and Cho, H. (2019), Are You Connected Through Consumption? The Role of Hashtags in Political Consumption, *Social Media + Society*, no. 5 (4), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119883427>

<sup>41</sup> Eggling, K. A. (2019), The digitalization of public diplomacy, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 32 (5), pp. 675-677.

<sup>42</sup> Manor, I. and Crilley, R. (2019), The mediatization of MFAs: Diplomacy in the new media ecology, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 15 (1-2), pp. 66-92.

they concluded that social media should be used by governments to frame themselves, government actions and identities, and other international actors. Notably, framing is based on selection, exclusion, and emphasis, while the communicator chooses which information to provide, which to omit, and which to focus on by repeating. Through framing events and issues, the government seeks to legitimize its actions and interests in order to achieve domestic and foreign policy goals. Mediatization precedes the process of digitalization of public diplomacy. During the period of television's existence as the main 'news provider', public diplomacy experienced its two-sided influence. On the one hand, news broadcast on television influenced the agenda of public diplomacy as it captured the public's attention. The CNN effect is a prime example of this. On the other hand, the administration could use television for its own purposes by applying the frames already mentioned and expecting journalists to use them when covering a situation.

In modern conditions, the role of television is performed by the Internet, and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, Telegram, and others allow diplomats to build relationships with the population of the host country or the population of another country online. Professor of International Politics at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University D. Drezner notes that innovations occurring in the field of technology create new dynamics of power. That is, a state, if it becomes an early follower of a technological breakthrough, can achieve hegemony, which will entail an increase in the prestige of its policies. While other actors in international relations will only try to "catch up" with the hegemon<sup>43</sup>.

Thus, digital diplomacy expands the boundaries of traditional diplomacy and enables engagement with large and heterogeneous audiences. In addition, the resources with which it works enable two-way communication, which qualitatively distinguishes 21st century digital diplomacy from 20th century public diplomacy, which used radio and television.

The tools of digital diplomacy are a great help in shaping a country's image and transnational relations. This requires creating attractive content on social media, as diplomacy in the digital field takes place in a space in which there are many opposing actors. This diversity of actors has led to the fact that digital diplomacy is now undergoing qualitative changes in the foreign policy mechanisms of many states. The traditional and familiar technologies of public and digital diplomacy are being

---

<sup>43</sup> Drezner, D. W. (2019), Technological change and international relations, *International Relations*, vol. 33 (2), pp. 286-303.



replaced by data diplomacy, which involves the use of ‘big data’, artificial intelligence, bots and other technological developments to contain and accelerate the spread of information<sup>44</sup>. Researchers emphasise that technological shifts and the growing role of the private sector have fundamentally changed the environment in which contemporary international relations take place. Successfully ‘winning minds’ in the new environment requires specific technical skills and data expertise rather than a compelling agenda<sup>45</sup>. In addition, the language of diplomacy itself is changing, also influenced by digital technologies: diplomats are increasingly using humour and memes when reporting on world events or posting their reactions to them<sup>46</sup>.

### **1.3 Opposition Groups and Leaders in Exile: Impact on World Politics**

The confident functioning of opposition groups is the key to the stable development of the regime, the sustainability of the political system and the change of power during free elections. That is why the formation of opposition to the current regime is an important process for any state. After all, without the normal functioning of the opposition institution, it is impossible to develop democracy, ensure political stability and consolidate civil society in the country. The main task of opposition groups is to ensure a balance of political forces, reflecting the interests and opinions of various social strata, to influence the policy of the ruling group, noting its shortcomings and offering possible alternatives to domestic and foreign policy.

There are many definitions of the opposition, summarising them, we can get the following definition of an opposition group: an opposition group is an actor of world politics, the main purpose of which is to develop alternative scenarios of domestic and foreign policy of the state, as well as criticism of the government, political elites or the regime as a whole. The topic of the development of opposition groups on the world stage in general and in individual states has long been in the centre of attention of scholars around the world. Over time, various scientific schools have emerged, interpreting the goals and objectives of opposition groups in different ways and considering their impact on world

---

<sup>44</sup> Tsvetkova, N. A. and Fedorova, I. V. (2021), US Data Diplomacy: Goals, Mechanism, Content, USA & Canada: Economy, Politics, Culture, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 104-116.

<sup>45</sup> Bjola, C. and Kornprobst, M., (2023), Digital International Relations: Technology, Agency and Order, Taylor & Francis.

<sup>46</sup> Chernobrov, D. (2022), Strategic humor: Public diplomacy and comic framing of foreign policy issues, The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 277-296.

politics and the politics of individual countries. One of the first to study opposition as a separate actor in world politics was Robert Dahl. In his works 'Political Oppositions in Western Democracies' (1966) and 'Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition' (1971), the author focused on analysing the functions of opposition in democratic regimes and the forms it can take. Gita Ionescu and Isabel de Madariaga also made significant contributions to the development of this scholarly field, publishing in 1968 the book 'Opposition: Past and Present of a Political Institution'.

Because of the excessively liberal orientation of the works of Dahl, Ionescu and de Madariaga, they were actively criticised, for example by adherents of the democratic transition theory, who proposed to study alternative forms of opposition in countries outside the Western world. The theory of democratic transition analysed the conditions and preconditions of democratic transition, its driving forces, as well as different models of democratic transition. Among the most important works on transitology are those of Juan Linz<sup>47</sup>, Guillermo O'Donnell<sup>48</sup> and Adam Przeworski<sup>49</sup>. Similarly, there is a similar trend in the study of opposition activity in non-democratic regimes and its impact on the democratisation process. A general analysis of these works leads to the conclusion that for decades the opposition has been treated as a secondary subject - through the prism of studies of power in general, of the government, parliament and parties. At the same time, little attention has been paid to the study of opposition groups themselves as actors in world politics. In many countries the opposition took the form of parties and began to develop mainly within their framework. As a result, it is often the case that opposition and opposition party are identical concepts. However, a more correct view is that which does not reduce the opposition to party structures alone. A party is always just an element of the overall opposition structure. Therefore, the absence of functioning opposition parties does not mean that there is no opposition at all.

There are many classifications of opposition groups and parties that need to be taken into account when analyzing the functioning of the opposition in world politics. The classic typology of Robert Dahl divides the opposition into structural and non-structural<sup>50</sup>. Based on this classification, a distinction has been made between loyal and disloyal, systemic and non-systemic, parliamentary and

---

<sup>47</sup> Linz J. The perils of presidentialism // Journal of Democracy. 1990. Winter [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www1.american.edu/ia/cdem/pdfs/linz\\_perils\\_presidencialism.pdf](http://www1.american.edu/ia/cdem/pdfs/linz_perils_presidencialism.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> O'Donnell G. Delegative democracy? [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingpapers/WPS/172.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Przeworski, A. (2000). *Demokratia i rynek: Politicheskie i ekonomicheskie reformy v Vostochnoi Evrope i Latiniskoi Amerike* [Democracy and the market: Political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America]. ROSSPEN.

<sup>50</sup> Dahl, Robert, ed., Political Oppositions in Western Democracies. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966.

extra-parliamentary, active and passive opposition. The basic difference between these two types of opposition groups is that the systemic opposition aims to change or prevent changes in government policy, while the passive opposition generally agrees with the course being pursued and focuses more on the domestic politics of the state.

The systemic opposition is usually represented in parliament and recognizes the general rules of the political game. The non-systemic opposition aims to overthrow the existing regime. These forces are excluded from official politics but want to participate in it, focusing on foreign policy issues and seeking opportunities to receive support from abroad. At the same time, foreign support for the opposition can strengthen or weaken it.

The non-systemic opposition, in turn, can be divided into opposition using violent methods (radical, revolutionary) and reform-oriented opposition, as well as parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition groups. An opposition group can be systemic, constitutional, and legal, but exist outside of parliament. This may be because such an opposition group:

- is too weak to enter parliament;
- does not believe in the effectiveness of parliament;
- is organised in such a way that it cannot enter parliament.

Extra-parliamentary opposition groups in world politics can function, for example, as political parties not represented in parliament, as media, social movements, non-governmental organisations, as well as groups using violent or terrorist methods.

It is important to note that there is also a division of opposition groups in world politics into active and passive. Active opposition aims to change the existing domestic or foreign policy line, while passive opposition, recognising that such a policy is wrong, does not take action to change it. Passive opposition can take the form of emigration, disobedience, dissidence<sup>51</sup>, etc. If we talk about the functions of opposition groups in world politics, the following are the most important ones:

- first, it is the representation of the interests of certain groups of people, states that exist in world politics on the world stage. Those whose interests are not or cannot be represented in legislative bodies can defend their interests through opposition groups, movements, organisations, etc;

---

<sup>51</sup> Nemčok M. Active and passive: two ways party systems influence electoral outcomes. *European Political Science Review*. 2019;11(4):451-467. doi:10.1017/S1755773919000250

- secondly, another formal function of the opposition is the critical function, the main component of which is the presentation of alternative options for foreign and domestic policy and the support of these options by the current actors in world politics;
- third, opposition groups perform the function of political communication. The role of constructive opposition here is to identify contradictions and dissatisfaction in society and to provide information to the government and society of its own country, to the governments and publics of interested states, and to the world community that would facilitate changes in policy. The function of political communication is not one-sided, because in addition to the direction "from opposition to power", it is also possible to distinguish the direction "from opposition to society", since opposition groups not only influence the government, but also provide society, including beyond the borders of their state, with alternative sources of information;
- fourthly, opposition groups help in the process of containing conflicting interests in society and at the same time serve as a channel for venting the discontent and frustration that accumulates in society.

These four "classical" functions are characteristic of the systemic constructive opposition that exists in democratic regimes. If we are talking about a radical non-systemic opposition or about the activity of the opposition within the framework of a non-democratic regime, then the functions of the opposition groups will be different. The main functions of the opposition groups in this case will be the destruction of the existing regime, the seizure of power or the formation of a new government with their participation.

The activities of opposition groups in Poland are interesting to study and have very stable results. The institutionalised anti-systemic opposition in Poland began to take shape in the second half of the 1970s. As early as 1976, the Committee for the Defence of Workers was established, which was later transformed into the permanent Committee of Public Self-Defence. The activation of opposition groups began in 1989 with the so-called roundtable talks between opposition groups and representatives of the Communist Party. The result of the round table was an agreement between the authorities and the opposition to hold free competitive elections in 4 years with the possibility of participation of different political parties and the subsequent introduction of the post of president. This process marked the beginning of the establishment of a modern democratic regime in Poland. The opposition in Poland united under the banner of the Solidarity trade union, which became an actor with great political weight and high mobilisation potential to attract opposition forces. However, already at the beginning of the 1990s, a growing contradiction became visible in the opposition camp. The country began to fragment, small opposition parties and groups emerged. Eventually, these

processes led to the split of Solidarność into two blocs. The Centrist Agreement was headed by Lech Walesa, while the Democratic Union began to operate under the leadership of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki.

After the next parliamentary elections in 1993, a new stage in the activities of the Polish opposition began. In Poland, the electoral legislation and laws concerning the activities of opposition groups were changed to facilitate the process of consolidation of political parties and to obtain guarantees for the establishment of a stable government. An important moment in the development of the opposition in Poland was the confrontation between the 'left-wing' President Aleksander Kwasniewski and the 'right-wing' government. This led to the formation of a party system after the parliamentary elections of 1997, the main subject of debate within which was the expediency of Poland's accession to the EU.

The main source of funding for Polish political parties is state subsidies. They can be received by political parties that received more than 3 per cent of the vote in the last parliamentary elections if they ran independently and 6 per cent if they were part of a coalition<sup>52</sup>.

The existence of a large number of diverse opposition parties, according to opinion polls, does not inspire confidence in the Polish population. Polls of the Polish electorate in the 2000s showed that the majority of the population favoured a classical two-party system that would allow the formation of a stable government. The 2005 parliamentary elections were the epitome of such a system. Two major parties competed against each other: the Kaczynski brothers' Christian Democratic Law and Justice Party and Donald Tusk's liberal pro-European Civic Platform

Polish opposition parties and groups are involved in international political networks. For example, transnational network groups such as the Greens 2000, the Polish Pirate Party and the Polish Women's Party are active in Poland. They are members of relevant international network structures, which open their so-called branches in different countries of the world.

Major decisions requiring political and electoral mobilisation have already been taken. Poland is a full member of the EU and NATO. The country is also gradually recovering from the tragic crash of the Polish president's plane near Smolensk in 2010. The evolutionary modernisation of the Polish political system will continue in order not to lose its 'brand' as a standard bearer of democratisation in Eastern Europe.

---

<sup>52</sup> V. Zhukovsky I.I. Formation of the party system of the Republic of Poland. Kaliningrad: Publishing house of the Russian State University named after I. Kant, 2010.

Opposition groups and leaders in exile represent a unique and significant force in international politics. These actors often emerge because of political repression, persecution, or armed conflict in their home countries. Despite their physical distance from the centers of power, their influence resonates globally through advocacy, alliances, and mobilization efforts. They are physically removed from their homelands yet remain integral to the political struggles they represent. Their exile often results from suppression by authoritarian regimes or the collapse of governance during conflict. Operating outside their national borders, these groups leverage international platforms, diaspora networks, and media to maintain relevance and influence.

The internationalization of exile politics has deepened in the context of globalization, as digital communication tools amplify their voices and connect them with global audiences. The significance of these actors is evident in their ability to shape narratives, garner international support, and influence the policies of host and home nations. This article delves into the mechanisms through which exiled opposition groups impact world politics and examines the implications for global stability, democracy promotion, and human rights advocacy.

The phenomenon of political exile has deep historical roots. Leaders like Napoleon Bonaparte, who spent his final years on the island of Saint Helena, and the Dalai Lama, who fled Tibet in 1959, exemplify the enduring relevance of exiled figures in global politics. The Cold War era witnessed a surge in exiled opposition movements, as superpowers supported dissident groups to undermine rival regimes. For example, the U.S. provided support to Cuban exiles opposing Fidel Castro, while the Soviet Union backed groups aligned with its ideological interests. In recent decades, the role of exile groups has evolved, reflecting shifts in international norms and technological advancements. The rise of international human rights law has provided exiled groups with new tools to advocate for justice and accountability. Simultaneously, the internet has revolutionized exile politics, enabling instantaneous communication and broader outreach.

It is well known that the primary and main subjects of international law are states. At the same time, there are still debates in the doctrine of international law; there is no single definition of the concept of 'state' in international law, nor is there an exhaustive or at least to some extent sufficient and universally recognised list of attributes that a state must meet. However, it is impossible not to note some attempts to solve this problem. The most striking such attempt is the example of the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (Montevideo Convention), which, however, is only a regional agreement and therefore lacks universality. Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention articulates the attributes of a State as: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government (in the sense of a public apparatus of government) and the capacity to enter into relations with other States. Moreover,

the population must be permanent, which is one of the attributes of a State as a subject of international law<sup>53</sup>.

At the same time, history, especially the history of the 20th century, knows cases when a state, for various reasons, primarily military and political, partially or even completely lost two of the four mentioned attributes, namely a certain territory and a permanent population. For example, Poland lost its entire territory in 1939, the Netherlands in 1940 retained control only over its overseas possessions, losing territory in Europe. An interesting example is the Republic of China, which retreated from mainland China to Taiwan during the 1946-1949 civil war. In all the examples given, states that ceased to exist 'on the map', on whose territory other state-political entities were proclaimed (for example, Reichskommissariats in the case of the Netherlands and Poland), retained the state apparatus of governance - their government, and the ability to engage in foreign relations. For example, Poland concluded the Sikorsko-Majsko Agreement with the USSR, which, among other things, agreed to immediately restore diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors - and this despite the fact that the Polish government did not control any territory at that time. Such entities, which have completely or largely lost the basic and qualitative characteristics of the state, are commonly referred to as governments in exile. In our opinion, the concept of 'emigrant government' should be singled out separately, which is often identified with the classical government in exile, although its members often never had power on a legal basis. Although the concept and attributes of the state are widely discussed in doctrine and there are common approaches supported, among others, by international legal custom, many difficulties arise with the definition of 'government in exile'. First, the use of the term implies that, as a result of external action, whether by external force or internal disturbance, coup d'état, intervention or any other seizure of control over all or a significant part of a State's territory, a nationally legitimate government is forced to seek refuge in the territory of another State. During the Second World War, the governments of several European states, such as the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia, invaded by Nazi Germany, were based in London. Often the Government in exile was accompanied by national armed forces formed or evacuated to the country of refuge<sup>54</sup>.

Secondly, there is the question of the possibility or impossibility of the formation, existence and recognition of a government-in-exile (or some form of it) in other cases where the territory remains

---

<sup>53</sup> International Law: Textbook for Bachelors / Ed. R.M. Valeev, G.I. Kurdyukov. -M.: Statut, 2017.-496 p.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Alfred Peszke, *The Armed Forces of Poland in the West, 1939-46: Strategic Concepts, Planning, Limited Success but No Victory!*, Helion Studies in Military History, no. 13, Solihull, England, Helion & Company, Ltd, 2013, ISBN 978-1-90891654-9.

under the control of the state, but the grounds for the government to exercise its authority in that territory are questionable from the point of view of domestic or international law. For example, following the 2020 presidential election in Belarus, former presidential candidate Svetlana Tikhanovskaya formed the Coordinating Council for Organising the Process of Overcoming Political Crisis, which aimed to ensure the transfer of power in the country. The current president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, called the creation of the council 'an attempt to seize power. In its turn, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in which it recognised the Coordination Council as 'a legitimate representation of the people demanding democratic changes in Belarus' and Svetlana Tikhanouskaya as 'the elected president and interim leader of Belarus until new elections'<sup>55</sup>. Lithuania then granted diplomatic accreditation to the Belarusian Democracy Representation, headed by Svetlana Tikhanovskaja. In this case, we can either speak of the absence of a government in exile as such due to the absence of the above-mentioned features - the so-called "spontaneous" or "virtual" government in exile; or we can distinguish a special type - a derivative government in exile, i.e. a derivative subject of international law, which is given legal personality due to the coordination of the expression of the will of the original subjects, and which has the ability to establish relations with other states, to negotiate, to enter into treaties, to make agreements, and to represent the interests of the nation. The distinctive feature of a government-in-exile derived from a political party on the territory of a foreign State is the representation of the political and organisational interests of the State as a whole, rather than of its own interests, which is manifested in the provision of assistance to citizens, including those abroad, in the defence and protection of their rights and interests. Thus, a government-in-exile is broadly defined as a body or system of bodies constituting a State apparatus of government which claims to exercise State authority in a declared State or territory and/or represents the interests of that State or territory at the international level and/or is the bearer of formally legitimate nominal authority previously exercised in that State or territory.

The strategies of exiled opposition groups deserve special mention. Exiled groups often engage in extensive information campaigns to highlight human rights abuses, corruption, or undemocratic practices in their home countries. For example, the Tibetan government-in-exile has aggressively lobbied for international recognition of Tibetan autonomy, using platforms such as the United Nations and engaging with sympathetic governments.

---

<sup>55</sup> European Parliament. (2020, September 17). European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the situation in Belarus (2020/2779(RSP)). European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0231\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0231_EN.html)



The Tibetan government-in-exile also called for a centralized approach within the European Union (EU) to address human rights violations in Tibet, which is under Chinese rule. The request was voiced by the head of the Tibetan government-in-exile during his visit to Lithuania. "In Europe, we hope to establish a special coordination office, similar to what we have in the United States. We want to have a single office within the European Union where Tibetans can resolve their problems, rather than having to contact each European country separately. At present, communication with us is carried out through different channels," Tsering said. He stressed the need for better coordination and coherence among EU countries. He also expressed hope that Lithuania could take the initiative in raising the Tibet issue in European forums and drew a connection between European business ties with China and the war in Ukraine. According to Tsering, the Tibetan diaspora numbers about 130,000 people living in 25 countries.

The head of the Tibetan government in exile has also visited Estonia, Finland and Latvia, the United Kingdom, Belgium and southern India. Formed in 1959, the Tibetan government in exile, now known as the Central Tibetan Administration, has legislative, executive, and judicial powers. China claims Tibet as a historical part of its territory since the 13th century and has administered the Himalayan region since 1951. However, many Tibetans argue that their land has been de facto independent for most of its history and accuse the Chinese government of exploiting Tibet's natural resources and trying to destroy its cultural identity. China does not recognize the Tibetan government in exile and has not had any dialogue with the Dalai Lama's representatives since 2010. While India recognizes Tibet as part of China, it does not provide asylum to Tibetan refugees. Beijing accuses the Dalai Lama of seeking to separate Tibet from China, which the Dalai Lama denies. Tsering continues to support the Dalai Lama's position, advocating for meaningful autonomy rather than outright independence for Tibet. The Tibetan government-in-exile and its supporters highlight the systematic suppression of Tibetan culture, religion, and language under Chinese rule. Support groups and activists often highlight the erosion of freedoms, forced labor programs, and environmental degradation caused by Chinese infrastructure projects in Tibet. The Tibetan cause is further strengthened by its spiritual dimension, with global campaigns calling for the preservation of Tibetan Buddhism and the release of political prisoners such as the Panchen Lama. Strengthening international coalitions and raising awareness remain key strategies for the Tibetan opposition<sup>56</sup>.

---

<sup>56</sup> Tibet.net. (2023, December 15). Tibetan parliamentarians welcomed to Lithuanian Parliament as Vilnius visit concludes. Central Tibetan Administration. <https://tibet.net/tibetan-parliamentarians-welcomed-to-lithuanian-parliament-as-vilnius-visit-concludes>

Another strategy for opposition groups is to build alliances with foreign governments, international organizations, and NGOs. The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) has cultivated relationships with Western politicians to pressure the Iranian government, demonstrating the power of transnational networks. The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) represents a coalition of democratic Iranian organizations and individuals united in opposition to the current theocratic regime in Iran. Established in Tehran in 1981, the NCRI has positioned itself as a parliament-in-exile, advocating for a secular democratic republic. Based in Tehran, NCRI is a coalition of democratic Iranian entities encompassing diverse political, ethnic and religious representatives. Its main mission is to establish a secular democratic republic in Iran that emphasises gender equality, separation of religion and state, and ethnic inclusiveness. The council's activities and organisational strength give an indication of its importance as a political opposition. NCRI was born out of Iran's turbulent political history. After the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, the theocratic rule of Ruhollah Khomeini limited democratic aspirations. The regime's subsequent authoritarianism sparked widespread discontent that persists today. In particular, the NCRI and its backbone, the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI/MEK), have been subjected to brutal repression, including mass executions. The NCRI functions as a parliament in exile, with 500 members representing various political tendencies and ethnic groups, including Kurds, Baluchis and Zoroastrians. Women make up 50 per cent of its members. PMOI plays an important role in NCRI by maintaining an underground network to mobilise the opposition in Iran.

NCRI stands out as a well-organised alternative to the regime. Its advocacy of democratic transition distinguishes it from other opposition groups. Its revelations about Iran's nuclear ambitions and human rights abuses have attracted international attention, highlighting its strategic capabilities. Despite decades of repression, NCRI and MEK have adapted through innovative structures such as Resistance Units and People's Councils. These networks exemplify their resilience and deep-rooted support in Iran<sup>57</sup>.

It is important to add that diaspora communities serve as a vital resource for exiled opposition groups. These communities often provide financial support, participate in protests, and amplify messages through social media. Venezuelan opposition leaders, including Leopoldo Lopez, have relied on the Venezuelan diaspora to maintain momentum against the Maduro regime. Leopoldo López is a prominent Venezuelan opposition leader, politician, and activist known for his efforts to challenge the government of Nicolás Maduro and advocate for democracy in Venezuela. López has been a vocal

---

<sup>57</sup> Abedini, H. (2020). Written evidence submitted by Mr. Hossein Abedini at National Council of Resistance of Iran - UK Representative Office (UKI0011). UK Parliament. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/2378/html/>

critic of both Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, accusing their administrations of authoritarianism, corruption, and economic mismanagement. In 2014, during widespread anti-government protests, López was arrested on charges of inciting violence. His arrest drew international condemnation, as many viewed it as politically motivated. López was sentenced to nearly 14 years in prison but continued to be a symbol of resistance. He spent time in a military prison and under house arrest. In 2019, López escaped house arrest and took refuge in the Spanish Embassy in Caracas during a failed uprising against Maduro's regime, led by opposition leader Juan Guaidó, who declared himself interim president. In 2020, López fled Venezuela and went into exile in Spain, where he continues his advocacy for democracy and human rights. López has received numerous international accolades for his work, including recognition as a prisoner of conscience by organizations like Amnesty International. He remains a key figure in the global campaign to pressure the Maduro regime to restore democratic norms in Venezuela. Exiled leaders like López engage with Venezuelans abroad to mobilize them for protests and advocacy campaigns that highlight the regime's human rights abuses, corruption, and economic mismanagement. Many in the diaspora work to influence their host countries to adopt stronger stances against Maduro, leading to sanctions, recognition of the opposition as legitimate, and support for humanitarian efforts.

A separate point to highlight is that leaders in exile use traditional and digital media to spread their narratives. Platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and independent media allow them to counter state propaganda and reach audiences around the world. Syrian activists leveraged social media as a vital tool to document war crimes and mobilize support against Bashar al-Assad's regime even before large-scale protests erupted in March 2011. Inspired by the Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, these activists used platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook to disseminate videos of small protests and anti-Assad slogans, creating the impression of a widespread nonviolent uprising. This online campaign set the stage for critical activist networks and a reliance on activist-generated content, especially as international journalists faced significant barriers to reporting directly from Syria. The regime initially underestimated the challenge, believing its legitimacy stronger than the pro-Western governments targeted during the Arab Spring. However, its harsh crackdown, such as the arrest and torture of youths in Deraa, triggered protests that spread rapidly, amplified by a strategic social media campaign aimed at international audiences. Early media coverage, particularly from outlets like Al Jazeera, began to spotlight the growing conflict, heavily relying on videos and reports from citizen journalists due to the lack of direct access.

Social media and the internet became indispensable for documenting the conflict and exposing atrocities. Platforms like YouTube served as primary sources of visual evidence for global media, with networks developing systems to authenticate and curate videos. Activist groups like the Local

Coordinating Committees (LCCs) played pivotal roles in smuggling out videos and testimonies. These efforts enabled international coverage of regime violence, contrasting with the silence surrounding earlier massacres, such as the 1982 Hama massacre under Hafez al-Assad.

However, as the opposition fragmented and the conflict escalated into a civil war, the narratives became more complex. Armed groups adopted the internet tactics of insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, using videos to showcase their strength, intimidate adversaries, and attract external support. This proliferation of competing narratives diluted the ability of initial activist networks to control the messaging, creating challenges in maintaining a coherent international narrative. Activists and citizen journalists faced a dual role: documenting atrocities while advocating for intervention. While some focused on promoting a narrative of a peaceful, pro-Western opposition, others highlighted atrocities to galvanize international action. These political agendas influenced the selection and dissemination of videos. For example, activists sometimes suppressed footage that could harm their cause, as in the case of armed groups in Idlib. Despite this, the content they curated significantly shaped global perceptions.

The Syrian regime and various factions also engaged in this media war, using social media to promote their narratives. For instance, the regime portrayed the opposition as Islamist extremists supported by foreign powers, while some Islamist factions used online platforms to rally support from like-minded audiences abroad. Videos of gruesome acts, such as a rebel commander eating a victim's organs, undermined the opposition's image internationally and highlighted the complexity of the information landscape. The reliance on social media also led to critical questions about the authenticity and representation of events. Media outlets often struggled to verify content while adhering to traditional news values that emphasized sensationalism and conflict. This reliance sometimes sidelined peaceful opposition groups or complex narratives, favoring simplified depictions of the conflict.

Over time, as journalists gained limited access to rebel-controlled areas, they could independently verify some information, but their reporting often reflected the narratives of the groups providing access. This further complicated the representation of the Syrian conflict, as atrocities documented via social media continued to shape international understanding of the war's brutality<sup>58</sup>. Social media, despite its potential for democratizing information, underscored the challenges of curation, authenticity, and the mediation of war narratives in a highly polarized and chaotic conflict.

---

<sup>58</sup> Aday, S., Farrell, H., Lynch, M., Sides, J., & Freelon, D. (2012, July). Blogs and bullets II: New media and conflict after the Arab Spring (USIP Peaceworks Report No. 80). United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org>

It is also important to mention the challenges that opposition figures face in exile. First, there is the difficulty of maintaining legitimacy and cohesion. Competing factions can undermine their effectiveness, as seen in the fragmented Syrian opposition. In addition, their distance from their homeland can lead to perceptions of alienation or elitism among local populations. Furthermore, exiled leaders often depend on host countries for protection and resources, which can limit their autonomy. Host governments may impose restrictions or prioritize their own geopolitical interests, making it difficult for exiled groups to operate. Third, there is security. Exiled opposition figures face significant security risks, including surveillance, harassment, and assassination attempts. The murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 highlights the dangers facing dissidents abroad.

When it comes to the influence of opposition groups and exiled leaders on world politics, it is important to emphasize that such groups influence the foreign policies of host countries and international organizations. Their lobbying efforts can lead to sanctions, diplomatic isolation, or even military interventions against their governments. Opposition leaders also often serve as symbols of resistance and defenders of democratic values. Their presence highlights the plight of oppressed populations and inspires global movements for change. The role of South African exiles during apartheid is a testament to the power of exile in strengthening international solidarity.

Thus, it can be concluded that opposition groups and leaders in exile are indispensable players in world politics. Their influence extends beyond national borders, shaping international agendas, building solidarity, and advocating for justice. However, their effectiveness depends on their ability to overcome challenges such as fragmentation, host-country dependence, and security threats.

## **2. DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AND RHETORIC: SVIATLANA TSIKHANOUSKAYA'S STRATEGIC USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOFT POWER**

### **2.1 Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Social Media Strategy: Leveraging Digital Platforms for Public Diplomacy**

The political crisis in Belarus started after the presidential election that took place on 9 August 2020. There were several candidates running in this election, but the main competitors were Alexander Lukashenko, who had ruled the country for more than 25 years, and Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the wife of an opposition figure who was detained and not allowed to participate in the election. After the polls closed, the Central Election Commission announced that Lukashenko had received more than 80 per cent of the vote, while Tsikhanouskaya only about 10 per cent. However, even before the election results were announced, opposition forces accused the authorities of falsifying the results and started mass protests. At this time, the internet in the country was practically down, and independent media websites and social networks were not accessible. Such brutality on the part of the law enforcement agencies did not stop the protests, and the next day people again took to the streets. But they were again confronted by security forces using weapons and force.

The actions continued until late autumn in courtyards, but they too were dispersed by the police and military. One such courtyard in the area of Chervyakova Street and Smorgovskiy Tract was unofficially named 'Square of Changes'. On 11 November 2020, around 22:00, unknown people in civilian clothes, called 'tikharys' in Belarus, came to the yard and started cutting red and white ribbons. Roman Bondarenka, a 31-year-old manager and activist, learnt about it from a yard chat room and went outside to watch. Two men got into an altercation with him, one of them hit Bondarenko and he fell, hitting his head on a children's slide. He was then beaten by another man and then by three others. The attackers took Bandarenka with them into a minibus and took him to Tsentralny District Police Department of Minsk, from where he was sent to hospital. The next day Roman Bandarenka died. At that time it was the last outburst of protest activity in Belarus. Two journalists of the Belsat TV channel (funded by the Polish government and recognised as an extremist group in Belarus in November 2021) - Katerina Andreeva and Daria Chultsova - broadcasted live from the 'Square of Changes' and received two years in prison each. Another journalist, Ekaterina Barysevich from TUT.by, discovered Lukashenka's lies, refuting his words that Bandarenka was drunk. She was also jailed - for violating medical secrecy.

The protest proved remarkably resilient due to its grassroots decentralisation, which made it virtually inaccessible to the authorities. However, it is precisely this decentralisation, under the current

conditions, that has made it virtually impossible for the protest to win. Meanwhile, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who had fled Belarus for Lithuania shortly after the election results were announced, was becoming a central figure in the opposition movement. She left Belarus under significant pressure and threats to her safety. Initially, Tsikhanouskaya had hoped to contest the election results, but as the crackdown escalated, her focus shifted to international advocacy and calling for new, fair elections. Tsikhanouskaya's departure occurred on August 11, 2020, when she crossed into Lithuania. While she was in Lithuania, she began to organize and rally international support for the Belarusian opposition, calling on the international community to impose sanctions on the Lukashenko regime. Tsikhanouskaya also held meetings with Western diplomats and leaders, including European Union officials, to garner support for the cause of free and fair elections in Belarus.

In the months that followed, Tsikhanouskaya's influence grew internationally, and she became a symbol of resistance to Lukashenko's regime. At the moment, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's political activities are focused on several key areas, for example, on international promotion of Belarusian democracy. She works to build alliances with Western governments, especially in the European Union and the United States, to increase pressure on the Belarusian authorities. She often calls for tougher sanctions against the Lukashenko regime and for international recognition of the Belarusian opposition as the legitimate representatives of the people of the country.

Tsikhanouskaya has remained a leading figure in the opposition to Lukashenko's government. She was a key member of the Coordination Council, an initiative aimed at organizing a peaceful transition of power in Belarus, and later created the United Transitional Cabinet, a government equivalent. In addition, Tsikhanouskaya works to provide moral and logistical support to Belarusian civil society, including activists, independent media, and protesters inside Belarus. She calls on the international community to recognize the repressive tactics of the Belarusian authorities and to support the rights and freedom of political prisoners. She also raises awareness of the repression faced by activists, journalists and ordinary citizens who have been detained or forced to flee the country.

Tsikhanouskaya also regularly participates in international conferences, meetings with foreign officials and media appearances to raise awareness of the situation in Belarus. She is an outspoken critic of human rights violations and the suppression of dissent, frequently appearing in international media and speaking at forums on human rights and democracy.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's use of social media has become a central component of her public diplomacy efforts, playing a key role in advancing her political agenda and representing the Belarusian opposition on the global stage. Tsikhanouskaya has turned to digital platforms as a

powerful tool to connect with domestic and international audiences. In a political environment where traditional media is tightly controlled by the Belarusian regime, social media has become an important means for her to circumvent state censorship and directly communicate with supporters, foreign governments, and international organizations.

Tsikhanouskaya's presence on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and YouTube allows her to spread messages of democracy, human rights, and Belarusian sovereignty, as well as call for global solidarity in the fight against authoritarianism. Her use of social media allows her to make various appeals to her audience, share personal messages, and raise awareness about political prisoners in Belarus. With the war in Ukraine ongoing, her social media activities have also become an important part of her diplomatic work, uniting the Belarusian opposition with the Ukrainian one in the fight for sovereignty and democratic principles, and presenting Belarus as a victim of Russian and Belarusian authoritarianism.

Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya's social media presence is a key component of her broader strategy of soft power and public diplomacy, allowing her to reach international audiences, raise awareness of the Belarusian opposition movement, and rally support for the cause of democracy and human rights in Belarus.

Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya has effectively utilized various social media platforms to engage with both her Belarusian and international audience. Verified social networks are located on the official website of Tsikhanouskaya. Data is current as of December 1, 2024. Here's an overview of her social media channels, the amount of engagement on each, and the nature of her interaction with her followers:

#### 1. Instagram (@prezident.sveta)<sup>59</sup>

- **Subscribers:** Instagram account has more than 106 000 followers.
- **Activity:** Instagram is one of her most important personal social media channels. She frequently shares updates, personal reflections and moments from her life as a political leader. The platform also allows her to communicate visually, showcasing both political posts and her daily life. Tsikhanouskaya personally checks and responds to Instagram posts, creating a sense of direct interaction and connection with her followers.
- **Content:** Her Instagram posts often include photos of her meetings with international leaders, useful information for Belarusians at home and abroad, including from human rights activists,

---

<sup>59</sup> Prezident Sveta. (n.d.). *Instagram profile*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/prezident.sveta/?hl=en>



and messages of solidarity with political prisoners. She uses Instagram's stories feature to keep her audience updated on quick reactions to the political situation in Belarus.

## 2. YouTube (Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya)<sup>60</sup>

- Subscribers: Her official YouTube channel has over 52 000 subscribers.
- Activity: On YouTube, Tsikhanouskaya shares longer-form content such as speeches, interviews, and news about Belarus's political situation. The channel serves as a platform for more in-depth communication, where she addresses the Belarusian people and the international community in a more formal setting. Number of videos: 382.
- Content: Tsikhanouskaya uses the platform to highlight key political moments, her meetings with foreign leaders, and her campaigns. YouTube also provides a space for live streams, including press conferences and global outreach events.

## 3. Twitter/X (@tsikhanouskaya)<sup>61</sup>

- Followers: Tsikhanouskaya's Twitter account has over 208 000 followers.
- Activity: Tsikhanouskaya uses Twitter as an essential tool for real-time updates, sharing breaking news, statements, and calling for international action. Twitter allows her to quickly address political developments in Belarus and engage with the global community.
- Content: Her tweets are often a mix of political commentary, calls to action, responses to international events, and solidarity messages for those fighting repression in Belarus. The page is maintained exclusively in English.

## 4. Telegram (@tsikhanouskaya)<sup>62</sup>

- Subscribers: Tsikhanouskaya's official Telegram channel has 21 500 subscribers.
- Activity: Telegram is an important communication tool in Belarus, especially since the regime has made efforts to restrict access to certain media. Tsikhanouskaya uses this channel to provide her followers with news regarding political developments in Belarus.

---

<sup>60</sup> YouTube. (n.d.). [Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcCJ5p6hQi1n-xaYkSMILXg>

<sup>61</sup> Tsikhanouskaya. (n.d.). [/@tsikhanouskaya]. X. <https://x.com/Tsikhanouskaya>

<sup>62</sup> Tsikhanouskaya. (n.d.). [/@tsikhanouskaya]. Telegram. <https://t.me/tsikhanouskaya>

- Content: The channel features direct messages, videos, and announcements related to Tsikhanouskaya's activities.

#### 5. Facebook (S. Tsikhanouskaya)<sup>63</sup>

- Followers: Her Facebook page has around 21 000 followers.
- Activity: Tikhonovskaya's Facebook page is a primary space for public updates, both personal and political. She uses this platform to post detailed updates, videos, and links to external articles.
- Content: Like her other platforms, Tsikhanouskaya uses Facebook to spread her message of nonviolent resistance, to promote Belarusian democracy, and to raise awareness about political prisoners. She also interacts with the media and shares key moments from her international engagements.

Social media are changing the nature of political communication by being tools that can be used to inform and mobilize users in new ways. Users can directly connect with politicians and their platforms and engage in political activity in new ways. Each of these social media platforms is programmed into code by developers, creating a unique digital architecture that affects how politicians and citizens can use the platform to interact with each other. For example, simply by clicking the "Like" button on Facebook or following someone on Twitter, users are able to connect with others and express their views in new ways. The ability for users to instantly share, like, or retweet political messages has opened up a new way for politicians to reach voters.

The use of social networks in her activities is an essential tool, as Belarusian propaganda and state bans and blockades prevent Belarusians from being informed about, for example, democratic values, the true situation on the front in Ukraine, world politics, etc. Social networks are a unifying factor, making Belarusians understand that Tsikhanouskaya has her finger on the pulse and is promoting their issues on the international stage. Social networks are a unifying factor, making Belarusians realise that Tsikhanouskaya has her finger on the pulse and is promoting their issues.

Lukashenko dealt a blow to the image of Belarusians on the international stage, becoming a co-aggressor in Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, creating a migration crisis on the borders with the European Union and NATO, and so on. It is fair to say that against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, the issue of the 2020 protests in Belarus has taken a back seat. However, Tsikhanouskaya's

---

<sup>63</sup> Tsikhanouskaya, S. (n.d.). [S. Tsikhanouskaya]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/S.Tsikhanouskaya>

role in promoting the interests of Belarusian society in the international arena remains. It can be said that Tsikhanouskaya defends the interests of Belarusians in meetings with diplomats, and in social networks she shares various opportunities and useful information with Belarusian civil society and initiatives.

Next, the Belarusian opposition leader's activities on each of the listed social media platforms should be analysed, as an analysis of her activities can show how Tsikhanouskaya uses these tools to create a narrative, attract an international audience and position herself as an authoritative and influential leader, help determine if and how she tailors her messages to the strengths of each platform and target audience, and so on.

It's worth starting with Twitter/X because, as mentioned above, it's the platform of modern public diplomacy, where politicians post official diplomatic statements or comments. Tsikhanouskaya's account has over 208,000 followers, reflecting a sizable international audience. This figure indicates her influence and ability to connect with policymakers, journalists, and global advocates for democracy. Her exclusive use of English underscores her focus on an international audience, aiming to engage Western democracies, NGOs, and global opinion leaders. Tweets frequently address Belarus's political situation, including criticism of the Lukashenka regime and appeals for international support for democratic reforms. Tweets often include images or videos of her at international events, meetings with global leaders, or participating in conferences, showcasing her diplomatic engagement.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's use of Instagram (@prezident.sveta) is an integral part of her public diplomacy and political communication strategy, especially as a leader in exile. With over 106,000 followers, her Instagram account serves as a platform for personal engagement, political messaging, and updates on the Belarusian struggle for democracy. Tsikhanouskaya frequently shares photos of her meetings with international leaders, messages of solidarity with political prisoners, and practical information for Belarusians at home and abroad. The platform also features a significant number of her video messages, making it a key tool for connecting with her audience. Her use of Instagram's Stories allows her to provide real-time updates and reactions to political developments, fostering a sense of immediacy and authenticity. Importantly, Tsikhanouskaya personally checks and responds to posts, creating a direct connection with her followers, which strengthens her soft power.

In the context of Belarus, Instagram has 3.90 million users, accounting for approximately 41% of the population<sup>64</sup>. Tsikhanouskaya's following, while significant, represents 2.72% of Belarusian Instagram users and 1.12% of the total population. Despite this, Instagram remains one of her most impactful channels for engaging with both domestic and international audiences.

A comparative analysis with Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó highlights differences in scale and reach. Guaidó, who also uses Instagram as a primary tool for maintaining his political relevance in exile, has 4.1 million followers. This accounts for 50.31% of Venezuela's 8.15 million Instagram users and 14.14% of the country's total population<sup>65</sup>. Guaidó's larger following can be attributed to the extended visibility he gained during Venezuela's political crisis and the active role of the Venezuelan diaspora in amplifying his message.

While Tsikhanouskaya's reach is smaller in both raw numbers and proportional terms, her use of Instagram mirrors Guaidó's in its emphasis on direct communication, humanizing leadership, and rallying support for democracy. Both leaders operate in the context of authoritarian regimes, where social media serves as a lifeline for their political movements. Tsikhanouskaya's account has significant room for growth, especially given the rising number of Instagram users in Belarus. Her continued focus on engaging content, video updates, and leveraging the platform's expanding audience could further amplify her message and strengthen her influence globally.

Telegram serves as an essential platform for political communication in Belarus, especially given the restrictions imposed on traditional and independent media by the Lukashenka regime. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's official Telegram channel (@tsikhanouskaya) has 21,500 subscribers. Through this channel, she shares direct messages, videos, and announcements, keeping her audience informed and engaged despite the regime's control over state media. Telegram's importance in Belarus stems from its resilience to censorship, making it a preferred platform for both political opposition and independent journalism.

The reach of Tsikhanouskaya's Telegram channel can be contrasted with Alexander Lukashenko's official channel, "Pul Pervogo," which boasts over 220,000 subscribers<sup>66</sup>. This channel, managed by his press service, has gained significant attention from both domestic and international audiences, including journalists, politicians, and experts. The popularity of Lukashenko's channel is fueled by

---

<sup>64</sup> Datareportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Belarus*. Datareportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-belarus>

<sup>65</sup> Datareportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Venezuela*. Datareportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-venezuela>

<sup>66</sup> Pul\_1. (n.d.). [*Pul Pervogo*]. Telegram. [https://t.me/pul\\_1](https://t.me/pul_1)

his controversial role in global events, such as his complicity in Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the orchestrated migration crisis at the EU border, and escalatory rhetoric regarding Belarus's geopolitical alignment with Russia. Furthermore, the potential deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus has made "Pul Pervogo" a key resource for monitoring his statements and policies, which have implications for Ukraine, NATO, and the broader international community.

When comparing these two channels, the vast difference in subscriber numbers reflects the contrasting contexts and audiences. Lukashenko's channel benefits from both state resources and a broader scope of interest due to Belarus's geopolitical significance. In contrast, Tsikhanouskaya's channel, while smaller, plays a critical role in sustaining the Belarusian opposition's voice and providing alternative narratives to the regime's propaganda. Her channel offers uncensored information and creates a space for democratic discourse, complementing her broader efforts on platforms like Twitter and Instagram. Her Telegram activity, much like her presence on other platforms, emphasizes her role as a leader in exile, working to inform and mobilize Belarusians and international supporters for the cause of democracy.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's official YouTube channel serves as an important medium for in-depth political communication and outreach. With over 52,000 subscribers and 382 videos, the channel focuses on longer-form content, such as speeches, interviews, and updates on Belarus's political situation. The platform also supports live streaming of press conferences and global outreach events, making it a versatile tool for public diplomacy.

YouTube's resilience against censorship is a critical advantage for political figures like Tsikhanouskaya, especially in authoritarian contexts where traditional media and other online platforms may be blocked or heavily controlled. Automatic transcription features further enhance accessibility, allowing foreign audiences to engage with content in Belarusian, making her messages more widely available.

Despite these advantages, Tsikhanouskaya's YouTube channel faces challenges in gaining broader popularity. Organic traffic to official channels like hers is often limited by YouTube's recommendation algorithms, which tend to prioritize trending news blogs, talk shows, and entertainment content over political or institutional channels. This trend reflects a broader competition for visibility, as YouTube increasingly functions as a replacement for traditional television. However, for a niche audience interested in Belarusian politics and democratic movements, the channel remains an essential resource.

The absence of an official TikTok account for Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya is a notable gap in her social media strategy, especially given the platform's growing influence, particularly among younger audiences. TikTok has become the most popular social media platform in Belarus, with over 5.63 million users aged 18 and above as of early 2024<sup>67</sup>. This demographic presents a significant opportunity for Tsikhanouskaya to connect with the younger generation and expand her outreach. Without a presence on TikTok, she misses an avenue to directly engage with this critical group.

The impact of TikTok on political campaigns was highlighted in Romania's recent presidential elections, where the pro-Russian candidate Calin Georgescu unexpectedly gained significant traction largely through TikTok<sup>68</sup>. Despite being virtually unknown, Georgescu campaigned primarily on the platform, where he used populist rhetoric to resonate with voters. His use of TikTok's algorithm-driven promotion led to a surge in his visibility, ultimately securing first place in the first round of the election with about 23% of the vote. Romanian authorities later launched an investigation into possible foreign interference, particularly from Russia, after it was revealed that several pro-Russian networks were active on TikTok during the election period. This case demonstrates the powerful role TikTok can play in shaping political outcomes, especially when algorithms promote content in ways that may not always be transparent. For Tsikhanouskaya, the absence of a TikTok presence could be seen as a missed opportunity to leverage this platform's influence, particularly among the younger, tech-savvy demographic in Belarus. The potential for her to use TikTok to amplify her message, particularly in a way that resonates with youth and challenges the regime's narrative, is substantial. TikTok's ability to bypass traditional media censorship and connect directly with users could help Tsikhanouskaya expand her reach, mobilize support, and counter the information warfare being waged by the Belarusian government.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's Facebook page, with around 21,000 followers, serves as a significant platform for public updates, both personal and political. She uses this space to share detailed posts, videos, and links to external articles, offering her followers comprehensive insights into her activities and political messages. Despite Facebook being less popular in Belarus compared to platforms like Instagram and TikTok, it still plays an important role in her communication strategy.

Communication on social networks, as demonstrated by figures such as Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, can be primarily attributed to digital diplomacy, a subset of public diplomacy. These concepts are

---

<sup>67</sup> Datareportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Belarus*. Datareportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-belarus>

<sup>68</sup> BBC News. (2023, December 16). [Romania orders election recount after TikTok bias claims]. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2n83vgxxjo>

closely intertwined in the context of social media, as they both focus on influencing global perceptions, fostering relationships, and advancing political and diplomatic goals without relying on violence or coercion.

In this case, Tsikhanouskaya uses her social media accounts to communicate directly with a global audience. Social media communication can be seen as an important tool in the exercise of soft power. Tsikhanouskaya's online presence and narrative-building efforts position her as a moral leader for democracy and human rights in Belarus. Through the strategic use of platforms, she is able to attract international attention and rally support for the democratic movement in Belarus, influencing foreign governments and organisations through the power of ideas, values and leadership.

As a conclusion, it can be said that Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's social media strategy has played a pivotal role in advancing the Belarusian opposition's fight for democracy and human rights. In an authoritarian context where traditional media is tightly controlled and state propaganda dominates, her use of digital platforms has allowed her to circumvent censorship, connect with both domestic and international audiences, and sustain the momentum of the opposition movement in exile. Tsikhanouskaya's efforts emphasize her dual role as a leader advocating for Belarusian democracy on the international stage and as a unifying figure for the opposition at home.

Tsikhanouskaya's use of Twitter, with its sizable international audience, has positioned her as a prominent figure in global public diplomacy, with real-time updates and formal statements aimed at Western governments and international organizations. Her highly personal and interactive approach on Instagram enables her to humanize her leadership while maintaining a strong focus on political messaging and solidarity with political prisoners. A critical platform for reaching Belarusian audiences under heavy censorship, Telegram serves as a reliable channel for sharing news and updates within Belarus. Her official YouTube channel facilitates deeper engagement through long-form content and live streams, but faces challenges in gaining visibility due to platform algorithms. Facebook is less prominent, it remains an important medium for detailed updates and public communications. Tsikhanouskaya effectively tailors her content to the unique strengths of each platform, balancing formal diplomatic appeals with personal interactions that foster trust and solidarity among supporters.

Her absence on TikTok, a rapidly growing platform in Belarus, represents a missed opportunity to engage with younger, tech-savvy demographics. Leveraging TikTok could further amplify her reach and counter the regime's narrative. Despite her significant presence in different platforms, Tsikhanouskaya's follower counts and engagement rates underscore the need for continued efforts to

expand her digital influence, especially among Belarusian audiences. Her social media strategy exemplifies how exiled political leaders can harness technology to sustain movements, mobilize supporters, and advocate for democratic change.

## **2.2 Critical discourse analysis of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric: positioning Belarus and leveraging soft power in the context of the Ukraine war**

### **Methodology for critical discourse analysis**

This study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore how Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya positions herself, Belarus, and its representation during interviews conducted between February 24, 2022, and November 26, 2024, in the context of the Ukraine war. The methodology follows the frameworks of Norman Fairclough<sup>69</sup> and Christopher Hart<sup>70</sup>, which are instrumental in dissecting both linguistic and ideological elements of discourse. The selected media differ in their political stances: some of them are considered to be more liberal, while others are more neutral or conservative. The research sample consists of 12 articles.

Fairclough proposes a universal model for critical discourse analysis of communicative events. This model links three dimensions: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice. Text analysis considers both meanings and their forms and encompasses linguistic analysis, which includes grammatical analysis, lexical analysis and analysis of semantics, as well as analysis of the organisation and coherence of the text. The measurement of discourse practices encompasses processes such as text creation and text consumption. The dimension of sociocultural practices includes analysing non-linguistic factors (situational context, cultural and political aspects of society, institutional practices, etc.) that influence text creation and perception<sup>71</sup>.

Fairclough's three-dimensional model serves as the primary structure for analyzing Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric. This model examines:

---

<sup>69</sup> Fairclough, N. (2005) *Media Discourse*. London, UK: Arnold. 214 p.

<sup>70</sup> Hart, C. (2014) *Discourse, Grammar and Ideology: Functional and Cognitive Perspectives*. London, UK: Bloomsbury. 232 p

<sup>71</sup> Fairclough, N. (2005) *Media Discourse*. London, UK: Arnold. 214 p.



1. Text analysis – the text dimension involves analyzing the linguistic features of Tsikhanouskaya's speech. This includes:

- Grammar and lexical choices (identifying keywords, syntactic structures, and their ideological implications).
- Semantics and cohesion (investigating how meanings are constructed and how sentences are connected to establish coherence).

2. Discourse practice – this dimension focuses on the processes of text production and consumption, considering how Tsikhanouskaya's interviews are crafted and received by audiences, including journalists and the public.

3. Sociocultural practice – the broader sociocultural, political, and institutional contexts are analyzed to understand how Tsikhanouskaya's discourse aligns with or challenges dominant narratives about Belarus, opposition leadership, and the war in Ukraine.

Hart focuses on the relationship between grammar and ideology in the practice of discourse. By 'grammar' the author means 'the system or systems that form part of the human linguistic capacity, and the theoretical models that seek to capture that system'. 'Ideology' is understood as a particular perspective or attitude. Hart emphasises on ideologically loaded linguistic means of representing events. One of the means identified through transitivity analysis is the description of certain types of processes and their participants, who can be perceived as agents or patients. Another strategy is mystification or concealment of information. It includes the use of the passive voice and nominalisation. As for social actors, they can be represented as a group or as individuals. Generalisation and collectivisation are usually used to depersonalise 'ordinary' actors, while personalisation is used to describe influential people. Moreover, social actors can be definite or indefinite. In the case of definite actors, nomination (use of proper names or affiliation) or categorisation can be applied. Categorisation relates to the functions and characteristics that social actors share with others and includes functionalisation and identification. Functionalisation takes into account the types of activities that social actors perform (what they do), while identification covers appearance (physical identification), personal or kinship relationships (relational identification) and characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity and social status (categorisation). In addition, implicit evaluation of certain actions can be considered a valuable representational strategy. Furthermore, Hart recognises the role of visual images in CDA and their features (camera angles, distance, etc.) in conveying a desired point of view of events.

Hart's emphasis on the relationship between grammar and ideology enriches the analysis by focusing on the following:

1. Transitivity analysis – examines how Tsikhanouskaya represents processes and participants. For instance, identifying who is positioned as an agent (active doer) or a patient (receiver of actions) to reveal underlying power dynamics.
2. Strategies of mystification – investigates how certain information is concealed through linguistic devices such as:
  - Passive constructions, which obscure agency.
  - Nominalization, which abstracts actions into static entities.
3. Social actor representation – analyzes how Tsikhanouskaya and other actors (e.g., the Belarusian government, Ukrainian leadership, or Western allies) are depicted:
  - Personalization vs. Collectivization (examining whether individuals or groups are highlighted).
  - Functionalization and Identification (considering roles and attributes attributed to actors, such as leadership roles or relational connections).
4. Evaluation strategies – evaluates the implicit judgment in Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric, uncovering subtle endorsements or criticisms.

The interviews are analyzed qualitatively, using Fairclough's and Hart's methods to identify how Tsikhanouskaya constructs her image and advocates for Belarus on the international stage. Textual and contextual factors, including tone, choice of language, and references to cultural and geopolitical issues, are critically examined. This approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the interplay between language, power, and ideology in her public diplomacy efforts.

## **Analysis**

It's best to start analyzing with the interview that was published first chronologically. This was an interview for VOA, published on 09/19/2022 under the title: "VOA Interview: Belarusian Opposition Leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya". VOA stands for Voice of America, a U.S. government-funded international news and broadcasting service. It provides news, information, and cultural programming in multiple languages, aiming to promote understanding of American policies, culture, and values worldwide. VOA broadcasts via radio, TV, and digital platforms to audiences in over 40 languages. It plays a key role in U.S. public diplomacy.

Lets start from text analysis. Grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya consistently use inclusive language, employing terms like "we," "our," and "us," to reinforce collective identity and solidarity among Belarusians. For instance, when she says, "I'm representing here the Belarusians who are fighting against a dictator in our country," she constructs herself as a unifying figure and aligns with the broader democratic movement. Her choice of verbs like "fighting," "sacrificing," and "building" emphasizes active resistance and agency. By juxtaposing these with nouns like "repressions," "tortures," and "prisons," she highlights the adversities Belarusians face, invoking a moral dichotomy between the democratic opposition and the Lukashenko regime.

Semantics and cohesion: the interview exhibits strong thematic cohesion. Tsikhanouskaya connects Belarus's struggle for democracy to global values of freedom and justice, evident in her plea for international support: "Consistency is our weapon, unity is our weapon." The metaphoric use of "weapon" underscores the non-violent yet resolute approach of the democratic movement. Her semantic framing distinguishes between "Belarusian people" and the "Belarusian regime," as seen in her statement: "Don't put the regime and the Belarusian people into one basket." This distinction is pivotal in shifting international perceptions away from Belarus as a co-aggressor in the Ukraine war.

Discourse practice: Tsikhanouskaya's responses are carefully crafted for an international audience. She leverages the interview to counter misinformation about Belarus's role in the Ukraine conflict, emphasizing, "Belarus became collaborators in this war... [but] Belarusian people are against this war." This positioning addresses potential Western skepticism and seeks to elicit empathy and support. Her alignment with democratic values aligns with Western discourses, making her rhetoric more palatable to international stakeholders. For example, her insistence on non-violence despite criticism highlights moral consistency: "I still believe in the peaceful decision of the recent crisis." The interview is tailored for dual audiences: international policymakers and the Belarusian populace. Her plea to Belarusian citizens to "stay brave" and "support each other" functions as a rallying cry, while her discussions with world leaders are framed as strategic efforts to secure resources and legitimacy for the democratic movement.

Sociocultural practice: The interview occurs during a pivotal period when Belarus is under scrutiny for its perceived complicity in the Ukraine war. Tsikhanouskaya addresses this geopolitical tension by emphasizing Belarusian resistance to Lukashenko's policies and aligning Belarusian aspirations with Western democratic values. Her assertion, "Without free Belarus, there will be no safety for Ukrainians," intertwines Belarus's fate with regional stability, reinforcing the urgency of international involvement. Tsikhanouskaya challenges the regime's legitimacy by highlighting its dependency on Putin: "Without Putin's support, Lukashenko wouldn't survive in 2020." This delegitimizes both leaders and frames the Belarusian opposition as the authentic representative of the people.

Moving on to Hart's approach to ideological grammar and representation and transitivity analysis, Tsikhanouskaya portrays Lukashenko and Putin as agents of oppression, while Belarusians are depicted as victims or active resisters. For instance, she states, "Lukashenko is very convenient for Putin... [he] fulfills all the orders." This positions the regime as subservient and illegitimate while underscoring the democratic movement's autonomy and integrity. She employs passive constructions sparingly but effectively, as in, "Thousands of political prisoners are still in prisons." The passive voice here universalizes the plight of the prisoners, ensuring focus remains on systemic injustice rather than individual perpetrators. Tsikhanouskaya uses personalization when discussing her family, as in her statement about her children: "The pictures of my husband are everywhere in my house for my children to feel the presence of their daddy." This personal narrative humanizes her struggle, making her leadership relatable and emotionally resonant. Conversely, she uses collectivization to emphasize unity among Belarusians: "We are staying united as never before." This fosters a sense of collective agency and resilience. Moving on to evaluation strategies, her rhetoric conveys implicit judgment, particularly toward Lukashenko and Putin. Descriptions such as "Putin just needs such a person in this regime" subtly critique their alliance, painting them as mutually dependent despots. Conversely, her praise for Belarusians' bravery and perseverance amplifies the moral high ground of the opposition.

This interview demonstrates Tsikhanouskaya's strategic use of discourse to navigate complex geopolitical dynamics and advocate for Belarusian democracy.

Next, we will analyze an interview for *The Atlantic*, published on 08.01.2023 under the title: "The Irreversible Change in Belarus"<sup>72</sup>. *The Atlantic* is an American magazine that covers a wide range of topics, including politics, culture, science, technology, and economics. Founded in 1857, it is known for its in-depth analysis, investigative journalism, and thought-provoking essays. The magazine publishes both print and digital content and is recognized for its high-quality writing and intellectual approach to current events and societal issues. *The Atlantic* has had a significant influence on public discourse and has featured work from many renowned writers, thinkers, and journalists.

Text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya uses clear and strategic lexical choices to underline Belarusian resistance to Russian aggression and Lukashenko's complicity. For instance, she states: "The Kremlin and Lukashenko are using each other, pursuing several goals: They want to hamper Ukraine and make Kyiv move its defenders from the east closer to Belarus, and they want to

---

<sup>72</sup> Nemtsova, A. (2023, January 8). Belarus's opposition leader speaks about Putin's war. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2023/01/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-belarus-russia-lukashenko-putin/672666/>

keep Belarusians themselves in a state of fear." The use of active verbs like "using" and "pursuing" underscores the manipulative dynamics between Putin and Lukashenko, positioning them as co-conspirators. The phrase "state of fear" personalizes the impact of their actions on ordinary Belarusians, crafting a narrative of victimhood that contrasts with the resilience of Belarusian society.

**Semantics and cohesion:** Tsikhanouskaya constructs her argument cohesively by linking past events to present realities and future aspirations. She observes: "We are a nation now. We've realized that we'd been an appendix to Russia." The contrast between the past ("an appendix to Russia") and the present ("We are a nation now") suggests a transformative Belarusian identity. This semantic framing connects the collective experience of repression with a renewed sense of national pride and autonomy.

**Discourse practice:** The interview, conducted by a Western journalist, shapes its reception among an international audience sympathetic to democratic movements. Tsikhanouskaya's responses are carefully crafted to appeal to this demographic, emphasizing Belarus's distinct identity and shared values with Ukraine and the West. For example, she states: "Belarusians do not want to be treated by the world as if they're Russians." This distinction seeks to influence Western perceptions, fostering solidarity with Belarusian resistance while addressing misconceptions. Tsikhanouskaya employs inclusive language ("We've realized," "We are a nation") to connect with Belarusians and international allies. Her mention of Belarusian volunteers in Ukraine, such as: "We believe that at least 17 Belarusians have been killed fighting for Ukraine," emphasizes Belarus's tangible contributions to the broader fight against authoritarianism, strengthening international alignment.

**Sociocultural practice:** Tsikhanouskaya situates Belarus's struggle within a broader geopolitical context, aligning it with Ukraine's fight against Russian imperialism. She remarks: "Just as has happened in Ukraine, more and more people are speaking in the native language, not Russian." This aligns Belarus with the narrative of national self-determination, drawing parallels between the two nations' histories of resisting Russian dominance. However, she also highlights the challenges of international focus shifting away from Belarus due to the war: "Unfortunately, all the attention has made it easier for Lukashenko to hide his crimes inside Belarus."

**Hart's framework analysis:** Tsikhanouskaya's transitivity choices depict Lukashenko and Putin as active agents of repression, while Belarusians are framed as resilient yet constrained victims. For example: "The police arrest innocent people every day, and lawyers have no access." The active voice in "arrest innocent people" attributes agency to the police, while "have no access" highlights the systemic denial of justice. She uses nominalization to abstract and universalize the ongoing repression: "This is a tool they use to terrify the population, to make people feel as if they're already living in a Gulag." By framing oppression as a "tool," Tsikhanouskaya obfuscates the specific agents

while emphasizing the pervasive nature of the tactics. Tsikhanouskaya balances personalization and collectivization effectively. She personalizes the opposition movement by mentioning her husband's imprisonment: "My own letters do not reach Sergei, but our children's letters reach him." This humanizes her narrative while collectivizing Belarusian aspirations through statements like: "We in Belarus are already different." Her rhetoric again conveys implicit judgment, particularly toward Lukashenko and Putin. Descriptions such as "Putin just needs such a person in this regime" subtly critique their alliance, painting them as mutually dependent despots. Conversely, her praise for Belarusians' bravery and perseverance amplifies the moral high ground of the opposition.

Next, we will analyze an interview for *The World Today*, published on 17.01.2023 under the title: "Interview: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya"<sup>73</sup>. *The World Today* is a global affairs magazine published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), a UK-based think tank. The magazine covers international news, analysis, and commentary on key global issues, including politics, economics, security, and human rights. It features insights from experts and policy analysts on current events and emerging trends that shape global relations. *The World Today* aims to provide in-depth perspectives on complex global challenges, often focusing on how policies and decisions impact the international community.

Text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya employs assertive and hopeful language, frequently using collective terms like "we" and "our" to emphasize solidarity and shared goals among Belarusians. For instance, she states, "The Kremlin doesn't recognize Ukraine or Belarus as independent countries – it sees them as part of Russia. But we are absolutely independent countries with our own languages, cultures, and so on." This lexical choice highlights her resistance to Russian hegemony and reaffirms national identity. Her personal narrative often conveys a transition from inexperience to empowerment, as exemplified in "I didn't have any political experience – I was an ordinary woman and wife." The use of the past tense juxtaposed with her current authoritative tone reinforces her growth as a leader.

Semantics and cohesion: Her statements exhibit strong semantic coherence by interlinking Belarus's democratic struggle with Ukraine's resistance against Russian aggression. She frequently ties Belarus's future to Ukraine's, such as in, "The fate of Belarus depends a lot on the outcome of the war in Ukraine, it is evident." This rhetorical strategy unites the struggles of the two nations under a common ideological framework of democracy versus dictatorship.

---

<sup>73</sup> Chatham House. (2023, January). Interview: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. *The World Today*. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2022-06/interview-sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya>

Discourse practice: Tsikhanouskaya's discourse consistently aligns Belarus's democratic aspirations with broader Western values, framing Belarus not merely as a victim but as an active participant in the fight for democracy. For instance, she asserts, "It is very important for democracy to have a strong voice at the moment." She appeals to the international community's responsibility to support Belarus. The emphasis on shared values and her portrayal of Belarusian resilience aim to mobilize diplomatic and financial assistance, as seen in her call for "packages to assist civil society."

Sociocultural practice: Tsikhanouskaya situates her discourse within the geopolitical struggle between democratic ideals and authoritarianism. Her framing of the Belarusian situation as a battle of values echoes broader international narratives surrounding Ukraine and Russia, such as, "It is not just a war between Russia and Ukraine. It is a war between democratic values and dictatorship."

According to Hart's ideological grammar, Tsikhanouskaya positions the Belarusian people as active agents of change. For example, "Every day we create multiple points of pressure on the regime from within the country, from outside the country," emphasizes the agency of the opposition while framing Lukashenka and the Kremlin as oppressors. There is minimal mystification in her rhetoric; she avoids passive constructions and directly attributes actions to actors. For example, she plainly states, "Lukashenka got huge political and economic support in 2020 after the protests, and now he owes a debt to the Kremlin." This directness reduces ambiguity and fosters clarity. Tsikhanouskaya employs both personalization and collectivization. She personalizes her struggle by referencing her husband's imprisonment and her initial hesitations, creating an emotional connection with her audience: "Our children can send him letters and they receive letters back from him." Simultaneously, she collectivizes the Belarusian movement, emphasizing the grassroots nature of their struggle: "We have been a grassroots movement since the first day." Tsikhanouskaya evaluates Lukashenka's regime critically, labeling him as self-serving and disloyal: "He only cares about his own interest, not his country or its people." Such explicit criticism delegitimizes his leadership while bolstering her own credibility as a moral and democratic alternative.

Next, we will analyze an interview for The Baltic Times, published on 11.07.2023 under the title: "Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: "Ukraine's victory will trigger something big – a change in the regime not only in Russia, but in Belarus too"<sup>74</sup>. The Baltic Times is an independent English-language

---

<sup>74</sup> Jegelevicius, L. (2023, July 11). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: Ukraine's victory will trigger something big – Change of regime not only in Russia, but in Belarus too. The Baltic Times. [https://www.baltictimes.com/sviatlana\\_tsikhanouskaya\\_\\_\\_ukraine\\_s\\_victory\\_will\\_trigger\\_something\\_big\\_\\_\\_change\\_of\\_regime\\_not\\_only\\_in\\_russia\\_\\_\\_but\\_in\\_belarus\\_too/](https://www.baltictimes.com/sviatlana_tsikhanouskaya___ukraine_s_victory_will_trigger_something_big___change_of_regime_not_only_in_russia___but_in_belarus_too/)

newspaper that covers news and analysis about the Baltic states: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. It focuses on politics, business, culture, and current events within the region, offering insights for both local and international audiences. The publication serves as a key source for understanding developments in the Baltics, including their relationship with the European Union, NATO, and neighboring countries. Available in print and online, it caters to expatriates, travelers, and anyone interested in the region's affairs.

Fairclough's CDA framework, text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya consistently uses terms like "strategic perseverance," "consistency," and "creativity" to frame the opposition's approach positively. These words evoke resilience and adaptability, portraying the opposition as determined and future-oriented. She emphasizes unity by referring to "a united transitional cabinet," countering narratives of fragmentation within the opposition. Her choice of negative descriptors for the regime—"repressive apparatus," "notorious man," and "throwing his fist"—frames Lukashenko's government as authoritarian and desperate. The metaphor "throwing a fist is a sign of weakness, not power" subtly undermines the perceived strength of the regime.

Semantics and cohesion: Tsikhanouskaya constructs coherence through repeated references to shared goals, such as "a free Belarus" and "new free and transparent elections." Her consistent return to these themes reinforces the central narrative of the interview. She contrasts Belarus's current state with potential democratic reforms, aligning her rhetoric with the values of her international audience.

Discourse practice: Tsikhanouskaya adapts her language to appeal to both international and domestic audiences. Her gratitude towards Lithuania and Poland for their support reflects an awareness of her reliance on external allies. Her discourse positions her as a credible representative of the opposition, appealing to international leaders who value democratic principles. She counters narratives of opposition disunity by highlighting internal coordination and shared objectives, such as "freeing political prisoners" and "holding fair elections."

Sociocultural practice: Tsikhanouskaya situates Belarus's struggle within the broader geopolitical context, particularly the war in Ukraine, appeals to Western nations, emphasizing the interconnectedness of regional stability.. By stating, "Ukraine's victory will trigger something big – a change of the regime not only in Russia but in Belarus too," she aligns Belarus's democratic aspirations with the fate of Ukraine. Her assertion that "Belarusians have always felt European" is a strategic cultural alignment with Europe, challenging the narrative of Belarus as a peripheral Russian satellite.

Hart's approach to ideological grammar and representation: Tsikhanouskaya frequently positions herself and the opposition as active agents (e.g., "We formed a united transitional cabinet," "We've



managed to retain the attention of the international community”). Conversely, the Belarusian regime is often framed as passive or reactive (e.g., “Lukashenko cannot trust even his closest staffers”). Passive constructions are occasionally employed to obscure specific agents of action, such as in “the votes of voters in the elections were counted” (emphasizing systemic flaws without attributing blame to individuals). Nominalization, such as “the whole repressive apparatus,” abstracts the regime's actions into a monolithic structure, reinforcing its depiction as authoritarian. Tsikhanouskaya personalizes Lukashenko’s actions, portraying him as the central antagonist. Meanwhile, she collectivizes the opposition as a unified body (e.g., “We share the same goals”), emphasizing collaboration and inclusivity. Tsikhanouskaya’s role is functionalized as a transitional leader, reflected in her repeated insistence that she does not intend to run for president once Belarus is free: “I will not be seeking presidential office anymore.” Tsikhanouskaya employs implicit judgment to contrast the opposition's values with the regime's failures. By highlighting the “dormant but ready” spirit of Belarusians, she subtly critiques Lukashenko’s inability to suppress public dissent entirely. Her portrayal of Belarusian support for Ukraine (“86 percent of Belarusians disapprove of [the war]”) reinforces this implicit criticism of the regime’s alignment with Russia.

Next, we will analyze an interview for The Guardian, published on 23.08.2023 under the title: “‘Belarus’s people are still resisting’: exiled leader calls for West’s support”<sup>75</sup>. The Guardian is a British newspaper known for its progressive stance, in-depth journalism, and global reach. Founded in 1821, it is one of the leading publications in the UK and internationally. The Guardian covers a wide range of topics, including politics, culture, science, technology, and environmental issues, with a focus on investigative reporting and social justice. It is published by Guardian Media Group, which is owned by the Scott Trust to ensure editorial independence and protect its journalistic mission. The newspaper is available in both print and digital formats, with a significant global audience accessing its online content.

Fairclough’s CDA framework, text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya’s language is deliberate, emphasizing Belarus’s continued resistance and international responsibility. The term “dictatorship is contagious” conveys an ideological warning, appealing to Western audiences by portraying Lukashenko’s actions as a threat to global democracy. Similarly, her choice of “vassal state” highlights Belarus’s subjugation to Russian influence, while “democracy is

---

<sup>75</sup> Loginova O. (2023, August 23). Belarus people still resisting: Exiled leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya calls for West’s support. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/23/belarus-people-still-resisting-exiled-leader-sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-calls-for-wests-support>

everyone's responsibility" frames Belarus's struggle as a collective global obligation. By describing the plight of political prisoners with phrases such as "more than 3,000 Belarusians prosecuted on charges of extremism" and "no active human rights organisations left," she paints a grim picture of repression. This narrative is strengthened by her emotive account of her husband's imprisonment: "I saw him, but I couldn't recognise him."

**Semantics and cohesion:** Tsikhanouskaya employs cohesive links between Belarus and global democratic values. Her comparison of Belarus to a "textbook for dictatorship" warns of the domino effect of tolerating Lukashenko's regime.

**Discourse practice:** The interview is designed to appeal to Western political and public audiences, particularly those disillusioned with protracted global conflicts. By addressing issues like the EU's alleged breach of sanctions and international inaction, Tsikhanouskaya crafts her message to resonate with policymakers and citizens who value democracy over economic convenience.

**Sociocultural practice:** The sociocultural context of this interview revolves around Belarus's subordinate position to Russia and the global preoccupation with Ukraine. Tsikhanouskaya highlights the invisibility of Belarus in international discourse, warning, "If Belarus is forgotten, Lukashenko can do whatever he wants." This aligns her rhetoric with broader narratives of authoritarianism undermining global order, especially post-Ukraine invasion.

**Hart's Ideological Grammar and Representation:** Tsikhanouskaya positions herself and the Belarusian people as agents of resistance and victims of oppression. The Belarusian regime and its actions are framed passively to underscore the agency of external actors in enabling Lukashenko's abuses. For example, "Sometimes one has to decide whether you want to support democracy or do business" implicitly critiques Western complicity. She addresses the EU's alleged evasion of sanctions through nominalizations like "importing Belarusian wood through Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan," subtly highlighting the complicity of unnamed agents in Lukashenko's financial sustenance. The mystification of these indirect economic ties amplifies her critique of global apathy. Tsikhanouskaya personalizes her narrative by recounting her family's struggles, which lends credibility and relatability. Simultaneously, she collectivizes the Belarusian opposition as enduring and resilient, stating, "People are still resisting – people are against the Russian occupation." She identifies Lukashenko as a textbook dictator and Belarus as a victim of both domestic oppression and international neglect. The Belarusian diaspora is functionalized as a crucial actor in raising awareness and maintaining pressure on the regime, described as "empowered to speak and act together." Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric is marked by implicit judgments of both Western and Belarusian actors.

She praises Western leaders for symbolic actions like her meeting with Joe Biden but critiques inconsistencies in policy implementation, such as sanctions breaches.

Next, we will analyze an interview-lecture for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, published on 19.10.2023 under the title: “2023 Lecture: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya”<sup>76</sup>.

Fairclough’s CDA framework, text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya employs emotionally charged terms such as “tyranny,” “cancer,” and “fake democracy” to evoke strong reactions. Her use of metaphors, particularly describing tyranny as “like cancer,” highlights its pervasive and destructive nature. By framing Lukashenka and Putin’s regimes as existential threats, she strengthens the urgency of her call to action. For example: “Tyranny is like cancer. If not dealt with properly, it spills over entire regions.” This metaphor not only emphasizes the interconnected nature of authoritarian regimes but also implicitly suggests that inaction will allow the malignancy to spread globally.

Semantic and cohesive strategies: Tsikhanouskaya repeatedly contrasts “democracy” with “dictatorship,” creating a binary opposition that emphasizes the moral and practical superiority of democratic governance. She associates democracy with modernity, prosperity, and security, while dictatorship is likened to regression into the “Cold War” or even “the Middle Ages.” Example: “To live in a democracy means to live in the twenty-first century. To live in a dictatorship means to live in the times of the Cold War, and in some cases in the Middle Ages.”

Discourse practice: Tsikhanouskaya’s direct appeals to her audience, such as “I ask you to stand with Belarus in such a critical moment of history,” personalize her message and create a sense of shared responsibility. She balances her emotional rhetoric with a structured call to action, addressing the British Parliament and other democratic stakeholders explicitly. The repetition of key phrases, such as “fake democracy,” “fake humanism,” and “fake patriotism,” strengthens her critique of Lukashenka’s regime. Drawing parallels to Orwell’s “1984” (“War is peace. Slavery is freedom. Ignorance is strength”) situates her discourse within a broader cultural framework, evoking a universal understanding of totalitarian oppression.

Sociocultural practice: Tsikhanouskaya positions herself as a defender of democracy not only for Belarus but as part of a global struggle against authoritarianism. By framing Belarus’s fight as integral to European security and the preservation of democracy, she aligns her discourse with Western

---

<sup>76</sup> Westminster Foundation for Democracy. (2023, October 19). 2023 lecture: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. Westminster Foundation for Democracy. <https://www.wfd.org/annual-lecture/2023-lecture-sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya>

priorities. Example: “Victory of Ukraine will be the ultimate defeat of Putin and Lukashenka. Democratic Belarus will be a huge blow to Russian imperialism.” Here, she connects Belarus’s struggle to the broader conflict in Ukraine, emphasizing the intertwined fates of these nations under Russian influence.

Hart’s Framework: Tsikhanouskaya assigns agency to the Lukashenka regime, portraying it as the active perpetrator of oppression and atrocities. In contrast, the Belarusian people are often framed as resilient but victimized, drawing attention to their suffering while preserving their agency: “The regime did not manage to convince Belarusians to join Russia in the war against Ukrainians.” This active construction positions Belarusians as resistant to authoritarian pressures despite the regime’s efforts. Tsikhanouskaya personalizes her narrative by highlighting individual stories of oppression, such as that of her husband or Palina Sharenda-Panasiuk: “Having texted me fake news about my husband’s death, Lukashenka’s henchmen were trying to break me. But you know what, they didn’t, and they won’t break me.” Tsikhanouskaya embeds implicit judgments in her speech, equating dictatorship with fear, regression, and fake values. Her positive evaluations of democracy—as a path to prosperity and security—are juxtaposed against these negative portrayals, creating a compelling argument for systemic change.

Next, we will analyze the interview for the Green European Journal, published on 19.02.2024 under the title: “Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: Europe Is Where Belarus Belongs”<sup>77</sup>. The Green European Journal is a political magazine that focuses on environmental, social, and political issues from a green and progressive perspective. Published by the Green European Foundation, it serves as a platform for discussing ideas, policies, and challenges related to ecology, democracy, social justice, and sustainability across Europe. The journal features contributions from activists, academics, policymakers, and writers, offering in-depth analysis, interviews, and essays. It is available in print and online and aims to foster debate and dialogue on building a sustainable and equitable future for Europe and beyond.

Fairclough’s CDA framework, text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya employs stark contrasts and emotive language to critique the Belarusian regime and rally international support. Terms like “farce,” “circus,” and “brutality” describe the elections and governance under Lukashenko, underscoring illegitimacy. Conversely, phrases such as “European family” and “democratic allies” frame her vision for Belarus. This duality reflects a rhetorical strategy to delegitimize the regime

---

<sup>77</sup> Green European Journal. (2024, February 19). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: Europe is where Belarus belongs. Green European Journal. Retrieved December 16, 2024, from <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-europe-is-where-belarus-belongs/>

while aligning Belarus with democratic ideals: "The Belarusian parliament is nothing but a farce, a circus." Here, Tsikhanouskaya emphasizes the lack of credibility in the political process through vivid imagery, denoting systemic corruption.

Semantics and cohesion: Tsikhanouskaya maintains cohesion by linking Belarus's struggle with broader geopolitical dynamics, particularly the conflict in Ukraine. By asserting that "Ukraine's victory is vital for Belarus," she ties Belarus's democratic aspirations to Ukraine's resistance, constructing a narrative of shared struggle against Russian imperialism. Repeated references to "Russia," "Europe," and "democracy" unify her arguments under themes of resistance and alignment with Western values.

Discourse practice: The interview's structure reflects calculated messaging tailored to diverse audiences, including Belarusian citizens, international policymakers, and the broader European public. Tsikhanouskaya's discourse integrates appeals to solidarity (e.g., "Belarusians and Ukrainians are facing the same enemy") and calls for pragmatic action (e.g., urging international partners to "not give legitimacy" to elections). The rhetorical framing seeks to amplify her position as a legitimate opposition leader while marginalizing Lukashenko's regime. Belarusians in exile might find inspiration in her appeals to the "diaspora's" role, while European leaders are urged to prioritize Belarus in geopolitical decision-making.

Sociocultural practice: Tsikhanouskaya situates her discourse within a sociopolitical context marked by authoritarianism, repression, and war. She underscores Belarus's European identity, contrasting it with Russian domination. For instance, "The European project will not be complete until Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova are fully part of it" implies a shared destiny with European nations, positioning Belarus as an integral component of regional stability.

Hart's ideological grammar and representation: Tsikhanouskaya portrays Lukashenko and Putin as agents of repression, while positioning Belarusians and Ukrainians as victims and resisters. For example, "Russia sees neither Ukraine nor Belarus as separate states that have the right to choose their own future" assigns agency to Russia's imperialistic policies, emphasizing its role as an oppressor. Nominalization appears in phrases like "repression against any form of dissent," abstracting the regime's oppressive actions into a general state, enhancing their perceived pervasiveness. Similarly, passive constructions (e.g., "NGOs are on their knees") evoke victimhood while omitting explicit actors, implying widespread systemic oppression. Tsikhanouskaya often personalizes Lukashenko and Putin, focusing on their individual roles in sustaining oppression (e.g., "Lukashenko is afraid for his power") to mobilize opposition. Phrases like "Belarusian people want to be part of the European family" stress collective aspirations, fostering a shared identity among her

audience. Implicit judgments permeate her discourse, as seen in her characterization of Western narratives (e.g., "If we now allow Russia to conquer Ukraine, then Russia will also knock on your door") to frame support as essential.

Next, we will analyze the interview for VERIDICA.ro, published on 22.07.2024 under the title: "Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: "The fate of Ukraine is closely tied to that of Belarus". An exclusive interview with the Belarusian opposition leader"<sup>78</sup>. Veridica.ro is a Romanian platform that focuses on fact-checking, combating disinformation, and promoting accurate news. It aims to identify and expose fake news, propaganda, and manipulation, particularly in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. The platform covers topics such as geopolitics, regional security, social issues, and misinformation campaigns, often analyzing narratives that affect Romania and its neighboring countries. Veridica.ro is part of efforts to support independent journalism and strengthen media literacy in combating the spread of false information.

Fairclough's CDA framework, text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya uses assertive language to emphasize the legitimacy of democratic forces and discredit Lukashenko's regime. For example, her statement, "We managed to show the whole world that Lukashenko does not represent Belarus," demonstrates active voice and a declarative tone, positioning the opposition as authoritative and globally recognized. The repeated use of "we" throughout the interview underscores a collectivized identity for the opposition, creating a shared sense of purpose and responsibility. Her lexical choices, such as "independence," "sovereignty," and "democratic forces," are ideologically loaded, aligning with values of autonomy and human rights. Terms like "masquerade" and "ritual" when referring to upcoming elections delegitimize the regime, framing it as fraudulent and performative.

Semantics and cohesion: The narrative coherence in Tsikhanouskaya's responses is constructed through causal connections, as seen in statements like, "Ukraine's victory will weaken Putin, and then much will depend on Belarus." This links Belarus's future to Ukraine's geopolitical trajectory, making a case for collective regional transformation. Repetition of themes like "window of opportunity" and "interdependence" reinforces her argument that the fates of Belarus and Ukraine are intertwined. Her phrasing, "Belarusians defending their independence and waiting for a new window

---

<sup>78</sup> Veridica. (2024, July 22). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: The fate of Ukraine is closely tied to that of Belarus – An exclusive interview with the Belarusian opposition leader. *Veridica*. <https://www.veridica.ro/en/interviews/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-the-fate-of-ukraine-is-closely-tied-to-that-of-belarus-an-exclusive-interview-with-the-belarusian-opposition-leader>

of opportunity,” integrates temporal and action-oriented dimensions, which suggest both a historical struggle and a forward-looking optimism.

Discourse practice: Tsikhanouskaya’s interview is structured to resonate with international audiences and democratic leaders. Her critique of European sanctions — “sanctions are not as efficient as they should be”—signals an informed and pragmatic perspective, which enhances her credibility as a leader capable of nuanced diplomacy. For international audiences, her articulation of Belarus’s geopolitical significance — “the fate of Ukraine is closely tied to that of Belarus”—positions the country as a critical piece in broader European security.

Sociocultural practice: Her framing of Belarus as a “police state” reminiscent of the Stalinist era situates the regime within a historical narrative of authoritarianism, which Western audiences are likely to find compelling. Her reference to “over 200 political prisoners” and the regime’s attempts to “destroy everything Belarusian” taps into universal human rights discourses, aligning Belarus’s struggle with global movements against oppression. Moreover, her insistence on “no empty chairs” in negotiations underscores a demand for Belarusian agency, countering narratives that Belarus is a mere appendage of Russian interests.

Application of Hart’s Framework: Tsikhanouskaya often positions democratic forces as active agents (e.g., “We managed to show the whole world...”) while portraying Lukashenko and Russia as antagonists undermining sovereignty (e.g., “Lukashenko has dragged Belarus into the war.”). This creates a clear dichotomy between oppressors and liberators, assigning agency strategically to highlight power dynamics. Tsikhanouskaya’s rhetoric alternates between personalization and collectivization. For example, “We managed to show the whole world...” collectivizes the democratic forces, while references to her family’s suffering, such as “my husband is a political prisoner,” personalize the struggle, fostering empathy. Her evaluations of sanctions as “not efficient” and elections as a “masquerade” offer implicit critiques, urging greater international action without overt hostility.

Next, we will analyze the interview for Kyiv Post, published on 04.10.2024 under the title: ‘Lukashenko Is Leading the Country Nowhere’ – Belarusian Opposition Leader Tsikhanouskaya<sup>79</sup>. The Kyiv Post is Ukraine’s leading English-language newspaper, known for its in-depth reporting on Ukrainian and international news. Founded in 1995, it covers a wide range of topics, including politics, economics, culture, and business, with a focus on Ukraine’s development, reform efforts,

---

<sup>79</sup> Kujawski, M. (2024, October 4). ‘Lukashenko is leading the country nowhere’ – Belarusian opposition leader Tsikhanouskaya. *Kyiv Post*. <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/40013>

and geopolitical challenges. The Kyiv Post is widely recognized for its independent journalism and serves as a key source of information for the international community, expatriates, and English-speaking Ukrainians. It has also been a platform for analysis on Ukraine's relationships with the EU, NATO, and Russia.

Fairclough's CDA framework, text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric emphasizes perseverance, national sovereignty, and strategic alignment with democratic ideals. Phrases like "Belarusians have managed to maintain unity, strengthen civil society, and reinforce the democratic forces" underscore a collective resilience. The use of positive, action-oriented verbs ("maintain," "strengthen," "reinforce") reflects an optimistic outlook despite oppressive circumstances. Lexical choices such as "repression," "torture," and "rigged elections" reveal the gravity of the regime's actions while framing the opposition's fight as moral and necessary. Her description of Lukashenko's tactics as "fool the West" employs colloquial phrasing to ridicule the regime's duplicity, reinforcing her alignment with Western democratic audiences.

Semantics and cohesion: Tsikhanouskaya constructs a coherent narrative by linking Belarus's struggle for freedom to the broader fight for democracy, particularly in the context of the Ukraine war. Statements like "The right moment when the wind will blow in favor of a free Belarus will be Ukraine's victory" create semantic connections between regional geopolitical outcomes and Belarus's aspirations. The repeated juxtaposition of Lukashenko's alleged gestures of reform (e.g., releasing political prisoners) with ongoing repression ("He pretends to show concern for humanitarian issues... while continuing to torture people") builds a semantic contrast that delegitimizes the regime.

Discourse practice: The interview appears tailored to a Western audience, particularly those invested in Ukraine's democratic struggle. By explicitly referencing international actors like Lithuania, the ICC, and the European Union, Tsikhanouskaya positions herself as a credible interlocutor and partner for the democratic world. She strategically integrates geopolitical contexts—such as the implications of Ukraine's victory for Belarusian democracy—to ensure that Belarus's plight remains relevant to global stakeholders. The use of direct appeals to diaspora communities and democratic allies (e.g., "Support Belarus, even if you live in another country") encourages transnational solidarity while mobilizing external pressure against the regime.

Sociocultural practice: Tsikhanouskaya's discourse reflects the complex sociopolitical dynamics of Belarus, a nation enduring internal repression and external dependency on Russia. Her rejection of equating Belarus's future with Russia's ("We are a separate, sovereign, and independent Belarus") highlights a deliberate effort to reframe Belarus as a distinct entity within the European geopolitical sphere. Her acknowledgment of the high costs of freedom ("days full of pain... days of hard work")



situates Belarusian struggles within a universal frame of democratic resistance, drawing parallels to Ukraine's sacrifices. This framing fosters empathy and solidarity, particularly among audiences familiar with Ukraine's challenges.

**Hart's Framework:** Tsikhanouskaya positions Lukashenko as the primary agent of harm through active constructions (e.g., "He can torture our loved ones in prison," "Lukashenko is leading the country nowhere"). This active representation of Lukashenko contrasts with her portrayal of Belarusians as resilient but constrained actors ("We haven't given up," "People don't want to take part in this farce"). Nominalizations such as "repression," "terror," and "rigged elections" abstract the regime's actions into systemic phenomena, reinforcing the scale of oppression while delegitimizing Lukashenko's authority. Tsikhanouskaya employs both personalization and collectivization to mobilize support. She personalizes the struggle through references to her family ("I also want to see my husband, whom I haven't seen for four years") and political prisoners, evoking empathy. Simultaneously, she collectivizes Belarusian resistance ("Belarusians have managed to maintain unity") to highlight a national movement rather than isolated dissent. Her depiction of Lukashenko oscillates between functionalization (as a "torturer" and "leader of the regime") and dehumanization (through metaphors like "circus" and "ritual" to describe elections), emphasizing his illegitimacy. Implicit judgments permeate her discourse, particularly in statements like "The regime isn't aiming to get Lukashenko re-recognized, nor is it trying to restore citizens' trust." This suggests a calculated critique of both Lukashenko's strategies and any external actors who might consider legitimizing him. Tsikhanouskaya's consistent emphasis on justice and democratic values underlines her moral authority while implicitly criticizing inaction from global leaders.

Next, we will analyze an interview for The Kyiv Independent, published on 08.10.2024 under the title: We can't solve the war in Ukraine without solving Belarus, Tsikhanouskaya says in exclusive interview<sup>80</sup>. The Kyiv Independent is an English-language news outlet based in Ukraine, established in 2021 by journalists who previously worked for the Kyiv Post before its ownership change. It was founded to uphold editorial independence and provide high-quality, reliable reporting on Ukrainian and international news. The Kyiv Independent covers topics such as politics, the economy, war, culture, and human rights, with a particular focus on Ukraine's struggle against Russian aggression and its efforts toward democratic development and reform. It is supported through donations, grants, and crowdfunding, reflecting its commitment to remaining independent and accountable to its audience.

---

<sup>80</sup> Kyiv Independent. (2024, October 8). The fate of Belarus and Ukraine are interconnected, Tsikhanouskaya says. *Kyiv Independent*. <https://kyivindependent.com/the-fate-of-belarus-and-ukraine-are-interconnected-tsikhanouskaya-says/>

**Text Analysis:** The linguistic features of Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric underscore her strategic positioning as a leader advocating for both Belarusian independence and Ukrainian victory. Tsikhanouskaya repeatedly connects the fates of Belarus and Ukraine, framing them as inseparable: "The fate of Belarus and Ukraine are interconnected, and we can't solve one issue without another." This choice reinforces the ideological alignment of Belarusian opposition with Ukrainian sovereignty, suggesting a shared struggle against Russian imperialism. Through transitivity analysis, Tsikhanouskaya positions Belarusian volunteers as active agents, emphasizing their solidarity with Ukraine: "We can support the Ukrainian army, and our Belarusian volunteers are fighting shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukrainians." In contrast, Lukashenko is depicted as a passive instrument of Russian control: "Lukashenko will sell our country piece by piece to Russia." This contrast underscores the ideological divide between her democratic vision and the authoritarian regime. Tsikhanouskaya occasionally employs nominalization to highlight systemic oppression while de-emphasizing specific agents of repression: "This feeling of impunity emboldens dictators. They think that they can unleash repression, torture people, and make people leave the country through intimidation."

**Discourse practice:** The interview reflects a carefully curated production aimed at multiple audiences, including the international community, Ukrainian allies, and Belarusian citizens. The discourse aligns with international narratives around supporting Ukraine and opposing Russian aggression. Tsikhanouskaya's statements resonate with democratic ideals, appealing to Western allies for legitimacy and aid. For example: "We can advocate for Ukraine at the international arena and explain why it's absolutely vital and necessary to give Ukrainians everything they need to win this war."

**Sociocultural practice:** The sociocultural dimension reveals the context influencing Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric, reflecting both Belarusian and global dynamics. Tsikhanouskaya situates Belarus as both victim and potential agent of change in the Russia-Ukraine conflict: "Belarus is part of the problem, but it might also be part of the solution." This duality aligns with her strategy of dismantling Lukashenko's regime to achieve Belarusian independence while aiding Ukraine. The invocation of accountability for Lukashenko's crimes appeals to the norms of international justice and human rights: "This referral is extremely important, first of all, as a message that all the perpetrators will be brought to accountability."

**Ideological grammar and representation (Hart's framework):** She represent herself as a proactive, moral leader advocating for justice and democracy: "We are trying to get Belarus out of this war by dismantling Lukashenko's regime because independent and free democratic Belarus might help Ukrainians win this war." Lukashenko is depicted as an autocrat and a tool of Russian control, reducing his legitimacy: "Lukashenko will sell our country piece by piece to Russia." Her rhetoric

implicitly evaluates the democratic world's role, urging stronger action against authoritarianism: "The democratic world has to say clearly that you can't influence domestic policies of different countries."

Next, we will analyze an interview for Euronews, published on 18.10.2024 under the title: Belarus opposition leader Tsikhanouskaya calls for unity and global support<sup>81</sup>. Euronews is a multilingual news media outlet headquartered in Lyon, France, that focuses on delivering European and global news from a pan-European perspective. Launched in 1993, it covers a wide range of topics, including politics, business, culture, science, and technology. Euronews is unique for its emphasis on multilingual broadcasting, offering content in multiple languages, including English, French, German, Spanish, and more, making it accessible to diverse audiences across Europe and beyond.

Text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya employs emotive and action-oriented language to position herself as a committed and empathetic leader. Phrases like "I miss my apartment, which had been confiscated" and "my task is to keep people united and inspire people to not give up" emphasize her personal sacrifices and resilience. These choices evoke both sympathy and admiration, reinforcing her credibility. Her use of terms like "heroes" for political prisoners highlights their valor while framing the regime's actions as unjust and inhumane. For example, she criticizes Lukashenko's actions with phrases like "they are taking more and more hostages to sell them for more money", embedding a moral judgment within the discourse.

Semantics and cohesion: Tsikhanouskaya connects personal anecdotes (e.g., memories of her home and family) with broader national struggles. This intertwining of the personal and the collective creates a cohesive narrative that humanizes the fight for democracy. For instance, her statement "people don't just go into exile and become foreigners. They continue to be Belarusians" bridges individual experiences with the collective identity of the diaspora.

Discourse practice: Her call "we are asking you to be with us on this difficult path toward democracy" directly addresses Western democracies, seeking moral and political support. The repetition of terms like "unity," "support," and "freedom" signals an intentional effort to align her discourse with the values cherished by her target audience.

Sociocultural practice: Tsikhanouskaya's discourse reflects the dual pressures of advocating for her cause while navigating international political complexities. For instance, her acknowledgment of Poland's historical support, despite recent policy shifts, demonstrates strategic diplomacy: "I don't

---

<sup>81</sup> Euronews. (2024, October 18). Belarus's exiled opposition leader Tsikhanouskaya continues her battle. *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/10/18/belarus-exiled-opposition-leader-tsikhanouskaya-continues-her-battle>

think this is a change of policy. But we will be in contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs just to find out what this message means.” Her framing of Lukashenko’s repressions, such as “he doesn’t enjoy the support of the Belarusian people”, counters the regime’s narrative of legitimacy. By portraying Lukashenko’s actions as desperate and unrepresentative, she challenges the dominant sociopolitical narrative within Belarus and positions herself as a credible alternative.

Hart’s approach to ideological grammar and representation: Tsikhanouskaya positions herself and the Belarusian opposition as active agents. For example, “Our task is to prepare our democratic movements and forces for the transition period in Belarus” emphasizes agency and proactive efforts. Conversely, Lukashenko is depicted as a passive figure dependent on repression and international bargaining, as in “they are taking more and more hostages.” Tsikhanouskaya avoids mystification, opting for transparency in her words. However, she critiques Lukashenko’s use of mystification, such as his attempts to present limited prisoner releases as signs of reform: “It’s not an act of humanity from the side of Lukashenko. I can’t suspect him of humanity at all.” Tsikhanouskaya’s rhetoric is imbued with implicit evaluations that align Belarusian democratic values with Western ideals. Her statement “we advocate for Ukrainian interests” not only signals solidarity with Ukraine but also frames Belarus as an ally of democratic nations.

The last one we will analyze is an interview for CBC/Radio-Canada, published on November 25, 2024 under the title: Exiled Belarusian opposition leader has a message for the world: Stand up to dictators<sup>82</sup>. CBC/Radio-Canada is Canada's national public broadcaster, offering a wide range of news, entertainment, and cultural programming across radio, television, and digital platforms. CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) primarily serves English-speaking audiences, while Radio-Canada serves French-speaking audiences, particularly in Quebec and other Francophone communities. It was established in 1936 and operates as a crown corporation, funded by the Canadian government but maintaining editorial independence. The broadcaster covers national and international news, produces original Canadian content, and supports cultural and linguistic diversity.

Text analysis, grammar and lexical choices: Tsikhanouskaya frequently employs assertive and emotive language to establish a moral dichotomy between democracy and dictatorship. Her choice of phrases like “stand up to dictators,” “fighting global evil,” and “dictators cannot be appeased” emphasizes a binary worldview where the democratic world is portrayed as inherently virtuous and dictatorships as malign. She also uses terms like “creeping occupation” and “ruining our national

---

<sup>82</sup> CBC/Radio-Canada. (2024, November 25). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in Canada. *CBC Radio As It Happens*. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-in-canada-1.7392773>

identity” to characterize Russian interference in Belarus. These terms evoke a sense of gradual, insidious erosion, portraying Lukashenko as complicit in enabling this loss of sovereignty.

Semantics and cohesion: Tsikhanouskaya constructs her narrative by interweaving Belarusian and Ukrainian struggles, as seen in statements like, “Our fates are intertwined.” This cohesive linkage aligns the Belarusian democratic movement with global anti-authoritarian efforts, strengthening the appeal for international solidarity. Her responses are tightly connected through a consistent use of oppositional semantics—“democracy vs. dictatorship,” “strength vs. weakness,” and “justice vs. impunity”—that amplify her overarching message of resistance.

Discourse practice: Tsikhanouskaya adapts her discourse to resonate with a Western audience, exemplified by her appeals to “democratic unity” and “decisive answers.” Her references to “Canada’s support” and “contacts in Trump’s team” reflect an awareness of her interview’s diplomatic potential.

Sociocultural practice: The geopolitical context, particularly the Ukraine war and the broader threat posed by Russia, shapes Tsikhanouskaya’s discourse. Her warnings about Belarus becoming a “consolation prize to Putin” align with fears of a strengthened Russian sphere of influence, making her appeals highly relevant to her audience. The sociopolitical backdrop in Belarus—marked by repression, fraudulent elections, and “Russification”—provides the foundation for her rhetoric. Tsikhanouskaya’s portrayal of “democracy with teeth” aligns with Western narratives emphasizing strength and unity against authoritarianism.

Application of Hart’s framework: Phrases like “Dictators cannot be appeased. Dictators can only be fought” position the democratic world as the active agent responsible for combating authoritarianism. Conversely, dictators like Lukashenko and Putin are depicted as aggressive agents responsible for “ruining our country” and “poisoning democratic people.” Mystification is minimal in her rhetoric; instead, she employs clarity to mobilize support. However, statements like “there is a process of Russification” and “they interfere into our military sphere” subtly obscure specific mechanisms, focusing instead on outcomes to highlight threats. Implicit judgments permeate her rhetoric. For instance, “Dictators are bold. They make alliances.” conveys criticism of authoritarian collaboration while implicitly endorsing democratic unity as a countermeasure.

## **Result**

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of Svetlana Tsikhanouskaya’s rhetoric, focusing on her strategic positioning of Belarus and her use of soft power in the context of the war in Ukraine. By applying Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Hart’s

focus on ideological grammar, the results shed light on how Tsikhanouskaya's discourse functions at the linguistic, ideological and socio-political levels.

Key linguistic strategies:

Tsikhanouskaya's language is characterised by inclusivity, emotional resonance, and strategic framing.

- The use of inclusive language - her repeated use of pronouns such as 'we', 'our' and 'us' - contributes to collective identity by emphasising the unity of Belarusians and solidarity with international allies. For example, phrases such as 'We remain united as never before' emphasise resilience.
- Emotional lexical choice - words such as 'struggle', 'construction' and metaphors such as 'tyranny is like cancer' evoke urgency and moral clarity, contrasting democratic aspirations with authoritarian oppression.
- Semantic coherence - its discourse consistently presents Belarus' struggle as part of the global struggle for democracy, using binary oppositions such as "democracy versus dictatorship" and "freedom versus fear" to appeal to shared values.

Sociocultural positioning:

Tsikhanouskaya situates Belarus' democracy movement within the broader geopolitical context of regional stability and the war in Ukraine.

- Relevance to global narratives - by intertwining the fate of Belarus with that of Ukraine, she emphasises the interconnectedness of the regional struggle. Statements such as 'Without a free Belarus, there will be no security for Ukrainians' emphasise Belarus' key role in European security.
- The dual appeal to the audience is that her rhetoric appeals to both international stakeholders and the Belarusian population. For the former, it presents Belarus as a democratic ally worthy of support; for the latter, it offers hope and solidarity.

Through Hart's structure, Tsikhanouskaya's discourse reveals power dynamics and ideological positioning:

- Analysing transitivity - Lukashenko and Putin are consistently portrayed as active oppressors, while Belarusians are presented as victims or agents of resistance. For example, 'Lukashenko will sell our country piece by piece to Russia' portrays him as complicit in undermining sovereignty.

- Personalisation and collectivisation - Tsikhanouskaya humanises the struggle through personal stories about her family, while collectivising the Belarusian opposition. Statements such as ‘We managed to show the whole world that Lukashenko does not represent Belarus’ emphasise both personal sacrifice and collective action.
- Assessment of the opposition and the regime - criticism of authoritarianism - the regime is presented as illegitimate and repressive, using nominalisations such as ‘terror’ and ‘repression’ to emphasise systemic injustice. Passive constructions (e.g. ‘political prisoners are still in jail’) shift the focus to the wider plight rather than specific perpetrators.
- Moral elevation of the opposition - the opposition is portrayed as morally superior and strategically skilful, with phrases such as ‘We are preparing for transition’ emphasizing proactive planning and resilience.

#### Changes in Tsikhanouskaya’s Soft Power Framing Over Time

##### 1. Early Speeches (2022–2023): Establishing Credibility and Identity

- Focus: Differentiating the Belarusian people from the Lukashenko regime, tying Belarus to global democratic values.
- Tone: Emphasized resilience and victimhood ("Belarusian people are oppressed but strong").
- Key Linguistic Techniques: Inclusive pronouns, binary oppositions, and appeals for international solidarity.

##### 2. Middle Period (2023–2024): Emphasizing Unity with Ukraine

- Focus: Intertwining Belarus’s struggle with Ukraine’s, portraying the two nations as fighting a shared battle against Russian imperialism.
- Tone: Hopeful yet urgent; advocating for strategic patience and perseverance.
- Key Linguistic Techniques: Semantic coherence linking past oppression to future freedom, personalization through family stories, and collective identity.

##### 3. Later Speeches (2024): Strategic and Visionary

- Focus: Highlighting Belarus as an integral part of Europe’s future stability and as a democratic ally.
- Tone: Determined and proactive; appealing for direct action from international stakeholders.

Key Linguistic Techniques: Strong metaphors, action-oriented verbs, and nuanced appeals for pragmatic solutions (e.g., better sanctions).

Here is a visualization of the analysis that captures linguistic strategies, sociocultural positioning, and ideological grammar.



Date/Source	Linguistic Strategies	Sociocultural Framing	Ideological Grammar
<b>19.09.2022</b> <b>(VOA)</b>	Inclusive pronouns ("we"), contrasts like "Belarusian people vs. regime", metaphors ("consistency is our weapon").	Belarus aligned with global democratic values, separating people from regime.	Lukashenko as an agent of oppression; Belarusian people as resilient and morally superior.
<b>08.01.2023</b> <b>(The Atlantic)</b>	Past vs. present transformation ("We are a nation now"), Belarusian volunteers fighting for Ukraine emphasized.	Belarus tied to Ukraine's fight against Russian imperialism, highlighting shared identity and struggle.	Active voice ("The Kremlin uses Lukashenko"), nominalization ("state of fear") universalizes repression.
<b>11.07.2023</b> <b>(Baltic Times)</b>	Positive framing ("strategic perseverance", "united transitional cabinet"), negative for regime ("throwing his fist").	Belarus's future tied to Ukraine's victory; Belarus as inherently European.	Belarusian opposition as active agents ("We formed"), Lukashenko portrayed as desperate and weakened.
<b>19.10.2023</b> <b>(WFD Lecture)</b>	Strong metaphors ("tyranny is like cancer"), binary oppositions ("democracy vs. dictatorship").	Belarus positioned as a crucial element for European security, tied to Ukraine and democratic ideals.	Opposition humanized through personal stories, regime dehumanized as systemic oppression.
<b>19.02.2024</b> <b>(Green European Journal)</b>	Emotional language ("ruining national identity"), European family vs. Russian domination.	Belarus framed as a key player in European stability and as inherently part of Europe.	Belarusian people collectivized; regime acts as oppressive force ("Russification").
<b>08.10.2024</b> <b>(Kyiv Independent)</b>	Emphasis on interconnection ("fates of Belarus and Ukraine are intertwined"), "we can't solve one without the other."	Belarus framed as both a victim and a potential agent of change, tightly aligned with Ukraine's goals.	Democratic forces active agents ("We advocate"), Lukashenko portrayed as passive instrument of Russian goals.

*Table 1: Key Points from Tsikhanouskaya's Rhetoric and Use of Soft Power*

In this way, we have shown how Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric serves as a powerful tool for criticizing Lukashenko's regime, redefining Belarus' identity and positioning the country as a

democratic ally on the world stage. Her discourse uses linguistic strategies, semantic framing, and socio-political alignment to mobilise support and build resilience among Belarusians. By linking Belarus' struggle to the universal values of democracy and freedom, Tsikhanouskaya not only strengthens the legitimacy of the opposition, but also ensures that Belarus remains a key player in regional and global geopolitical narratives. The results highlight the transformative potential of discourse in shaping perceptions and mobilising action in support of democratic goals.

## CONCLUSION

This research analyzed Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's digital diplomacy, as a part of public diplomacy, and critical discourse as tools for advancing the Belarusian opposition's cause, positioning Belarus as a democratic ally, and challenging authoritarian narratives. By integrating critical discourse analysis and digital diplomacy frameworks, the study uncovered the intricate strategies through which an exiled leader can reshape public perceptions and mobilize both domestic and international audiences. The findings contribute to broader discussions on the role of language, power, and technology in public diplomacy, particularly in the context of resistance to authoritarian regimes.

### Key findings

**Rethinking Public Diplomacy in the Digital Age.** Tsikhanouskaya's ability to bypass state-controlled media and use digital platforms illustrates a paradigm shift in public diplomacy. Her use of platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Telegram highlights the potential of digital tools to amplify non-state voices, support opposition movements and create transnational solidarity. It can be concluded that public diplomacy is no longer the exclusive domain of states, but is increasingly shaped by individual leaders and grassroots movements.

**Language as a tool of resistance and mobilisation.** The critical discourse analysis showed how Tsikhanouskaya's rhetoric creates a compelling narrative that unites Belarusians and appeals to international actors. Through her inclusive language, emotional resonance and semantic framing, she effectively presents the Belarusian opposition as a moral force against authoritarianism. Her ability to link the Belarusian struggle to universal values such as democracy and human rights underlines the power of language in legitimising political movements.

**Soft power through strategic representation.** Tsikhanouskaya's discourse positions Belarus not as an isolated entity, but as a critical actor in European security and stability. By linking the fate of Belarus to that of Ukraine during the war, she reinforces the interconnectedness of the regional democratic struggle. Its dual appeal - mobilising domestic audiences and garnering international support - is an example of the strategic use of soft power to attract global attention and advocate for democratic change.

**The challenges and opportunities of digital diplomacy.** While Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya has effectively used platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Telegram, her limited reach on newer platforms such as TikTok highlights the need for broader engagement strategies, especially with younger audiences. In addition, overcoming algorithmic bias and competing with state-sponsored

propaganda remain critical challenges. These findings underscore the importance of a diversified and adaptive digital presence to maintain the momentum of political movements.

Implications for exiled opposition leadership. Tsikhanouskaya's leadership demonstrates that leaders in exile can remain politically relevant and influential by skilfully navigating the digital and rhetorical landscape. Her example serves as a model for opposition figures operating in similar circumstances, highlighting the need for cohesive narratives, transnational alliances and the strategic use of digital platforms to effectively challenge authoritarian regimes.

This research highlights the transformative role of discourse and digital tools in public diplomacy and opposition leadership. Tsikhanouskaya's strategic engagement demonstrates how exiled leaders can transcend physical borders to remain relevant, reshape national identities, and mobilise global support. As authoritarian regimes increasingly manipulate information spaces, her case illustrates the power of language and technology to challenge such regimes and inspire movements for democracy. This study contributes to the academic discourse on public diplomacy, soft power, and rhetorical strategies, and offers insights with practical implications for policymakers, activists, and scholars alike. As public diplomacy continues to evolve, the lessons drawn from this study reinforce the importance of adaptability, authenticity, and strategic communication in navigating the complexities of global politics.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

Abedini, H. (2020). Written evidence submitted by Mr. Hossein Abedini at National Council of Resistance of Iran - UK Representative Office (UKI0011). UK Parliament. <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/2378/html/>

Anderson J. E. Public Policymaking: An Introduction. - Boston-New York, 2003.-P. 1-34.  
Belyaeva N. Yu. Development of the concept of public policy: attention to the “driving forces” and governing entities // Polis. - 2011. - No. 3. - P. 72-87.

Arendt H. Vita Activa, or about the active life. - SPb.: Aletheia, 2000. - 75 p.

Associated Press. (2023, December 13). U.S. faces multiple crises as Biden heads to Europe. AP News. <https://apnews.com/general-news-82db522360b046feb533efelc417d309>

BBC News. (2023, December 16). [*Romania orders election recount after TikTok bias claims*]. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2n83vgxxjo>

Belyaeva N. Yu. Development of the concept of public policy: attention to the “driving forces” and governing entities // Polis. - 2011. - No. 3. - P. 72-87.

Bernal, V. (2014), Nation as network: Diaspora, cyberspace, and citizenship, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bjola, C. and Holmes, M. (2015), Digital diplomacy: Theory and practice, Routledge.

Bjola, C. and Jiang, L. (2015), Social media and public diplomacy: A comparative analysis of the digital diplomatic strategies of the EU, Us and Japan in China, Digital diplomacy: Theory and practice, London: Routledge, pp. 71-88.

Bjola, C. and Kornprobst, M., (2023), Digital International Relations: Technology, Agency and Order, Taylor & Francis.

Capano G., Howlett M. Introduction: Multidimensional World of Policy Dynamics // European and North American Experiences in Policy Change. Policy Drivers and Policy Dynamics. - London, 2009. - P. 1 -12.

Cassidy, J. (2018), Digital Diplomatic Crisis Communication: Reconceptualising Diplomatic Signalling in an age of Real Time Governance, Working Paper, no. 3, Oxford Digital Diplomacy Research Group.

CBC/Radio-Canada. (2024, November 25). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya in Canada. *CBC Radio As It Happens*. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-in-canada-1.7392773>

Chatham House. (2022, June). Interview: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. The World Today. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2022-06/interview-sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya>

Chernobrov, D. (2022), Strategic humor: Public diplomacy and comic framing of foreign policy issues, The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 277-296.

Cull N. J., Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past// N. J. Cull – Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009. – p.10.

Cull N.J., «Public diplomacy» before Gullion: the evolution of a phase// USC Center on Public Diplomacy. – URL: <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/public-diplomacy-gullion-evolution-phrase> (дата обращения: 02.02.2020) April 2006

Dahl, Robert, ed., Political Oppositions in Western Democracies. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966.

Datareportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Belarus*. Datareportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-belarus>

Datareportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Venezuela*. Datareportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-venezuela>

Drezner, D. W. (2019), Technological change and international relations, *International Relations*, vol. 33 (2), pp. 286-303.

Easton D. The Political System. An Inquiry into the State of Political Science. - New York: Knopf, 1953. - 87 p.

Eggling, K. A. (2019), The digitalization of public diplomacy, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 32 (5), pp. 675-677.

Euronews. (2024, October 18). Belarus's exiled opposition leader Tsikhanouskaya continues her battle. *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/10/18/belaruss-exiled-opposition-leader-tsikhanouskaya-continues-her-battle>

European Commission. *Erasmus+*. European Commission. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

European Parliament. (2020, September 17). European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the situation in Belarus (2020/2779(RSP)). European Parliament. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0231\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0231_EN.html)

Fairclough, N. (2005) *Media Discourse*. London, UK: Arnold. 214 p.

Fokin V.I., Formation of the content of the concepts "foreign cultural policy" and "cultural diplomacy" in the international activities of modern states//*Bulletin of the St. Petersburg State University*. Series 6. -2003. Issue 2 (No. 14) - P. 125-129

Gilboa E., Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy// *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. – 2008, Volume 616, №1 – P. 57, 68

Green European Journal. (2024, February 19). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: Europe is where Belarus belongs. *Green European Journal*. Retrieved December 16, 2024, from <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-europe-is-where-belarus-belongs/>

Habermas J. Moral consciousness and communicative action. - St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2000. - 382 p.

Hart, C. (2014) *Discourse, Grammar and Ideology: Functional and Cognitive Perspectives*. London, UK: Bloomsbury. 232 p

Hayden, C. (2012), *Social media at state: Power, practice, and conceptual limits for US public diplomacy*, *Global Media Journal*, vol. 11, no. 21, pp. 1-21.

*International Law: Textbook for Bachelors* / Ed. R.M. Valeev, G.I. Kurdyukov. -M.: Statut, 2017.-496 p.

Jegelevicius, L. (2023, July 11). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: Ukraine's victory will trigger something big – Change of regime not only in Russia, but in Belarus too. *The Baltic Times*. [https://www.baltictimes.com/sviatlana\\_tsikhanouskaya\\_ukraine\\_s\\_victory\\_will\\_trigger\\_something\\_big\\_change\\_of\\_regime\\_not\\_only\\_in\\_russia\\_but\\_in\\_belarus\\_too/](https://www.baltictimes.com/sviatlana_tsikhanouskaya_ukraine_s_victory_will_trigger_something_big_change_of_regime_not_only_in_russia_but_in_belarus_too/)

Johnson, O., Hall-Phillips, A., Chung, T.-L. (Doreen) and Cho, H. (2019), *Are You Connected Through Consumption? The Role of Hashtags in Political Consumption*, *Social Media + Society*, no. 5 (4), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119883427>

Kujawski, M. (2024, October 4). 'Lukashenko is leading the country nowhere' – Belarusian opposition leader Tsikhanouskaya. *Kyiv Post*. <https://www.kyivpost.com/post/40013>

Kyiv Independent. (2023, December 7). The fate of Belarus and Ukraine are interconnected, Tsikhanouskaya says. *Kyiv Independent*. <https://kyivindependent.com/the-fate-of-belarus-and-ukraine-are-interconnected-tsikhanouskaya-says/>

Leonard M., Stead C., Smewing C., *Public Diplomacy*// M. Leonard, C .Stead, C .Smewing C. –London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2002. – pp. 8-22.

Linz J. The perils of presidentialism // *Journal of Democracy*. 1990. Winter [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://www1.american.edu/ia/cdem/pdfs/linz\\_perils\\_presidentialism.pdf](http://www1.american.edu/ia/cdem/pdfs/linz_perils_presidentialism.pdf)

Loginova O. (2023, August 23). Belarus people still resisting: Exiled leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya calls for West's support. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/23/belarus-people-still-resisting-exiled-leader-sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-calls-for-wests-support>

Loveluck, L. (2019, October 6). Turkey's top diplomat takes on critics — on Twitter. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.com/news/2019/10/06/turkey-diplomat-twitter-like-035865>

Manor, I. (2019), *The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy*, Palgrave Mcmillan.

Manor, I. and Crilley, R. (2019), *The mediatisation of MFAs: Diplomacy in the new media ecology*, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 15 (1-2), pp. 66-92.

Melissen, J. (2005), *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, New York: Springer.

Michael Alfred Peszke, *The Armed Forces of Poland in the West, 1939-46: Strategic Concepts, Planning, Limited Success but No Victory!*, *Helion Studies in Military History*, no. 13, Solihull, England, Helion & Company, Ltd, 2013, ISBN 978-1-90891654-9.

Nemčok M. Active and passive: two ways party systems influence electoral outcomes. *European Political Science Review*. 2019;11(4):451-467. doi:10.1017/S1755773919000250

Nemtsova, A. (2023, January 8). Belarus's opposition leader speaks about Putin's war. The Atlantic. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2023/01/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-belarus-russia-lukashenko-putin/672666/>

Nikovskaya L. I. Yakimets V. N. Problems and priorities of public policy development in modern Russia // *Power*. - 2013. - No. 9. - P. 4-10.

Nye J.S. Jr., *Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power*.//*Foreign Affairs*. – 2009, Vol. 88, №. 4. –P. 160

Nye J.S., Jr., *Soft power: The Means to Success in World Politics*// J.S. Nye Jr. – NY: Public Affairs, 2004. – pp. 10-15

O'Donnell G. Delegative democracy? [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://http://www.kellogg.nd.edu/publications/workingpapers/WPS/172.pdf>

Orbán, V. (2022, October 17). [Text of the tweet] [Tweet]. X. [https://x.com/PM\\_ViktorOrban/status/1582395473889210368?s=20&t=H8gVZuGVC-hnMMh\\_P6mX-A](https://x.com/PM_ViktorOrban/status/1582395473889210368?s=20&t=H8gVZuGVC-hnMMh_P6mX-A)

Pajtinka E., Public diplomacy as a theoretical problem: searching for a definition// *EJTS European Journal of Transformation Studies*. – 2019, V. 7, No. 2 – P. 22-23, 26

Prezident Sveta. (n.d.). *Instagram profile*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/prezident.sveta/?hl=en>

Przeworski, A. (2000). *Demokratia i rynek: Politicheskie i ekonomicheskie reformy v Vostochnoi Evrope i Latiniskoi Amerike* [Democracy and the market: Political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America]. ROSSPEN.

Pul\_1. (n.d.). [*Pul Pervogo*]. Telegram. [https://t.me/pul\\_1](https://t.me/pul_1)

Revolution @State: The Spread of Ediplomacy [Electronic resource] // The Lowy Institute for International Policy. – 2012. URL: [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/03\\_ediplomacy\\_hanson.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/03_ediplomacy_hanson.pdf)

Sandre A. *Digital Diplomacy: Conversations on Innovation in Foreign Policy*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 332 p.

Aday, S., Farrell, H., Lynch, M., Sides, J., & Freelon, D. (2012, July). *Blogs and bullets II: New media and conflict after the Arab Spring* (USIP Peaceworks Report No. 80). United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org>

The new public diplomacy: soft power in international relations/ Ed. by Jan Melissen. – Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. – pp. 13-16, 30



Tibet.net. (2023, December 15). Tibetan parliamentarians welcomed to Lithuanian Parliament as Vilnius visit concludes. Central Tibetan Administration. <https://tibet.net/tibetan-parliamentarians-welcomed-to-lithuanian-parliament-as-vilnius-visit-concludes>

Tsihanouskaya. (n.d.). [@tsihanouskaya]. X. <https://x.com/Tsihanouskaya>

Tsikhanouskaya, S. (n.d.). [S. Tsikhanouskaya]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/S.Tsikhanouskaya>

Tsikhanouskaya. (n.d.). [(@tsikhanouskaya)]. Telegram. <https://t.me/tsikhanouskaya>

Tsvetkova N.A., Web 2.0 Programs in US Public Diplomacy// USA and Canada: Economy, Politics, Culture. - 2011, No. 3 - P. 109-122.// URL: <https://ushistory.ru/nauchnye-stati/559-programmy-web-20-v-publichnoj-diplomatii-ssha>

Tsvetkova, N. A. and Fedorova, I. V. (2021), US Data Diplomacy: Goals, Mechanism, Content, USA & Canada: Economy, Politics, Culture, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 104-116.

Twiplomacy. (2021). World leader executive summary. Twiplomacy. <https://www.twiplomacy.com/world-leader-executive-summary>

United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). Home. United Nations Development Programme. <https://www.undp.org/>

V. Zhukovsky I.I. Formation of the party system of the Republic of Poland. Kaliningrad: Publishing house of the Russian State University named after I. Kant, 2010.

Varpahovskis E., Six Ways States Resist Cultural Diplomacy Hegemony// USC Center on Public Diplomacy. URL: <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/six-ways-states-resist-cultural-diplomacy-hegemony>

Veridica. (2024, July 22). Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya: The fate of Ukraine is closely tied to that of Belarus – An exclusive interview with the Belarusian opposition leader. Veridica. <https://www.veridica.ro/en/interviews/sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya-the-fate-of-ukraine-is-closely-tied-to-that-of-belarus-an-exclusive-interview-with-the-belarusian-opposition-leader>

Walker, P. (2022, February 12). Liz Truss's 'Instagram diplomacy': Five photos a day as foreign secretary. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/feb/12/liz-truss-instagram-diplomacy-five-photos-a-day-foreign-secretary-flickr>

Westminster Foundation for Democracy. (2023, October 19). 2023 lecture: Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. Westminster Foundation for Democracy. <https://www.wfd.org/annual-lecture/2023-lecture-sviatlana-tsikhanouskaya>

YouTube. (n.d.). [Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcCJ5p6hQi1n-xaYkSMILXg>

Zeng, C. (2021, July 7). China's diplomacy on Twitter: 'Wolf warrior' diplomacy comes of age. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/07/magazine/china-diplomacy-twitter-zhao-lijian.html>